

# Opportunities, Obstacles, and Solutions for *Kolosua* Craftswomen's Weaving Skills in Morobea Village, Konawe Kepulauan Regency

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## ABSTRACT

As one of villages in Konawe Kepulauan Regency, Morobea Village becomes a land where kolosua grass grows which is usually woven into mats by local community. Observations in 2010 found a female kolosua weaving craftswoman living in Tekonea Village; she had high skills at weaving various forms of craft objects. However, in 2023, she died and brought her skills with her with no craftswomen having similar level of skill. The study aimed to uncover and analyze female craftswomen who used kolosua as their raw weaving materials. The research method used ethnographical inquiry involving five ordinary informants and one key informant who were selected purposively. Data was collected by in-depth interview techniques, participant observation, and documentation and to check the validity of the information, triangulation techniques were employed; analysis was done by qualitative description. The results show that, in case of opportunities, the location where the kolosua grows is quite strategic and representative because the climate is not so dry and not so wet that the kolosua can grow well. In case of obstacles the community, especially the younger generation, are not interested and do not know the benefits of the kolosua clump. The solution is that there needs to be a policy

created by village government to determine a location for planting kolosua, providing counseling, training, and ongoing assistance so that the community, especially young women, are interested and willing to develop kolosua weaving skills into products that are economically valuable in national and global markets.

**Keywords:** women's skills, marketing of kolosua weaving, kolosua weavers

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has a variety of natural resources that can be used to meet human needs; however, the resources will only be able to provide utility value for the community if they are processed into various products. One of them is used as crafts to increase people's income.<sup>[1]</sup> Crafts can be part of the tourist's experience since they are produced by hand with raw materials from local resources, have cultural meaning, require high investment and bring high added value when compared to other industries. Meanwhile, crafts would refer to skills by hands rather than by machines and undergo a process of pure ideas and beauty so that a quality and artistic product are available.<sup>[2]</sup> Handicrafts often become the hallmark of a community because they are made from local materials and consist of expertise from previous generations. The cultural values contained in the crafts make them valuable

to their owners. Unique and aesthetic handicrafts have the potential to reach a wide-markets in domestic and international domains. The ability to penetrate a wide-markets can place handicrafts in global competition. Consider, for example, the hand-made batik from Java that received success worldwide. Success in global competition shows that the products have the best quality and, of course, can increase the selling value and profits. Thus, indirect action from craft entrepreneurs can increase the craft women's income.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Currently, in various regions in Indonesia, new products are available and utilize the regions' natural potentials to increase community income and to develop and make their respective regions independent.<sup>[3]</sup> Together with the primary agricultural sector, these natural products can be used as a source of income for the majority of the Indonesian population and reduce poverty. The role of natural products is not only seen from their resilience in facing the economic crisis but also has a strong relationship with other sectors. This relationship does not only depend on products, but also on other factors, namely the consumption, investment, and labor.<sup>[4]</sup> This has implications for the development of these products, job opportunities, and sources of income for the community, so farming households do not only depend on their livelihoods on an increasingly narrow plot of land, but are widely able to support productivity growth.<sup>[5]</sup> One of the natural products that can be processed into a source of income for the community comes from plant fiber.<sup>[6]</sup> In Konawe Kepulauan Regency (KKR), kolosua grass grows and is used for generations as a material for making mats by women in Morobe Village, Wawonii Tengah District. The kolosua mat craft produced from kolosua has a local wisdom that has been maintained because it is a source of income for residents and can also maintain the sustainability of the ecosystem. However,

the production of this mat is still limited in terms of quality and quantity. This business still relies on household businesses that are used by themselves as a sitting mat at home. The Ministry of Cooperatives and Small and Medium Enterprises of the Republic of Indonesia (2009) stated that to drive the development of craft businesses, the key to success mainly depends on two aspects. Firstly, systematic and sustainable efforts are needed with stages of selection, development, and exposure. The selection stage is to find potential business actors, carry out development, find development sources, and select potential products to be developed according to the target market with available resources. Finally, efforts are needed from related parties, both MSME business actors, including business support institutions such as financial institutions, academics as sources of innovation and progress, the government as regulators, facilitators, and the community as drivers, assessors, consumers of crafts and other creative products synergistically and sustainably. However, in order to develop, there are still obstacles, including a lack of knowledge and skills in producing quality and marketable products.<sup>[7]</sup>

