

SOCIAL WELFARE IN THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BITUNG SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE IN BITUNG CITY OF NORTH SULAWESI PROVINCE

Kesejahteraan Sosial dalam Pembangunan Berkelanjutan Kawasan Ekonomi Khusus Bitung di Kota Bitung Provinsi Sulawesi Utara

Runtukahu Joi Meinhart Moningka¹, Burhan Niode^{2*}, Welly Waworundeng³

¹²³Universitas Sam Ratulangi, JL. Kampus Unsrat Bahu, Kleak, Malalayang, Kota Manado, Sulawesi Utara

¹moningkajoev@gmail.com

²burhanniode@gmail.com

³wellywaworundeng@gmail.com

(*) Corresponding Author

burhanniode@gmail.com

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<p>Received : 30-08-2023 Revised : 06-10-2023 Accepted : 06-11-2023</p> <p>Keywords:</p> <p>Bitung Special Economic Zone, Social Welfare, Sustainable Development</p>	<p>Abstract</p> <p>This research aims to analyze the social welfare of the community in the sustainable development of the Bitung Special Economic Zone in Bitung City, North Sulawesi Province. The research employs a qualitative descriptive method based on social welfare indicators according to the Republic of Indonesia Law Number 11 of 2009, Article 6, regarding social welfare, which stipulates that achieving social welfare involves several indicators, including social security, social empowerment, and social protection. The research informants were obtained using purposive sampling techniques, totaling 16 informants. Data analysis comprised stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The research findings indicate that in terms of social security, the government ensures access to health needs, encompassing clean water, adequate housing, and environmental sanitation, as well as educational needs. The government provides educational infrastructure for the residents in the Bitung Special Economic Zone, including the <i>Program Indonesia Pintar</i> (PIP) and <i>Kartu Indonesia Pintar</i> (KIP). Regarding social empowerment, the government assists the community through Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), supported by the Cooperative and MSME Office of Bitung City. Furthermore, the government provides social protection, including contributions for national health insurance (JKN) and the Prosperous Family Rice Program (Rastra). The conclusion of this research is that social welfare for the community in the sustainable development of the Bitung Special Economic Zone in Bitung City is carried out in accordance with the applicable laws and regulations.</p>
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INTRODUCTION

The government, in order to fulfill the mandate of the people as the Sovereign of the state, which is a representation of the nation, is obligated to realize the goals of the Indonesian nation as contained in the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution, including the advancement of public welfare. In the general explanation of the 1945 Constitution, Indonesia aims to achieve social justice for all the people, where, in a literal sense, public welfare refers to the creation of conditions that are safe, peaceful, and prosperous.

The implementation of the people's mandate and the realization of national goals require the government to direct the organization of the state and social welfare that prioritizes the prosperity of the community rather than individual prosperity (Suntoro & Hariri, 2018). Therefore, the economy

is organized based on economic democracy with principles of togetherness, efficiency, justice, sustainability, environmental awareness, self-reliance, and by maintaining a balance between progress and national economic unity. The government continually strives to achieve social welfare as one of the steps by enhancing economic growth. Economic growth must be accompanied by adequate fiscal capacity to carry out development for the improvement of the people's welfare and active participation of Indonesia in the global economic arena. Indonesia's economic growth, which has an impact on improving people's welfare, can undoubtedly be achieved with support and competitiveness from the state.

One of the breakthroughs made by the government to accelerate economic development is through the establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in various regions of Indonesia (Nooraini, 2017). Indonesia, the largest country in Southeast Asia, has relatively stable economic growth. Despite contracting by 2.07% in 2020 due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Indonesia's economy has shown very positive performance with an economic growth rate of 3.51% in the third quarter of 2021, and it is projected to continue to increase to five percent by the end of 2021 (kek.go.id).

In the context of economic development, the Indonesian government enacted Law No. 39 of 2009 on Special Economic Zones, which also repealed Law No. 36 of 2000 on the Establishment of Government Regulations Replacing Law No. 1 of 2000 on Free Trade Areas and Free Ports, making it an Act of the State of the Republic of Indonesia in 2000.

