Rural development in Papua: lesson learned from cocoa farming

M I Rahmanto1*, S A K Frank1, M Flassy1 and D A Romaropen2

1Cenderawasih University, Kamp Wolker St., Jayapura, Papua, Indonesia
2YPMD – IRJA/Kakao Kita, Jayapura, Papua, Indonesia

*ichsanrahmanto@gmail.com

Abstract. This paper convey a reflection on the economic activities of the chocolate farming community in Berab, Papua and its relationship with the international market, namely in Japan through the Kakao Kita business organization in Jayapura. The ethnographic methods was used to collect the data, in-depth interviews, participant observation, and visual ethnography are conducted during June 2020 – January 2021. The crucial finding from this research is that the trading systems that are built are both based on humanism and community principles. Both buyers from Japan and the farming community built social relations which then abandoned the impression that trade, especially on an international scale, was all about profit and loss. There is a positive intersubjectivity between the two of them, shown by a sense of togetherness in the importance of maintaining this relationship, as well as the relationship to nature shown by organic cocoa plantation management and transparent and humanist trading mechanisms. Furthermore, the challenge that arises and need to reflect on is whether a similar scheme model can be replicated to other communities in Papua. It is recommended to the Papuan local government to take a closer look at the policy implementation process, especially from special autonomy for the economic empowerment of local communities.

1. Introduction
There is no more relevant time to discuss community economics than right now. Apart from the pressure of the global economic downturn due to the pandemic, it is also because the community is the smallest unit in the circulation of commodities on various scales, both local and international. In common capitalist market chain, community seen as object even though they aren’t statistics presented as table and data. Often, this perception guides by frontier-ism which is way of seeing them as object in natural resources [1]. However, in this study we found a rather different approach used by Kakao Kita, a company born from community and social development project by YPMD IRJA (Yayasan Pengembangan Masyarakat Desa Irian Jaya). They use a ‘learning together’ (belajar bersama) and ‘people to people trade’ approach to maintain a humanist trade relationship in a sustainable way in both social and natural aspects.

Through this study, we found the benefits of this empowerment approach to cocoa farming communities in Berab, Papua. This study shows that the 'cultural approach', especially the analysis of habits, traditions, gender in economic empowerment is very effective and can be sustainable. The Berab people have known chocolate for a long time at least when the Dutch were still in Papua, but until the 2000s, the management of chocolate as an economic commodity had not been carried out properly. As a result, everything from agricultural techniques to marketing is done traditionally.
Traditionally in agricultural techniques from seeding to harvesting has proven to be good in an environmentally friendly way without the use of chemicals. However, traditional marketing does not support the community's economy, because farmers usually only pick and sell them on the roadside or in the form of raw fruit without being processed and sold directly to the market. As a result, farmers only get a little income. On the other hand, the existence of a patriarchal culture makes the majority of women work more in the garden and sales, but the income is in the hands of men. These challenges certainly cannot be overcome if we only view society as a single agency, on the contrary, through this study we found that the role of gender is very important.

How then, the community together with exporter and consumer market, maintain a sustainable trade relationship? This paper conveys a reflection based upon ethnographic research to understand community positioning in commodity circulation both local and global scale with the help of the exporter. Second, analysis on what makes it practically sustainable, context of why it’s important, the challenges and its future opportunities.

2. Materials and methods
This study used ethnography research both in data collection and in writing this paper. The methods are in-depth interviews, observation, and visual data collections: photographs and documentary film. The research for paper and film are conducted from June 2020 until January 2021. This study intends to follow the information flows using snowballing techniques which make this research spread from one location to another. We asked, listened, witnessed and participated with the participants (farmers in Genyem District, Kakao Kita staffs, and some experts in community local food in Jayapura) in discussion, or other activities. This gives us a rather rich and deep qualitative data. Visual ethnography is used to both documenting and narrating the stories in visual media also for visual literacy [2]. The documentary film was shared in various forum from university to community in village and city of Jayapura. ‘Confessional tales’ was used to write the report, that is presenting ethnography in narrative style where both ethnographers and participants are actively involved [3]. The purpose is to share the stories to large audience and readers so they can understand that in Papua there is a good quality of commodity which can be managed in a sustainable way. There are two variables that become the main concern of this research, the first is what changes arise from the community empowerment scheme. Second, how gender issues play a role in the empowerment process, this is specifically observing the culture in the fostered community which is culturally more patriarchal.

