

# Empowerment Strategy for Acehese Embroidery Craftswomen Through Creative Economic Activities in North Aceh Regency.

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## Keywords:

*empowerment strategy, women's empowerment, creative economy, Acehese embroidery crafts*

## Abstract

The empowerment program must facilitate an increase in the capacity of Acehese embroidery craft entrepreneurs, thereby enabling Acehese women embroidery craftsmen to engage in business activities with greater autonomy and efficacy. It is essential that embroidery craftspeople demonstrate high creativity in creating products that align with market demands while maintaining the distinct regional characteristics of Acehese embroidery motifs. However, many embroidery craftspeople have not yet achieved this level of creativity. The objective of this research is to develop an effective empowerment strategy for women Acehese embroidery craftsmen in North Aceh Regency. This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach, comprising in-depth interviews and an examination of the strategies deployed in the program to empower women embroidery craftsmen in Aceh through a creative economy program implemented by the Department of Trade, Industry, Cooperatives and Small and Medium Enterprises of North Aceh Regency. The data was subjected to an analysis employing the SWOT method. The research was conducted in North Aceh Regency, with in-depth interviews conducted at the Office of Trade, Industry, Cooperatives and Small and Medium Enterprises of North Aceh Regency, with the department head and Acehese embroidery craftsmen. The findings of the research indicate that the strategy for empowering women Acehese embroidery craftsmen in North Aceh Regency through the creative economy necessitates the provision of support in the form of skills enhancement, marketing access, capital assistance, and the establishment of partnerships with various stakeholders. An integrated approach between the government, private sector, and local communities is essential for empowering women craftsmen to achieve economic independence and contribute to the preservation of Acehese culture through the art of embroidery.

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## INTRODUCTION

The implementation of women's empowerment programs in society is characterized by a high degree of diversity. This is a consequence of the diversity of livelihoods and the diversity of needs and problems faced by the communities targeted by these empowerment programs. One of the most commonly implemented empowerment programs for mothers is the empowerment program through creative economic activities. One such creative economic activity is Acehese embroidery crafts.

The creative economy plays an important role in the Indonesian economy, making a significant economic contribution. It is therefore imperative that the creative economy be developed, as it has the potential to foster a positive business environment, reinforce the image and identity of the Indonesian nation, promote the use of renewable resources, serve as a hub for innovation and creativity, and yield a beneficial social impact. One particular form of creative economy that has emerged in North Aceh is the creative economy of craftsmanship. This encompasses all creative activities related to the creation, production and distribution of products crafted by artisans, from the initial design stage to the completion of the product.

North Aceh Regency is one of the districts in which Acehese embroidered bag crafts are produced. The production of Acehese embroidered bag crafts is concentrated in several sub-districts, including Muara Batu, Nisam, Lhoksukon, and several others. All Acehese embroidered bag craftspeople in North Aceh Regency are overseen by the Department of Industry, Trade, Cooperatives and MSMEs. However, several businesses have also been supported by various institutions and BUMMs, including Bank Indonesia, PT PIM, and numerous other entities. Numerous empowerment programs have been implemented to enhance the capacity and advancement of Acehese embroidery craft businesses. Nevertheless, there are also several businesses that have encountered difficulties in their development, and the pandemic has led to the closure of several others.

The Aceh embroidery craft business is a traditional enterprise that has been conducted for multiple generations. This craft business is intimately connected to the market, with the ultimate objective being the sale of the craft product in question. However, the market is dynamic, undergoing constant change due to product innovation. In this context, the ability to innovate and create products that align with market demands while maintaining the distinctive regional characteristics of Acehese embroidery motifs typical of the region is crucial. To achieve this, strategies must be developed to empower women entrepreneurs to effectively manage their businesses while also ensuring their continued success in building harmonious and dignified families.

It is imperative that the empowerment program facilitate an increase in the capacity of Acehese women engaged in the embroidery craft industry. This will ensure that Acehese women embroidery craft entrepreneurs are equipped with the necessary skills and resources to effectively manage their businesses. It is essential that embroidery craftspeople demonstrate high creativity in creating products that align with market demands while maintaining the distinct regional characteristics of Acehese embroidery motifs. However, many embroidery craftspeople have not yet achieved this level of creativity. Therefore, it is crucial to examine the most effective strategies for implementing women's empowerment programs for female embroidery craftspeople in North Aceh Regency.