SEZs are designated areas within the jurisdiction of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, established to perform specific economic functions. SEZs aim to create economic growth, promote even development, and enhance the nation's competitiveness. SEZs are developed by preparing areas with geo-economic and geostrategic advantages and are intended to accommodate industrial, export, import, and other economic activities with high economic value and international competitiveness (Wahab, 2021). The presence of SEZs is expected to build economic capacity and competitiveness at the national level through value-added industries and value chains.

In its development, to keep SEZ management aligned with global economic and technological dynamics, the government has transformed development policies by emphasizing the orientation toward SEZs that not only focus on accelerating regional economic growth and national development but also encourage the creation of SEZs that can build added value through technology and human resources, which are realized through health, economic, digital, and overhaul development (Suaib, Rakia, Purnomo, & Ohorella, 2022).

The acceleration of SEZ development must also be accompanied by sustainable development. Sustainable development is development that can meet the present living conditions while considering the living needs of future generations. Sustainable development, with its main principles of economic well-being, social justice, and environmental preservation, is implemented through comprehensive approaches that take into account the impacts of every social and economic action on the environment. Harmful effects on the environment must be avoided in all social and economic activities to ensure environmental preservation for the present and future (Alisjahbana & Murningingtyas, 2018).

Sustainable development is not only related to economic development; other types of development in various fields must also be considered. However, economic development is considered the initial step in sustainable development. Therefore, sustainable development cannot be separated from the SEZ development process initiated by the government. One of the provinces in Indonesia that has Special Economic Zones is North Sulawesi. In North Sulawesi, there are two areas designated as SEZs: Bitung as an industrial SEZ and Likupang as a tourism SEZ. The presence of SEZs in North Sulawesi automatically contributes to higher economic growth with positive impacts on the community.

To support SEZs in North Sulawesi, especially in Bitung, the central government is taking steps to build toll roads. Through the Ministry of Public Works and Housing (PUPR), several toll road projects are continuously being developed to enhance connectivity. This includes the construction of

the Manado-Bitung toll road, spanning 39 km. The development of the Manado-Bitung toll road is a significant support for the development of Bitung SEZ and the Super Priority National Tourism Strategic Area (KSPN) of Manado - Bitung - Likupang.

Bitung SEZ was established through Government Regulation No. 32 of 2014. Bitung SEZ has a strategic location and serves as a gateway to the Asia-Pacific countries. This accessibility is supported by the Bitung International Hub Port, which is a trading hub for the eastern regions of Indonesia. Bitung SEZ focuses on the fish processing industry to produce internationally quality export commodities. Additionally, Bitung SEZ focuses on the coconut industry and its derivative products, which have a wide and high-demand market both nationally and internationally (Dewan KEK-RI, 2022).

In its implementation, the Bitung Special Economic Zone (SEZ) faced various challenges, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic was not only a national but a global crisis, causing severe economic impacts. Consequently, the investment climate deteriorated significantly, leading to a multitude of economic issues, including those in the Special Economic Zone of Bitung, which necessitated intervention by the central government to devise strategies for economic recovery.

Some of the challenges that afflicted the Bitung SEZ during the COVID-19 pandemic included halted construction, a lack of investor interest, and the need to transport marine resources to Jakarta before exportation to the destination countries. Hence, the development of the Bitung SEZ is prioritized to stimulate economic growth both at the national and local levels, with the SEZ serving as a primary driver of the economy.

The establishment of the Bitung SEZ is driven by the goal of improving social welfare, particularly in the Special Economic Zone Bitung. However, the Bitung SEZ still suffers from a lack of investor interest, hindering its optimal development. This deficiency in investor attraction can be attributed to land acquisition issues, inadequate access to the SEZ site, and limited access to water resources. Therefore, the government of North Sulawesi is compelled to seek solutions to promote the development of the Bitung SEZ.