The KKR Government, especially the Chairperson of the PKK (Pemberdayaan dan Kesejahteraan Keluarga or Family Empowerment and Welfare) Team for KKR provides training every year to craftswomen using kolosua. Training is provided to improve skills as well as empower the people's economy in order to increase the PAD (Pendapatan Asli Daerah or Locally-Generated Revenue) of the KKR Government, as well as opportunities for investors to invest their capital. The current problem is that the women's skills in weaving kolosua in Morobe Village are different from 2019 which was carried out by a grandmother living in Tekonea Village. She was able to make various forms of weaving according to the requested shape; unfortunately, she passed away in 2023. It is estimated that her skills in weaving various forms of these products can be inherited by

her descendants and neighbors. Therefore, this study tries to uncover the opportunities, obstacles and solutions of kolosa craftswomen in developing their products in order to increase the income and welfare of the craftswomen's families.

## MATERIALS & METHODS

This research was conducted using ethnographic methods. The informants were selected on the basis of purposive techniques. In this study, five regular informants and one key informant were chosen. Data collection was carried out using in-depth interview techniques, participant observation, and documentation. For the validity of the information, this study employed triangulation techniques.



(a)



(b)

Figure 1.a and b. The growth of green and old kolosua grass  
(Source: Personal document)

Kolosua grows wild and is not seasonal. It grows at any time so that the availability of materials for making woven crafts is always ready. This kolosua can be harvested when it is still green but it is better if it is old or dry. When harvested in green, it can be dried first before being used for weaving. According to several informants in Morobe

Village, there are actually several other locations where kolosua grows, but it is mostly available is Morobe Village. This is supported by the climate and flexible soil texture that is not too dry, sandy and has little water.<sup>[8]</sup> Figure 2 can be seen below where kolosua grass grows.



(a)



(b)

Figure 2.a and b. The locality of kolosua growth (Source: Personal document)

Because the kolosua grows in large colonies and its stems grow upright, it is not difficult for the community to harvest. They only need a machete to cut the base of the kolosua grass that is old or considered suitable for use for weaving.

The development of kolosua is not as complicated as other plants such as agricultural commodities because kolosua generally grows wild and is not affected by climate change, so land use would be more optimal. However, in the long term, kolosua need to be a specific policy in order the production of this natural resource has high economic value; the results of land suitability evaluation are appropriate and cultivated by the community and have sufficient infrastructure and institutional support. By compiling a land use plan for the development of kolosua as resources,

land damage can be avoided or minimized and a sustainable land use system can be formed.<sup>[9]</sup> This means that raw materials for kolosua grass crafts remain available, and the activities of Morobe villagers in weaving kolosua continue.

Kolosua mat weaving is one of the handicraft businesses that are quite potential for ethnic groups in Indonesia. The making is very simple by relying on hands and assisted by several traditional tools such as knives and machetes. The materials come from plants that grow around the residential environment of people in rural areas.<sup>[10]</sup> Residents who make mat crafts from kolosua usually work in groups, starting from harvesting, drying, cleaning fibers and weaving (Pay attention to Figure 3). Until now business groups have not been officially formed.