The objective of this research is to develop an effective empowerment strategy for women Acehese embroidery craftsmen in North Aceh Regency.

## METHODS

This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach, with the objective of delineating and examining the most efficacious strategies to be implemented in the empowerment program activities for women embroidery craftsmen in Aceh through the creative economy. In this study, the researcher sought to provide a comprehensive description through data collection, which involved conducting in-depth interviews and studying the strategies implemented in the program to empower women embroidery craftsmen in Aceh through the creative economy program implemented by the Department of Trade, Industry, Cooperatives

and Small and Medium Enterprises of North Aceh Regency. Data analysis was conducted using the SWOT method.

The research was conducted in North Aceh Regency. The location was selected due to its status as a primary production center for Acehese embroidery crafts, a tradition that has been passed down through generations. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter, in-depth interviews were conducted at the Office of Trade, Industry, Cooperatives and Small and Medium Enterprises of North Aceh Regency. The interviews involved Acehese embroidery craftsmen who were beneficiaries of the creative economy program and implementers of the women's empowerment program.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

#### Aceh Embroidery Craft Business

The Acehese embroidery craft business is one of the embroidery craft businesses that has experienced significant growth over the past two decades. The business continues to demonstrate robust growth and development. This is due to the fact that the business has been managed by the same family for multiple generations. The embroidery craft business is experiencing a period of rapid growth, guided by the Department of Industry and Trade and the Lhokseumawe branch of the Bank Indonesia (BI) representative office through a cluster program in Ulee Madon Village, Muara Batu District, North Aceh Regency.

A total of 175 embroidery craft entrepreneurs are distributed across five sub-districts in North Aceh: Muara Batu, Dewantara, Sawang, Nisam, and Lhok Sukon. Muara Batu subdistrict boasts the highest concentration of embroidery craft entrepreneurs among the five subdistricts. The scale of business operations also varies considerably across the subdistricts, encompassing household businesses, small enterprises, and large-scale commercial ventures. Large-scale businesses are particularly prevalent in Muara Batu and Lhok Sukon districts.

Table 1. Data on product types and production of Aceh embroidery crafts in 2023

No	types of products	Production Quantity (Units)	
		2022	2023
1	Bag	1.270.000	1.540.000
2	Wallet	72.500	67.450
3	Cap	175.000	207.000
4	Prayer Clothes	420.000	485.000
5	Clothing Set	335.541	428.281
6	Prayer Mat	16.000	18.700
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2.289.041</b>	<b>2.746.431</b>

Source: North Aceh Industry and Trade Office (2023)

The products most commonly produced by women entrepreneurs are bags, wallets, Hajj caps, clothing, suitcases, and other similar items. The most commonly utilized Acehese embroidery motifs include cloud meu-arak, pucok reubong, pinto Aceh, rencong, and iku abo motifs. The combination of colors and motifs used is particularly aesthetically pleasing, contributing to the high demand and commercial success of the resulting products in local, national, and international markets.

### Discussion

#### 1. A Strategy for Empowering Women Embroidery Craftsmen in Aceh

In order to empower Acehese embroidery craftsmen in North Aceh Regency through the creative economy, it is necessary to provide support in the form of improving skills,

marketing access, capital assistance, and partnerships with various parties. An integrated approach between the government, the private sector, and local communities is essential for empowering women craftsmen to achieve economic independence and contribute to the preservation of Acehese culture through the art of embroidery.