In 2022, Ministry of Investment/BKPM data highlighted critical challenges impeding the Bitung Special Economic Zone (SEZ). Land acquisition complexities and underutilization of Bitung Port, attributed to incomplete supporting infrastructure, are prominent among these issues, hindering efficient port connectivity. This data underscores the urgency of collaborative efforts to surmount these obstacles and unleash the Bitung SEZ's full potential for economic development and sustainable growth. Overcoming these challenges is pivotal for the SEZ to fulfill its role as an economic catalyst and a vehicle for improving social welfare in the region, ultimately contributing to the broader goals of sustainable development.

Sustainable development is rooted in concerns about environmental carrying capacity exceeded by human production and consumption (Ismail & Sofwani, 2016). The concept of sustainable development integrates nature and ecology with social and economic needs and preferences, combining preservation and protection with development and growth. The Bitung Special Economic Zone, an industrial SEZ, must also take into account and consider sustainable development. This must be promoted by the government to boost economic growth while ensuring sustainability for the present and future generations. Thus, the development of the Bitung SEZ must be carried out sustainably.

In the context of sustainable development, particularly for the Bitung SEZ, economic growth is closely related to potential issues due to economic growth. Consequently, SEZs, in the context of sustainable development, must be capable of addressing barriers to economic growth. These barriers can lead to low levels of education and productivity, insufficient capital due to low savings among the population, and unstable economic conditions that can result in inflation, thereby causing unequal distribution and pricing policies by the government. Such issues can have a significant impact on future generations, potentially leading to high unemployment, increased poverty, and reduced competitiveness that ultimately affects subsequent generations.

Beyond its implications for economic growth, sustainable development in the Bitung SEZ is closely related to social welfare. Data from the Ministry of Social Affairs in 2020 indicated that 75,777 citizens faced social welfare problems (Kemensos, 2020). Sustainable development is closely related to welfare, where equitable development can enhance the welfare of society. Thus, the quality of life for the local population needs to be improved as part of social welfare development. In the Bitung SEZ, social welfare is problematic, with the local population not yet feeling the effects of the SEZ's presence.

Sustainable development, viewed through the lens of social welfare, can assist the local population in meeting their daily needs. The SEZ is an economically and geostrategically advantageous area, encouraging investment that impacts the local economy (Kustiwan & Ramadhan, 2019). This development plays a vital role in accelerating economic growth and ensuring national development. Moreover, it is expected that the local population will gain access to quality education and healthcare services. Higher economic growth, supported by income, education, and health, will lead to improved social welfare and income distribution, further stimulating economic development. Hence, economic growth is crucial for increasing production capacity and the income of the local population.

Social welfare within the context of sustainable development for the Bitung Special Economic Zone (SEZ) represents a pivotal commitment by the government to uplift the well-being of the local population. As part of this commitment, the government recognizes the need to align economic growth with social progress and environmental protection to create a more equitable and prosperous society. This research endeavors to shed light on the multifaceted aspects of social welfare as they intersect with the sustainable development goals of the Bitung SEZ, situated in the city of Bitung, North Sulawesi Province.

METODE

This research will be conducted in the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) located in the city of Bitung, North Sulawesi Province, with a planned timeframe of approximately six months, from April to September 2023. The research will adopt a qualitative approach to comprehend phenomena related to the research subject, with a focus on social welfare within the context of sustainable development in the Bitung SEZ. Three indicators of social welfare will be central to this study: social security, social empowerment, and social protection, in accordance with the Republic of Indonesia Law Number 11 of 2009 concerning social welfare (Indrawan & Yaniawati, 2016).

The selection of research informants will employ purposive sampling techniques and will encompass various stakeholders, including government representatives, the Secretariat of Bitung City, and the local community. Data will be collected through observation, interviews, and document analysis. Observation will assist in describing the issues and developments related to sustainable development in the Bitung SEZ, while interviews will delve into the perspectives of key informants (Aan & Djam'an, 2014). Document analysis will support data collection by accessing relevant documents, including government regulations and laws pertaining to the Bitung SEZ. After data collection, qualitative data analysis will be performed in three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions with verification.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Social welfare is the condition in which the material, spiritual, and social needs of citizens are fulfilled to enable them to live decently and develop themselves, thus performing their social functions (Rahadian, 2016). Hence, it necessitates the establishment of social welfare programs as a targeted, integrated, and sustainable effort undertaken by the government, local authorities, and the community in the form of social services to meet the basic needs of all citizens. These services encompass social rehabilitation, social security, social empowerment, and social protection.