**Figure 3. Weaving activities by community**  
(Source: Personal document)

The weaving activities at first glance looks quite complicated because they require precision and neatness. However, because it is a habit, the complexity is not a problem (interview with Kartini as craftswoman). The kolosua mat weaving activities do not become a permanent job, because usually women do it when the harvest season has not arrived. As explained by Darman, a

resident of Morobe Village, women who do weaving activities are generally farmers, and do weaving work to utilize the time when the harvest season has not arrived. The farmers in question are plantation crop farmers such as cashew nuts, cloves, nutmeg, and coconuts. Firman, a resident of Morobe Village, further explained that it is a village located on the coast, but the

potential for agriculture is more fertile. About 90% of its population are farmers. However, the livelihood in the agricultural sector is only so-so, as well as the maritime sector and people who work as fishermen are only so-so. This means that agricultural and fishery products are sufficient for consumption and also sold outside the village of Morobea. Likewise, the results of the kolosua grass craft in the form of mats are used by themselves and sold to residents in other villages. The current production of kolosua grass crafts is different from previous years. Based on the results of an interview with the Head of Morobea Village as the Head of the Village PKK Team, it was stated that in 2019, there was a grandmother who was a kolosua weaver in Tekonea Village, who could weave various shapes of objects according to request. In 2023, she passed away. This condition

causes the results of the kolosua grass craft in the form of mats to be limited in terms of aesthetics so that they are less in demand by the market. The KKR Government has provided training to females about kolosua weaving crafts in Morobea Village every year. This apparently is still not enough to overcome the limited skills and knowledge of residents in weaving. In addition, the younger generation is also not interested in weaving work, because they are more interested in working or earning a living in the city.<sup>[11]</sup>

The mat crafts produced by female craftswomen in Morobea village are generally only rectangular in shape. Craftswomen are not yet able to make various shapes like other woven mat crafts that are already on the market (see the only one Kolosua mat motifs in Figure 4).



**Figure 4. Sample of mat made from kolosua grass  
(Source: Personal document)**

Motifs that do not contain aesthetic value are generally less attractive to consumers and cause the selling value of the grass mat craft product to be unable to compete with similar products. A strategy for developing woven crafts can increase competitiveness, including studying whether the products offered meet the product sales scheme or not, such as durability, motifs and utility.<sup>[12]</sup> Durability refers to how long the product is used; motifs refer to the existence of the product that can be seen; utility refers to the high utility value of the product. In addition

to product factors, labors and marketing factors need to be considered. The first factor, in this case the Morobea village community, have the ability to make woven crafts that have been obtained from generation to generation but the motifs are no longer used as a side job, from working as farmers and laborers. Skills in making woven products need to be improved through training, courses, further education provided by the government and the private sector in order to become skilled workers in weaving.

Finally, about the marketing factor, woven kolosua crafts are local crafts that can be developed to enter the global market; the raw materials that are processed can be made into high-value products. This kind of raw material is preferred by customers in developed countries because it is environmentally friendly. The opportunity to market woven kolosua crafts needs to be pursued to reach national and international markets. However, previously, sales of woven kolosua crafts were obtained from buyers who went directly to the craftsmen's place or traditional markets around Morobe village. Marketing needs to be done with promotions at the front stalls of the craftsmen's houses or group leaders, or through social media such as Instagram, Facebook and Youtube which are widely used by the younger generation. Digital marketing makes it easier for sales promotions to be wider and can increase consumer purchasing intentions.<sup>[13]</sup> The seriousness of the local government, both Morobe village and the KKR Government are needed in developing local crafts made from kolosua, by providing business capital facilities, product promotion and marketing through national and international events and exhibitions.<sup>[12]</sup> With this strategy, the development of the kolosua mat craft business to become a job opportunity, preserve cultural heritage, and increase the economy can be achieved immediately.

## CONCLUSION

The kolosua mat weaving as crafts in Morobe Village becomes one of the villagers' routines to earn extra incomes, although, actually, they work mainly as farmers and laborers. Local government policy has been made as efforts to encourage the sustainability of the production of kolosua mat weaving in Morobe Village; the policy gives permission for the expanse of kolosua plant savanna to grow well and provides opportunities to participate in exhibitions held by Government, so that kolosua mats are better known by outside communities.

The policy also provides training and courses to craftsmen to improve mat quality. Making handicrafts from kolosua with selling value requires skills, creativity, and precision; in addition, paying attention to good design, materials, and manufacturing processes should be a must. Likewise, effective marketing and good handling can make handicrafts a successful business and earn a satisfactory income for local PAD.

## Declaration by Authors

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