

Promoting community's pro-activities in confronting natural hazards through community based disaster management organization : The case of Paguyuban Sabuk Gunung Merapi

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Abstrak

<i>Promoting Community's Pro-activeness in Confronting Natural Hazards through Community Based Disaster Management Organisation: The Case of Paguyuban Sabuk Gunung Merapi Due to its particular geomorphological conditions, Indonesia has experienced numerous natural hazards of different types and frequencies. These natural hazards such as earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, floods, droughts, and landslides in most cases have led to natural disasters. Indonesia is placed third by the Asian Development Bank in its observation of 13 - Asian countries most susceptible to natural disasters Philippines and India, in terms of severity of the disasters and their cumulative frequencies of occurrence. Whereas a number of global decisions have been taken that signify the need to pay proper attention to disaster management as part of development, regrettably disaster management policy and programs in this disaster prone country have only been rhetoric. Measures by the Government, private sector and civil society including NGOs are largely relief and rehabilitation oriented rather than focusing on prevention and preparedness.

Relief responses invariably put the community affected by the natural disaster at the receiving end of assistance rather than actively involve the community in the process of the disaster management. This raises concerns since it is the affected community that suffers the most from any impacts of disaster occurrences, but at the same time it is inevitably the affected community that is in the position to provide initial assistance to the natural disaster victims. In addition to the lack of supports, efforts to promote disaster preparedness at the affected community level are challenged by the apprehension that the affected community adopts a fatalistic attitude in dealing with natural disasters. There is an assumption that particularly in developing countries, natural disasters have been accepted as acts of God over which communities have no control. Encouragingly, literature and cases from other countries have suggested that disaster management is most effective at the community level where specific local needs are met. They have also suggested the plausibility of establishing and developing a community based organization to perform the disaster management.

Looking into the country situation, however, there has been insufficient knowledge about community based disaster management organizations in Indonesia. Since this issue has not been addressed, this research studied Paguyuban Sabuk Gunung (PASAG) Merapi. This organization has been assumed to provide empirical evidence to answer the central research question of the plausibility of establishing and developing a community based disaster management organization in Indonesia. The study develops a framework to seek answer(s) to the ultimate question of whether PASAG (Paguyuban Sabuk Gunung) Merapi is indeed a community based disaster management organization. The answer(s) will be utilized to explain the above-presumed plausibility.

The framework explores the community based modality and disaster management proficiency dimensions of the study subject. The dimensions are further examined by assessment areas derived from the combination of the insights provided by the theories on Reasoned Actions, Disaster Management and Community Based Organization. The assessment areas within the community based modality dimension are:

1. the geographic proximity as the setting of the organization;
2. the shared problems the organization attempts to address;
3. its relation toward the government; and
4. its ability to accommodate issues arising in the community.

As to the other dimension, the study identified PASAG's proficiency in disaster management by assessing how far the organization applies risk reduction principles of hazard mitigation and vulnerability reduction as well as capacity strengthening measures in the pre-disaster phase. This research has focused on the pre-disaster phase due to the combined reasons of the limited scope of the study and the attribute of the phase indicative of a more pro-active attitude toward natural hazards compared to measures undertaken during and post disaster phases. The assessment areas on the proficiency in disaster management dimension are:

1. PASAG's performance to mitigate hazards in preparedness measures;
2. PASAG's performance to strengthen community's capacity for preparedness;
3. PASAG's performance to mitigate hazards in prevention measures; and
4. PASAG's performance to strengthen community's capacity for prevention

The assessment of both the community based modality and disaster management proficiency of Paguyuban Sabuk Gunung (PASAG) Merapi has provided sufficient evidence that this organization is a community based disaster management organization. This affirmative answer to the research question has confirmed the viability of establishing and developing such an organization in Indonesia. The case of PASAG also proves that the community has acquired competence in "deconstructing" (assessing and addressing) nature-induced disasters. This competence, which has enabled the community to exercise a calculated course of actions against natural hazards, is transferable to tackle other challenges namely political, economic, social, and environmental imperatives of community development as suggested by the Holistic Approach to disasters. The case, thus, has demonstrated how the Holistic Approach and its derivative Risk Reduction Paradigm, in which Community Based Disaster Management is anchored, at work advocating for the goal of Community Development for which a community based disaster management organization will play a significant role.

Arriving at this positive conclusion, the study puts forward academic recommendations including a proposed model of facilitating the establishment of a community based disaster management organization, recommendations for enabling policy in the area of disaster management, and practical suggestions for those involved in and committed to the development of PASAG Merapi.