In the context of social welfare for the population within the Special Economic Zone (SEZ), both the central and local governments have designated SEZs to be economically and geostrategically advantageous areas to enhance investment. Furthermore, the development of SEZs plays a crucial role in exploring regional economic growth and national development equity, accompanied by an increase in social welfare for the population, achieved through social security, social empowerment, and social protection programs, particularly for those residing in the Bitung SEZ.

The research involves interviews conducted by the researcher, in collaboration with relevant government agencies in Bitung City, focusing on social welfare and the development of the Special Economic Zone. Interviews also involve residents living within the Bitung City Special Economic Zone, specifically in the Matuari District. The interviews provided data regarding social welfare in the sustainable development of the Bitung City Special Economic Zone based on indicators of social security, social empowerment, and social protection.

1. Social Security

Sustainable development and social welfare are closely intertwined. Even distribution of development automatically leads to an increase in social welfare within the community. This is related to social welfare development, which involves planned and institutionalized efforts, encompassing various forms of social interventions in social services to fulfill human needs, prevent and address social issues, and strengthen social institutions.

During an interview with G.D., the Secretary of the Bitung City Social Services Department, it was stated that social security is a form of social protection provided by the government to ensure that all citizens can meet their basic living needs. This extends to areas such as healthcare and access to clean water, closely related to environmental sanitation and living conditions, as well as ensuring access to education. The city government supports national healthcare and education programs.

Interviews with the Head of the Social Protection and Social Security Division at the Bitung City Social Services Department emphasized the role of social security in healthcare and education. These programs are seen as an extension of government initiatives that encompass areas such as national healthcare and social employment, including protection against job loss. Such programs benefit not only those residing in the Special Economic Zone but all Indonesian citizens. However, for sustainable development, particular attention must be given to social security programs to improve the social welfare of those in the Bitung SEZ, especially considering the relocation of residents due to SEZ development.

Based on interviews and observations, it is evident that social security plays a crucial role in improving social welfare and facilitating sustainable development in the Bitung Special Economic Zone. It is essential for the local government of Bitung City and the central government to enhance efforts in implementing social security measures and strengthening supportive regulatory frameworks.

2. Social Empowerment

Empowering the community is a step toward enhancing the capabilities and competencies of the population, enabling individuals and communities to maximize their potential, maintain their identity and dignity, and develop independently in economic, social, cultural, and religious contexts. Social empowerment is closely linked to individuals, families, and community institutions. It can include building the capacity of remote indigenous communities and managing social funding. Social empowerment serves as a strategy for increasing the strength or power of individuals, institutions, and communities, with policies aimed at achieving specific objectives.

The interviews conducted by the researcher, in conjunction with informant G.D., revealed that the Bitung Special Economic Zone (SEZ) functions as an industrial-focused economic region that serves as a pivotal gateway for accessing the entire industrial output within the fisheries sector and the production of copra from coconuts. This represents a promising prospect

for enhancing social welfare, particularly for those situated within the Special Economic Zone, as a pivotal component of sustainable development, by means of fostering social empowerment. Government-led initiatives in social empowerment entail the provision of continuous support and guidance for the establishment of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) with the primary objective of enhancing the welfare of the local populace. The MSME programs include ongoing support, particularly aimed at addressing the fundamental needs of the community, especially for those residing within the Bitung Special Economic Zone.

In an interview with J.G., who serves as the Secretary of the Bitung City Cooperative and MSME Department, it was underscored that the Bitung City Government is dedicated to supporting the social welfare of the community, with a specific focus on those residing within the Bitung Special Economic Zone. This is achieved through an array of social empowerment measures, including the active engagement of the local populace in micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) to foster community empowerment.