3. Results and discussion
The history of creating trade relations between cocoa farmers in Genyem and markets in Japan cannot be separated from the role of YPMD IRJA. The foundation, which was founded in 1984, has three main programs: community development, advocacy through studies and publications called news from the village, and capacity building for NGOs in Papua and Maluku. Especially in community development, the focus is the people's economy. In the Genyem District, the obstacle faced in the market chain is distribution, especially the availability of transportation modes. Then YPMD made a cooperation with the Japanese consulate in Makassar to overcome these problems.

Assistance in the form of trucks and tractors were then given, the trucks functioned for the mobility and distribution of residents’ commodities, which at that time generally consisted of vegetables and fruits. Although it sounds trivial, the existence of this truck opens opportunities for women to distribute their crops to various markets in the district and city of Jayapura and vice versa. On the other hand, tractors are used to clear land close to residential areas, this is because most farmers who work full time are women. The consideration of land clearing near settlements is based on observations of the workload and domestic activities of women who must take care of children, the family economy, and other domestic work. Although the assistance has been given and is running, there was a refusal from the men regarding access to these tools. In the Genyem farming community, the patriarchal culture is still strong, so gender issues, especially in economic access, need to be considered.
During discussions with community member in 2006, a tribal chief named Yotam Bairam asked YPMD, "apaakah YPMD bisa carikan pasar untuk cokelat di lembah Grime (Genyem) ini? (Can YPMD find a market for chocolate in this Grime (Genyem) valley?)". This was welcomed because there was already a relationship with the Japanese side and a report on community development activities was also submitted by YPMD in Japan represented by Deki Romaropen. In 2008, three representatives from business institutions, environmentalists and humanitarians from Japan visited Genyem to review the potential of chocolate and the condition of its community. They agreed to support the chocolate management process in Genyem. A proper management is needed for the chocolate to become an export commodity, so a CV is formed. Kakao Kita for export trade management and business administration in 2009.

In 2012 was the first time that exports to Japan were carried out after the change of trading institutions from CV to PT because it was hampered by government regulations where CV are prohibited to export. Exports are carried out by sending cocoa beans to Surabaya and Jember to be processed semi-finished or finished and then sent to Japan. This is a technical obstacle because there are no tools and human resources who understand the chocolate processing.

From the narrative above, several important lessons can be drawn which we will explain in the following points.

3.1. Establishing ‘people to people trade’
Trade relations between cocoa farmers in Genyem and markets in Japan is as they called it ‘people to people trade’. This concept carries the basic assumption in which chocolate is a unifying commodity between producers and consumers. This concept originated from the development of the concept of ‘learning together’ which was initiated by YPMD when implementing community development. Practically speaking, the concept of ‘people to people trade’ brings together buyers and producers in Kampung Berab, where farmers live. The aim is to understand the differences, situations, and conditions between the two. During the event, Japanese buyers and Genyem farmers discussed for several days of visits ranging from the technical management and production of chocolate, social life, and even personal matters.

“Dong (orang Jepang) datang sa senang. Tukar pikiran, curhat masalah kebun, keluarga, dong ada yang Mama – Mama (perempuan) jadi sama-sama tahu ternyata tidak jauh berbeda di Papua dan di Jepang (dalam mengurus rumah tangga)”. 

“I was happy when they – the Japanese came here. We exchanged ideas, sharing about farm, family, there were also female Japanese so we both surely understood each other that it was not much different in Papua and in Japan (in taking case of the household)”, said Mama Maria.

Every year Japanese buyers visit farmers’ villages with the exception during 2020 - 2021 because of the pandemic. In previous years, at least one visit was made annually. In addition to providing insight to both parties, this meeting also strengthened their intersubjectivity. The Japanese buyers appreciate the technique of organically managing chocolate without any chemicals involved, on the other hand, farmers also respect and maintain their responsibility to continue to well manage their nature. There were no findings about unfavorable practices from both parties because they knew and had developed a sense of trust and togetherness.
This kind of relationship can only be created because of transparency in business in mutual trust. The process of purchasing chocolate and its progress is carried out transparently and directly without any intermediaries. Every month Kakao Kita staff and representatives from Japan come to farmers to buy chocolate. Farmers can see directly how to determine the quality and quantity of chocolate. In addition, monthly reports are also sent to Japan which are also presented to the farming community. Came as no surprise, this relationship has lasted almost a decade to date.