The following is a SWOT matrix for the Empowerment Strategy for Women Embroidery Craftsmen in Aceh through Creative Economy Activities in North Aceh Regency:

<p><b>Strengths (S)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Distinctive and unique traditional skills.</li> <li>2. Potential for quality and unique products.</li> <li>3. Solid community of craftsmen.</li> <li>4. Support from the government and local institutions.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Weaknesses (W)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Restricted access to capital.</li> <li>2. Inadequate understanding of digital marketing.</li> <li>3. Obstacles to product innovation.</li> <li>4. Infrastructure constraints.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Opportunities (O)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. An increasing demand for creative products.</li> <li>2. The utilisation of social media and e-commerce.</li> <li>3. The provision of governmental assistance.</li> <li>4. The advancement of local tourism.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Threats (T)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. An increasing demand for creative products.</li> <li>2. The utilisation of social media and e-commerce.</li> <li>3. The provision of governmental assistance.</li> <li>4. The advancement of local tourism.</li> </ol>

**Strategi SO (Strengths - Opportunities)**

- **S1, S2, O1, O4:** The objective is to enhance the distinctiveness and excellence of Acehese embroidery as a distinctive offering to tourists and consumers who appreciate creative products.
- **S3, S4, O2, O3:** It is essential to optimize support from the craftsmen community and government in developing digital marketing and utilizing e-commerce platforms.

**Strategi WO (Weaknesses - Opportunities)**

- **W1, W2, O2, O3:** It would be beneficial to provide digital marketing training for craftsmen and to seek access to capital through creative economy programs.
- **W3, W4, O1, O4 :** Conduct product innovation training to ensure the continued relevance of Acehese embroidery in the market. In addition, support must be provided for product marketing infrastructure at local tourism locations.

**Strategi ST (Strengths - Threats)**

- **S1, S2, T1, T2:** The objective is to reinforce the identity of Aceh embroidery products and to underscore their superior quality and product uniqueness, thereby enhancing their competitive position in the market.

### **The Women's Empowerment Program**

#### **1. Program for Providing Capital Assistance and Micro Business Credit.**

The objective of this program is to facilitate access to capital and financial resources for artisans seeking to expand their business operations, despite encountering financial constraints. The program is designed to facilitate access to credit for embroidery craftsmen, offering more affordable terms and a low-interest system that is not onerous. In addition to providing capital, the program is designed to offer fundamental financial training with the objective of enhancing the business management competencies of craftspeople. It is anticipated that with sufficient capital, craftsmen will be able to increase production scale, product quality, and ultimately income, thereby supporting regional economic growth.

The women embroidery craftsmen in North Aceh possess distinctive traditional skills that could potentially serve as a catalyst for the growth of the creative economy in the region. However, many of them are constrained by limited capital, especially for procuring quality raw materials, modern production equipment, and marketing infrastructure. The aforementioned constraints on capital impede their ability to expand their business and reach a wider market. Consequently, a considerable number of artisans are compelled to operate their businesses on a modest scale, with meagre earnings, despite the considerable aesthetic and artistic merit of their products.

The lack of access to sources of financing, particularly for women engaged in microenterprise activities, represents a significant challenge. A substantial number of formal financial institutions have implemented requirements that are challenging for micro craftsmen to satisfy. The aforementioned requirements, including the necessity of collateral, the imposition of high interest rates, and the implementation of intricate administrative procedures, frequently render it challenging for these individuals to secure credit. Conversely, craftsmen lacking proficiency in financial management may be unable to optimally manage loans, thereby increasing the risk of encountering challenges in repayment.

#### **Program Goals:**

- a. The objective is to facilitate access to capital for women engaged in the craft of embroidery who are constrained by financial limitations, thereby enabling them to expand their business operations without encountering financial impediments.
- b. The objective is to assist craftsmen in enhancing both their production scale and product quality by facilitating access to sufficient and sustainable capital.
- c. The objective is to enhance the financial management competencies of craftsmen through the implementation of a fundamental business financial management training program.
- d. The objective is to facilitate women's empowerment in the creative economy sector in North Aceh Regency by providing access to a broader range of business opportunities.
- e. It has the potential to exert a beneficial and sustained influence on the regional economy and the well-being of women engaged in the craft of embroidery.

The objective of this program is to provide capital assistance and sustainable microbusiness credit for those engaged in the embroidery craft industry.

#### **2. Basic Financial and Business Management Training**

In order to guarantee the optimal deployment of capital, the program offers fundamental financial management instruction, encompassing transaction documentation, cash flow administration, and budgetary planning. The acquisition of enhanced financial competencies enables artisans to administer their enterprises in a more efficacious manner, to oversee the generation of profits, and to allocate funds for the repayment of debts.