These findings were corroborated by informants A.R, A.K, and M.N, entrepreneurs operating MSMEs such as food stalls and grocery stores, who emphasized that these endeavors are integral to the government's community empowerment program, which is particularly tailored for the residents of the Bitung Special Economic Zone. Within this framework, individuals and businesses receive financial assistance and access to equipment, as the development of the Special Economic Zone is expected to attract private investments, spurring the influx of external individuals, and thereby creating opportunities for the local populace to fulfill their basic needs through businesses supported by the government within the framework of the MSME programs.

Resonating with the perspectives of informants A.R, A.K, and M.N, informant A.N, the head of the Maturai District, underscored that the emergence of new MSMEs in the Maturai district is a direct consequence of community empowerment programs initiated by the Bitung City Government, particularly tailored for those situated in the strategically positioned Special Economic Zone. This zone presents substantial economic development potential and contributes to an economic transformation, thereby enhancing the social welfare of the community.

Based on the researcher's observations and interviews with informants regarding community empowerment, it is evident that the government is focused on reinforcing the capacity and self-sufficiency of the community, with a view to enhancing the quality of life. This is accomplished through active community participation in the planning and decision-making processes, the development of community skills, and the facilitation of improved access to resources. Additionally, the government actively promotes social networking and improved access to education, offering support to the community through the vehicle of MSMEs with the overarching objective of fostering sustainable development, particularly within the Bitung Special Economic Zone.

3. Social Protection

Social protection is intrinsically linked to safeguarding the well-being of the workforce, predominantly through the provision of healthcare coverage. According to the interviews conducted by the researcher, G.D. emphasized that social protection encompasses a multifaceted approach aimed at preventing and addressing risks that may manifest as social shocks, which could potentially jeopardize the livelihoods of the populace, particularly within the context of the Special Economic Zone. This framework facilitates the fulfillment of basic needs and is manifested through various measures, including the provision of national health insurance and a program supporting rice welfare families. It is crucial to emphasize that these forms of social protection are not limited to the residents of the Bitung Special Economic Zone but extend to encompass the entire population of Blitar City.

In an interview with Y.K, the Secretary of the Population and Family Planning Control Department, it was articulated that the year-on-year increase in the population must be

accompanied by corresponding developments and improved access to social welfare. The seamless alignment of these factors holds significant implications for national development, particularly in the context of continuous and sustainable development. Consequently, the preservation of social welfare necessitates the implementation of social protection measures as a form of state or government assurance to the community. As previously elucidated, this encompasses a spectrum of government guarantees that enable access to basic needs, complemented by social protection initiatives in healthcare, including the National Health Insurance (JKN) and Rastra.

The interviews with community informants, including B.S, D.W, F.M, F.P, and F.G, illuminated that one of the principal forms of social protection offered by the Bitung City Government, particularly for the entire community and those located within the Special Economic Zone, notably in the Matuari District, comprises participation in the National Health Insurance (BPJS) program. Additionally, individuals receive monthly assistance in the form of rice welfare, which significantly contributes to meeting their basic needs, specifically in the realms of sustenance and healthcare.

Based on the results of interviews and observations, it is evident that in the realm of social welfare, particularly concerning social protection, the Bitung City Government provides assistance in the form of rice welfare and national health insurance contributions, with the management being overseen by the National Social Security Agency (BPJS). Indonesia is a developing nation, with a particular focus on infrastructure development to meet the needs of the population, including the establishment of Special Economic Zones in various regions proposed by local authorities and endorsed by the central government. The development initiatives undertaken by the government are well-known for their commitment to sustainable development. The concept of sustainable development in Indonesia has its roots in the early 1970s when the Human Environment Conference took place (Mutaqin, Muslim, & Rahayu, 2021). In this conference, sustainable development was conceived as a development concept that obligates due consideration of environmental dimensions as an integral part of enhancing the social welfare of the population. From this sustainable development framework, the transition into the new millennium, spanning from 2000 to 2015, saw the United Nations design a concept known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Through these global programs, the regional level gains insight into the progress of development within a specific area, compared to the global development outcomes, using available indicators that reflect the performance of local development vis-à-vis global development objectives. Both the MDGs and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) share common aspirations related to sustainable development. The MDGs, scheduled for achievement by 2030, encompass eight focal areas: eradicating poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability, and developing global partnerships for development.