3.2. Lesson learned: the importance of cultural and community principles

There are two important things that we all learn from Berab, firstly the importance of paying attention to the cultural and locality aspects of the applied community. Second, good management practices in social, economic, and ecological aspects.

Especially in Genyem and other areas in Papua where men dominate as a patriarchal culture, policies in community economic development must look at this gender issue equally. This is not only for mere equality but also affects the sustainability and success of the program. More sensitive observations in various socio-cultural spaces in society show the subordination of women [4].

The success in maintaining organic chocolate management techniques is also inseparable from the tradition of the Berab community where for generations chocolate is considered a useful and culturally meaningful plant.

“Dari dulu kita punya nene–tete ajarkan kalau tanam cokelat itu macam besarkan anak. Tidak boleh diberi obat yang keras, selama ini kita hanya pakai alami saja. Nene–tete dulu pakai...
“Our ancestors taught us that growing chocolate is like raising a child. Strong drugs should not be given, we have only used natural ones. Our ancestors used reeds, dried sago leaves and dried coconut leaves to repel pests, just burn them and then we take them around the garden,” said Pak Marthen.

Although this cultural identification sounds simple, it can support the natural sustainability aspect. And this can only be known by the process of research or careful observation. This change is inseparable from the balance between business and social management, so in Kakao Kita there are two divisions, namely the business division and social development. The business division takes care of the technical trade, while social development regularly looks at the social conditions of farmers related to plantations, and data on changes in household aggregates.

From this study of social development, new policies such as the creation of savings for farmers emerged. The reason for the emergence of savings from farmers is the result of an evaluation which in the early years showed that the income from cocoa was less significant to changes in the household economy. After investigation, it turned out that the money earned was mostly held by men, which was not used for reinvestment in the production process [5]. Around 2014, when this savings proposal was put forward in the deliberations, farmers, especially women, were very happy. Some of the money from the sale of chocolate they save for school children and other business capital.

Figure 3. Mama - mama lined up to deposit savings every month in the village.

“We moms are very happy with the savings agenda indeed we use some of it but there are some left. For children’s school and business capital, nowadays if there were no savings, it becomes very difficult,” said Mama Selvi.

The traditions of the Berab community and in general in various ethnic groups in Papua have been handed down from generation to generation to place the position of women as inferior to men [6]. Observations and interviews show that the role of work in women is very large for the survival of the Berab community’s household, but has limited access to economic outcomes [7]. This assessment is the basis for the application of empowerment which then seeks to be gender equal.

In addition to savings, Kakao Kita in collaboration with the coffee and chocolate study center in Jember (ICRI) introduced chocolate fermentation techniques to improve the quality. In the past, farmers
sold dry chocolate directly, it was worse before this program’s intervention, chocolate was directly sold in the form of raw fruit to markets or on the roadside. Presently, farmers have a good understanding of the fermentation process to produce high-quality chocolate.

3.3. Challenges and future opportunities

The trading practices applied by Kakao Kita with farmers in Berab are inseparable from challenges and opportunities in the future. Some of the challenges that exist include fluctuating cocoa prices in the international market, the lacked existence of government support in providing seeds and nursery facilities and plantation tools, as well as obstacles of climate change which directly affect the uncertainty of the harvest season and the quality of chocolate. Of the existing challenges, climate change has the most impact because the management of chocolate crops can no longer be predicted using the old, conventional method. Various parties in the chocolate trade are trying to find an adaptive way to overcome this case [8].

On the other hand, opportunities that can still be explored are the demand for chocolate in the Japanese market, which is still quite high, starting with the opening of local markets with the opening of cafes so that many farmers from other villages will also want to join. Finally, there is an opportunity to create agro-culture-based tourism as reflected in the experience of Japanese buyers visiting Berab Village as well as the landscape conditions that are potential as tourism sites. Despite tourism as most potential, the visitors were solely from Japan. There are no local visitors, even when we asked in the city of Jayapura only a few know that there is high quality original chocolate from Papua close to their surroundings. In fact, if attentions are given to the potential of tourism, this will be good for educational facilities for students and the public to observe sustainable business opportunities.

