

Empowerment of coastal communities as a non-conventional measure to address armed robbery against ships, Indonesia

Senia Febrica, American Studies Center, Universitas Indonesia

By 1999, Indonesian waters accounted for more than one third of the reported sea robbery incidents in the world. This concern remains, particularly in view of a sustained spate of armed robbery against ships in Indonesia territorial waters, in the Strait of Malacca and Singapore and in tri-border areas (bordered by Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippine) in the Sulawesi Sea.¹

Efforts to address the surge in armed robbery at sea in Indonesian waters do not consist exclusively of military measures. Another important measure is the Indonesian Government's Coastal Communities' Empowerment Program (*Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Pesisir*).² Initiatives such as the Indonesian Navy welfare improvement project (*Operasi Bhakti*) and the Ministry of Fishery and Marine Affairs economic empowerment scheme (*Pemberdayaan Ekonomi Masyarakat Pesisir*) contribute to this program.

Officials emphasized that through the economic empowerment program, the Government expects that the option to gain income through conducting sea robbery will no longer appeal to local residents.³ The seven regencies of Rokan, Hilir, Bengkalis, Siak, Palawan, Indragiri Ilir and Karimun, which border the Strait of Malacca and Singapore, are viewed as the key priority areas.⁴ Second in the welfare program's priority list are other regencies that border other important straits, including the Lombok and the Sunda Straits.⁵

The Indonesian Government's coastal communities' empowerment program contributes to the economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

¹ Straits Times, "Piracy in Asia on the rise - Report shows incidents up 60% on last year, while pirates are becoming more violent," 20 October 2010.

² Interviews with officials from the Indonesian Maritime Security Coordinating Board, the Ministry of Defence and the Navy, July 2010, Jakarta, Indonesia.

³ Interviews with officials from the Indonesian Navy and the Maritime Security Coordinating Board, Jakarta, Indonesia, July 2010.

⁴ Ho, "Securing the Seas as a Medium of Transportation in Southeast Asia," at 211.

⁵ *Ibid.*

It generates additional economic income and creates new employment opportunities. Traditionally in Galang Baru village, Batam (which lies close to the Straits of Malacca and Singapore) the main local marine industry focuses on trans-shipment and shipyard business. The new seaweed farming business developed as part of the empowerment program created additional employment opportunities for the local population.⁶ Another example can be seen in the West Bangka Regency where 1,647 fishermen gained access to the Ministry of Fishery and Marine Affairs, Coastal Communities' Economic Empowerment program.⁷ The economic empowerment program has assisted local communities to develop their alternative livelihood as fresh and brackish water fish farmers.⁸

The coastal communities' empowerment program offers benefits for the environment. The introduction of alternative livelihoods, particularly seaweed farming, contributes to the development of bio-fuel production that uses seaweed as a raw material. This development is expected to provide an alternative solution to land-based raw materials for bio-fuel, such as palm oil, which have caused massive deforestation across Indonesia.⁹ Newly introduced economic activities, such as seaweed and salt farming, represent alternative ways to earn a living, other than through fishing. This assists Indonesia in tackling the rampant problem of overfishing in almost all Indonesian waters.¹⁰

⁶ Batam City Council, "Wako Lakukan Penanaman Perdana Rumput Laut," available from <http://www.humasbatam.com/2010/12/11/wako-lakukan-penanaman-perdana-rumput-laut/>; accessed 15 November 2013.

⁷ Rinaldy, "Peningkatan Kemampuan Ekonomi Masyarakat Pesisir di Kabupaten Bangka Barat," Universitas Terbuka, Jakarta (2010), at 118, available from <http://www.pustaka.ut.ac.id/pdfthesis/40564.pdf>; accessed 23 April 2014.

⁸ *Ibid.*, at 109-110.

⁹ Jakarta Post, "RI, S. Korea to develop biofuel from seaweed," 10 March 2009.

¹⁰ Dewan Maritim Indonesia. *Laporan: Perumusan Kebijakan Grand Strategi Pembangunan Kelautan*. (Jakarta: Departemen Kelautan dan Perikanan, 2007), at 4-1,5-6-5-7)