In Indonesia, the pursuit of sustainable development is closely aligned with the national development agenda known as "*nawacita*" or the nine national priority agendas. This national agenda shares priorities and development targets, specifically focused on vulnerable groups and delivering development for all, which underscores inclusive development that remains relevant to the objectives and local development in various regions, including Bitung city. Therefore, the development of Special Economic Zones in Bitung represents a significant milestone in the quest for regional development, while simultaneously emphasizing the obligatory fulfillment of social welfare for the population, particularly those located within the Bitung Special Economic Zone (Antasari, 2020). The attainment of the required indicators is essential to ensure the satisfaction of the social welfare of the local community.

1. Social Security

Social security comprises National Health Insurance (NHI), Employment Social Security, Occupational Accident Insurance, Death Insurance, Pension Insurance, Old Age Insurance, and

Job Loss Insurance (JKP). These components are integral to social welfare within the context of sustainable development in Special Economic Zones (SEZs), playing a role in enhancing the social welfare of the population and facilitating sustainable development, especially in industrial SEZs. Presently, social security plays a pivotal role in advancing social welfare. Beyond offering financial and health protection, social security strengthens social and economic resilience, both within a region and at the national level.

Social security functions as social protection, providing adequate financial protection to assist the population in overcoming poverty and meeting their basic needs. Furthermore, it ensures access to high-quality healthcare without the fear of financial detriment. Social security contributes to enhancing workforce productivity and stability, which are crucial for the rapid development of booming industrial regions. Simultaneously, it promotes efficiency and innovation (International Labour Organization, 2014). As such, social security has a significant impact on economic development acceleration.

In practice, the implementation of social security in industrial SEZs should be underpinned by a clear and consistent regulatory framework. However, it must be executed meticulously to remain both financially effective and efficient since it may impose a burden on businesses and the state. Therefore, precise regulations are needed to ensure the efficient implementation of social security in these areas, accommodating diverse needs arising from different social backgrounds.

Social security contributes to sustainable development, particularly in SEZs. It enhances work productivity, as individuals – particularly those residing within SEZs – benefit from financial and health protection, leading to increased job satisfaction and happiness. Effective social security plays a pivotal role in achieving sustainable development objectives, especially in health and equity-related areas. Social security is an integral part of social responsibility, contributing to the enhancement of social welfare.

Social security serves as a form of protection to ensure that the entire population can access decent basic living standards. It employs a compulsory social health insurance mechanism. Social security in Indonesia encompasses programs such as health insurance, accident insurance, death insurance, and old-age insurance. The establishment of social security in Indonesia is based on existing laws, with the formation of bodies aimed at achieving national security goals, as stipulated in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. The 2004 Law on National Security Systems is also based on several considerations: 1. Every person has the right to fulfill basic living needs and to enhance their dignity, contributing to a prosperous, fair, and thriving Indonesian society; 2. To provide comprehensive security, the state develops a national social security system for all the people of Indonesia; 3. In light of these considerations, legislation on the national security system is necessary.

National security is implemented according to principles of humanity, benefit, and social justice. In principle, social security programs include various types that benefit the welfare of the population (Nur & Guntur, 2019). It can be said that social security encompasses both social insurance and government assistance. Social security is a component of the social welfare programs available, which also includes the social welfare of the community residing in the Bitung Special Economic Zone. These social security programs offer access to basic needs, thereby aiding the sustainability of life amid ongoing development processes, which are integral to social community empowerment in the context of sustainable development, akin to the goals of sustainable development and the Millennium Development Goals.