Those engaged in craftsmanship who are in receipt of capital assistance will be supported by a team or volunteers whose role is to oversee business development. Such assistance encompasses the provision of counsel pertaining to matters of production, marketing, and rudimentary financial record-keeping. The objective of the assistance and monitoring is to guarantee that the credit is utilized in an optimal manner and that the business goals are accomplished.

Furthermore, the program conducts periodic assessments of the outcomes attained by participating craftsmen. The objective of this evaluation is to assess the efficacy of the program and identify potential challenges that craftsmen may encounter. The implementation of regular evaluation allows for the continuous improvement and development of the program, ensuring its alignment with the evolving needs of the participating craftsmen.

### Program Benefits

#### a. Increasing Production Scale and Product Quality

The injection of additional capital enables craftsmen to expand production by procuring superior raw materials or modernizing production equipment. The ability to produce goods on a larger scale allows artisans to fulfill a greater number of orders and reach a more diverse market.

#### b. Increasing Income and Economic Independence

It is anticipated that an expansion of production capacity will result in an increase in income for craftsmen, thereby facilitating their attainment of economic independence. An increase in income will enable craftsmen to enhance the economic standing of their families, particularly those who are the primary providers.

#### c. Financial Management Skills Development

Basic financial training provides an understanding of the importance of financial record-keeping and management for those engaged in craftsmanship. The acquisition of these skills enables the formulation of superior business plans and the effective management of business finances, thereby enhancing the sustainability of the enterprise.

In order to achieve women's empowerment in the creative economy sector, it is essential to implement a comprehensive and inclusive strategy that will enable Acehese women embroidery craftsmen to gain economic empowerment.

### CONCLUSION

In light of the aforementioned discussion, it can be posited that the empowerment of women engaged in the practice of embroidery in Aceh holds considerable promise for the advancement of local economic growth and the preservation of Aceh's traditional cultural heritage. The SWOT analysis identified several key strengths, including the unique and distinctive Acehese embroidery skills and the support provided by the government. Additionally, the analysis highlighted a number of promising opportunities, including the growing interest in creative products and the potential of e-commerce. However, there are also weaknesses in terms of access to capital, digital marketing expertise, and infrastructure limitations, which must be addressed so that businesses can develop optimally. Furthermore, the potential for external product competition and shifts in market trends necessitates the development of robust innovation and marketing strategies.

In order to optimize opportunities, it is recommended that training programs be implemented with the objective of enhancing the skills of craftsmen, that access to business

capital be increased through collaboration with local financial institutions, and that digitalization be marketed. Community-based empowerment and cooperative support can also assist craftsmen in overcoming capital and distribution constraints, as well as expanding their marketing networks. By optimizing strengths, overcoming weaknesses, exploiting opportunities, and managing threats, this empowerment strategy will enhance the economic independence of women embroidery craftsmen, expand business scale, and propel the creative economic sector that supports socio-economic development in North Aceh Regency.

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## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

1. The objective is to enhance the quality of the product. It is imperative to persist in the advancement of skills and innovation in the domain of embroidery design, with the objective of ensuring that the products exhibit robust characteristics and are of the highest quality. This development will enhance the product's appeal and facilitate entry into a more expansive market.
2. It is recommended that social media be employed as a marketing tool. It is recommended that social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp be employed for the purpose of product promotion. By sharing images of their products and the stories behind their embroidery, craftsmen can attract customers from diverse geographical locations, including international markets.
3. One may participate in business and financial management training. In order to achieve business success, it is essential that craftsmen participate in training programs that are specifically related to business management and financial recording. Effective management enables craftsmen to allocate capital more efficiently and to formulate long-term business development strategies.
4. Membership in a cooperative or craftsmen's community can facilitate access to raw materials at reduced costs and expand market networks. Additionally, cooperatives can serve as a platform for knowledge exchange, experience sharing, and obtaining support from governmental or private institutional entities.
5. It is recommended that collaboration with local tourism actors be undertaken. Collaboration with local tourism actors, such as tour agents or souvenir shops, represents an effective strategy for the promotion of Aceh embroidery products as distinctive souvenirs sought after by tourists.

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