Lastly is the possibility to be replicated in other places and commodities. Papua has natural products, especially local food that is diverse and of good quality, but its management is still lacking. This should be a concern for the central and local governments as well as other parties. The government and particularly the regional leaders, need to develop policies or politically see the potential for local community development with assistance based on the principle of shared learning that prioritizes humanity and welfare for the people.

4. Conclusions

From this research, several things we can learn are first, trade of various scales can be applied while still prioritizing humanist and environmentally friendly relations. Second, this example from Berab shows that trade relations can be built with the concept of community, whether farmers in Berab or buyers from Japan to have a sense of togetherness. Third, related to the negative impression of trade, which for the time being is generally capitalistic and exploitative, each party involved in this trade scheme does show that there is a hope in the future for an economy that is environmentally friendly and not exploitative to nature [9]. Fourth, anthropologically this is an eye-opening finding for us as researchers that communities can be built not only because of a common identity, but in this case the community transcends the boundaries of ethnic identity, language, and even state. The community in this example is built because there is still a sense of humanity which is reflected in the corridor of togetherness.

Considering the effectiveness and good examples of the empowerment approach that has been described, the concern that we need to ponder and examine in the future is whether a similar approach can be replicated in other communities with the same or different commodities. This is important to do in the future, considering that Papua's local commodities are very diverse and possess great potential to be developed and certainly will benefit the applied community fairly. Based on this study, the recommendation that emerged to the government, especially Papua and especially the central government, was the need for attention to aspects of the local culture of the community [10]. This is due to the diversity of the diaspora in Papua, as well as the various ethnic groups that have different traditions, customs, and cultural structures. This cannot be done by relying solely on the intensity of socialization or conventional empowerment [11]. Furthermore, the meaning of special autonomy to strengthen the economy of local Papuan communities also needs to be expanded by looking at
opportunities from outside, for example by establishing cooperation with other parties outside Papua, even in the case of this study, with foreign countries. Meanwhile, the implementation of the special autonomy law specifically in economic empowerment has not been carried out widely to various Papuan communities [12,13] and ethnic groups. There are still many local superior commodities from various ethnic groups that are still 'second class' in market competition.

Acknowledgement
We thank the Department of Anthropology and the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Cenderawasih University, as well as Deki Romaropen, who despite his health condition, was willing to be involved in this research. Also, to farmers in Berab, Kakao Kita and Charles Toto–Papua Jungle Chef.

References
[1] Tsing A L 2003 Natural Resources and Capitalist Frontiers Econ. Polit. Wkly. 38 5100–6
[2] Pink S, Postill J, Leder Mackley K and Astari N 2019 Digital-visual stakeholder ethnography Sociol. Res. Online 22 174-92
[3] Gullion J S 2016 Writing Ethnography (Rotterdam: SensePublishers)
[4] Kadir H A and Mahadika G 2019 Economic practices of ‘mama-mama papua’ using shifting cultivation system: study case in Sorong and Maybrat Regencies - Western Papua J. Peremp. 24 299
[5] Palit M A P 2017 Status dan peran wanita tani etnik papua dalam pengambilan keputusan rumah tangga di Distrik Sentani Kabupaten Jayapura Provinsi Papua Sosio Inf. 3 257–72
[6] Holle Y 2020 Peran gender masyarakat papua dalam usahatani pangan J. Harkat Media Komun. Gend. 16 47–55
[7] Gateau-Rey L, Tanner E V J, Rapidel B, Marelli J-P and Royaert S 2018 Climate change could threaten cocoa production: effects of 2015-16 El Niño-related drought on cocoa agroforests in Bahia, Brazil PLoS One 13 e0200454
[8] Moriarty K, Elchinger M, Hill G and Katz J 2014 Cacao Intensification in Sulawesi: A Green Prosperity Model Project (Golden: National Renewable Energy Laboratory)
[10] Torobi K L 2014 Efektivitas pelaksanaan kebijakan otonomi khusus dalam rangka meningkatkan kesejahteraan masyarakat di Distrik Jayapura Utara Kota Jayapura J. Adm. Publik UNSRAT 2 63-74
[11] Ismail M 2015 Strategi pengembangan ekonomi rakyat di Provinsi Papua J. Bina Praja 7 251–9