2. Social Empowerment

Community empowerment is closely linked to the level of community empowerment achieved through empowerment programs, activities, and the implementation of work, including the sustainable development of Special Economic Zones (SEZs). Sustainable development in SEZs is essential for achieving inclusive and sustainable growth. Social welfare and community empowerment are highly interconnected in achieving established objectives. Community

empowerment can encompass participation in decision-making, skill development, and improved access to resources. Social welfare through community empowerment can be achieved by building social connections among individuals and community groups that encourage participation and empowerment. Furthermore, social welfare can help enhance access to education, as education is crucial for community empowerment. The implementation of community empowerment is not without challenges, both in terms of socio-economic disparities and limited access to information. Socio-economic disparities can hinder access to resources and worsen inequalities among community groups. Regarding access to information, it can impede participation and community empowerment.

Hence, strategies are needed to enhance community empowerment in the context of social welfare. Sustainable consumption and production patterns are encouraged among the community. Furthermore, community participation in decision-making should be increased and facilitated, including enhancing community access to public facilities, education, and a healthy environment. Development is closely associated with social empowerment. Development challenges are complex, requiring comprehensive management, including planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. The various aspects of life to be addressed in development are extensive, covering political, economic, social, cultural, as well as defense and security dimensions. In authoritarian and centralized governance, society is often positioned as an object of development. However, in the development of democratic governance, society must transition from being an object of development to a subject of development. Positioning society as a subject in development is essential for effective development and involves various alternative community empowerment strategies that can improve the capabilities and self-reliance of the community.

Empowerment is a process that develops, enables, and strengthens the bargaining position of the lower strata of society against the various forces of oppression in all life aspects and sectors (Fitria, 2022). The concept of community social empowerment is not as recipients or beneficiaries dependent on external entities such as the government, but rather as subjects or participants who act independently. Empowering the community, as a part of social empowerment, aims to empower and enable the community, particularly those facing poverty, underdevelopment, inequality, and powerlessness. The social empowerment process requires innovative and effective strategies, including creating an enabling environment, strengthening capabilities, and providing protection. This is an effort to empower communities by creating an atmosphere or environment that allows the potential of the community to flourish, recognizing that every individual or community has potential that can be developed. Furthermore, it involves strengthening the potential or capacity of the community, focusing on raising the level of education, health, and access to economic development resources. This is closely related to the development of physical infrastructure and basic facilities, including irrigation, roads, electricity, as well as social facilities like schools and accessible healthcare services for the most disadvantaged communities. Additionally, it relates to the availability of financing institutions, training, and marketing institutions in areas with concentrated populations in need of special empowerment, as general programs may not always reach these marginalized groups.

One essential program to address this is the micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) program implemented by the Bitung city government, particularly for social community empowerment in the Bitung Special Economic Zone. Community empowerment through social welfare is crucial in achieving sustainable development. Therefore, increasing community participation and focusing on sustainable human and environmental resource development is needed to advance Special Economic Zones.

3. Social Protection for Communities

Social protection is an action that assists communities in coping with the adverse effects of various social risks by providing social guarantees. In sustainable development, social protection plays a role in strengthening the pillars of humanity, the economy, and the environment. Social

protection, as a part of social welfare in sustainable development, plays a role in creating equitable and fair conditions that promote high-quality economic growth, allowing for effective social protection. In the context of social protection, budget constraints are the primary hurdle to its implementation in Special Economic Zones (SEZs). Additionally, there are cultural and social awareness differences among communities and variations in systems and infrastructure between SEZs and other regions.

Social protection is carried out through job training and lifelong employment programs as a government policy for job placement (Febriano, Hariyadi, & Falatehan, 2017). Furthermore, the government provides social assistance through programs targeting poverty alleviation, family hope programs, and national health insurance programs. The policies and social protection programs implemented in SEZs need to be thoroughly examined to address the social issues faced by the communities in Special Economic Zones. Government policies should be supported by social protection support institutions aimed at facilitating the application process and obtaining social protection. Furthermore, enhancing the capacity of human resources, particularly in finance, human resources, national development, and the integration of institutions in the implementation of social protection programs is required to have a real and effective impact on society.

Social protection can help address poverty by reducing inequality and building household resilience in the face of unforeseen events such as illness or accidents that can push the poor further into poverty. Social protection is an effort aimed at preventing, reducing, and addressing risks and challenges throughout life, from social shocks and vulnerabilities faced by citizens. Social protection is protected by law under Article 34, paragraph 1, of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which mandates the state's responsibility to care for the poor and neglected children.

Social protection is part of the government's programs to enhance social welfare, as it encompasses social assistance programs for the people, including the Smart Indonesia Program (PIP), the national health insurance program (JKN-KIS), the family hope program (PKH), and non-cash food assistance (*Rastra*). The expansion of social assistance programs is part of the government's commitment to accelerate poverty alleviation. This also applies to people in Special Economic Zones, where poverty alleviation is necessary to ensure that the population in Special Economic Zones, which should be the center of economic activity, can meet their basic needs. This is part of the structured, integrated, and sustainable social welfare provision carried out by the government, both at the central and regional levels, in cooperation with the community through various social services to meet the basic needs of all citizens, encompassing various social aspects.

The concept of social protection is divided into two dimensions in expanding social security, consisting of a series of basic social security for everyone, known as the horizontal dimension, and gradual implementation with higher standards, known as the vertical dimension (Herdiana, 2018). This is in line with ILO Convention No. 102 of 1952 on minimum standards of social security. Social protection is not limited to social assistance and social security alone. According to Barrientos and Shepperd (2003), social protection is traditionally understood as a broader concept than social security, social insurance, and social safety nets. Social protection can be defined as a set of public efforts aimed at addressing and mitigating the vulnerability to risks and poverty that have exceeded the limits.

The concept of social protection fundamentally focuses on the principles of social justice and specific universal rights, where every person is entitled to social security and an adequate standard of living to access health services and well-being for themselves and their families. Social protection aims to combat poverty, underdevelopment, and inequality. The foundation of social protection must be complemented by other strategies, such as strengthening labor and social institutions and promoting a pro-worker microeconomic environment (Nur & Guntur, 2019). Currently, some countries have incorporated these key elements into their social

protection systems. Countries with lower to middle income levels have access to social protection programs as part of efforts to reduce poverty and inequality and other social transformations.

Social protection encompasses a broader set of components, including prevention and promotion. The social protection component consists of various policies aimed at ensuring a minimum level of well-being for the disadvantaged community. The prevention component comprises various policies aimed at preventing vulnerable communities from falling below the set well-being standards. The promotion component includes policies aimed at reducing vulnerability throughout life in the future. Social protection is viewed as having a transformative role, where it is expected to improve the status and create more livelihood opportunities for marginalized community groups (Winarno, 2016). The expansion of the concept of social protection goes beyond to the transformative role.

The concept of social protection is triggered by the world's concerns about increasing socio-economic shocks and threats to livelihoods. Slowly, the concept of social protection has become one of the constant topics in various head-of-state meetings, as social protection has become an integral part of social policies designed to ensure income security and access to social services for all populations. This is done by paying special attention to vulnerable community groups, protecting and empowering communities throughout the life cycle.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussions presented, it can be concluded that social welfare in the context of sustainable development in the Bitung Special Economic Zone (KEK Bitung) can be achieved through various strategies. These strategies include the implementation of social security, encompassing healthcare services, to ensure the safety and fulfillment of basic needs for the community. Furthermore, community empowerment, particularly in supporting both existing and emerging Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), plays an integral role in efforts to achieve broader and more inclusive social welfare.

In light of these conclusions, several recommendations can be made to support social welfare efforts in Bitung Special Economic Zones. First, it is essential to ensure that the benefits of social security, especially healthcare services, are provided consistently to the community to create a sense of safety and protection. Second, the establishment of dedicated facilitators responsible for addressing various aspects of social welfare in SEZ will facilitate community access to available facilities and promote the growth of SMEs. Finally, there is a need to enhance broader social protection with a focus on vulnerable groups to achieve a more inclusive form of social welfare.

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