



Rational Choices of Labor Workers in Increasing Family Income in Indonesia Forest Fringe Communities

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the Rational Choices of Labor Workers in increasing family income in forest fringe communities. The method used is qualitative descriptive with an ethnographic approach; informants consist of laborers and landowners. Data collection techniques are carried out by participant observation, interviews, and documentation; data analysis is carried out by Interactive analysis, namely with three flow processes: data reduction, data presentation, and data verification. The study results show that labor is the main job for people who do not have land; the selection of work as a laborer is motivated by economic factors, and they do not have land to cultivate themselves. The income obtained by workers is only enough for daily food, so this work greatly supports the survival of people who work as laborers to meet their daily needs, only relying on daily work with wages of Rp.50,000 to Rp.80,000. Women have a dual role in helping the family economy. Women work as laborers to help meet the daily needs of the family. Labor efforts increase income by working in two places, thus increasing family income.

1. INTRODUCTION

Rejang Lebong is a district with basic income from the agricultural and plantation sectors, especially vegetable and fruit farming such as oranges, and papayas. The significant increase in demand for vegetables and fruits is due to rapid population growth and the development of agricultural industries in many provinces (Khesro et al., 2022). The agricultural sector is one of the important production sectors of any country's economy (Habeeb et al., 2022). The Rejang ethnic community owns agricultural land that is managed by itself or managed by others

Agricultural and plantation sector jobs absorb the most Labor in the District. Employment consists of activities as farmers, planters, and as freelance laborers in the agricultural and plantation sectors. People also farm rice and have jobs outside of agriculture (Ramdayal et al., 2021). The main one is the differentiation of farmers' income, which is seen from the increasing diversity of income sources (including agricultural plantations and non-agricultural employment) (Jiang et al., 2021). The skill that must be learned and applied in work is to utilize social contacts because it effectively helps get a job (Merkel, 2019). Workers can utilize non-agricultural work through investment in small-scale enterprises, and the existence of flexible agricultural loans to workers can increase workers' capacity to intensify agriculture and reduce total dependence on agriculture and plantations (Acheampong et al., 2021). Landowners provide additional work to workers and demand higher standards, as well as adjust the salaries earned by workers (Kumpf, 2020).

Labor work in this sector includes land preparation, seeding, planting, and plant care such as; grazing, fertilizing, spraying, and harvesting. The land cultivated or utilized for the agricultural sector covers an area of 26,456 Ha, and the plantation sector covers an area of 44,226 Ha. From this land area, many absorb labor, one of which is labor. Owners of farms and plantations often also employ laborers, primarily for harvesting but also for general maintenance tasks (Curry et al., 2015). In the process of preparing land, labor, machinery, and diesel fuel are needed as supporting components (Tang et al., 2022). The harvesting system applied is that as a whole workers harvest together according to the land area (Miyajima et al., 2021). Labor in progress sowing, plowing, and harvesting are paid by landowners with payment agreements (Jiang et al., 2021). Workers are paid starting from Rp 50,000. Up to Rp.80,000. and paid

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according to attendance according to the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) quoted from databoks.com, reported an average nominal wage of farmworkers of Rp.59,226 per day in December 2022. Harvesting will be carried out in the morning or evening and carried out manually using equipment adapted to the place of work and put in bags carried by workers (Mustafah et al., 2020).

Labor welfare is still low because the wages received by workers have not been able to meet their daily needs, such as research from (Juanda et al., 2019) explains that tanti workers try to reduce family fulfillment costs because the wages of being farm laborers are not enough to cover the cost of meeting household needs. Similar to the results of research (Andwitasari et al., 2022) which explains that farmworkers in Jatinoro are classified as people who live in poverty, the wages received by farmworkers are still minimal and not enough to meet their daily needs. Workers are paid according to attendance at work; There is a difference between the wages of workers and ordinary laborers, so people who become laborers are still looking for side jobs to increase income. Another study was also conducted by (Putri et al., 2021) in Solok, West Sumatra, the results of the study found that Livelihood as a farmer for people living in villages by cultivating land to plant and maintain crops to obtain results from these crops for their use or sale to others. Similarly, in Jorong Galagah, Nagari, Alahan Panjang, Lembah Gumanti District, and Solok Regency, in general, people make a living as onion farmers and make a high contribution to economic development. But not every agricultural process carried out gives satisfactory results, and often farmers experience failure during the harvest period.

Research (Kalsum, 2021) found that in fishing communities it shows that people take attitudes due to insufficient economic factors, activities carried out are improving fishing gear and gardening, and some others choose to find other jobs, some even just gather with family and also highlight the role of wives helping husbands make a living, for example by utilizing the tides to find sea cucumbers and shellfish, make cakes and yellow rice. This is not from the husband's coercion. Because of the insistence from the wife herself to help add to the family economy. Research on freelance workers or workers in the agricultural sector has been done before, including; Research conducted by Afriyame Manalu et al entitled Factors affecting women working as freelance laborers (BHL) at PT inti indosawit subur, Muara Bulian, Mario Sebo Ilir District, Batang Hari Regency. The results of this study show that the Economic Factors that cause women to want to work are as follows: (1) The husband's income level is relatively low. 2) Help the family economy. 3) The number of dependents in the family. 4) Diversity of women's needs. The sociocultural factors that encourage women to work are as follows: 1) Social status. 2) Compete and develop yourself. 3) Certain interests and abilities. 4) Fill free time (Manalu et al., 2014). Another research was conducted by Haidi Decision Support System for Selection of Freelance Workers to Permanent Employees Using Profile Matching Method. The results of the study are known: (1) By using a decision support system, is expected to facilitate the performance of users or leaders in the decision-making process. (2) In the selection of casual workers to become permanent employees, the profile matching method is used. (3) The report made is an explanation of the existing system, so that the output produced is by the procedures applicable to PT. Nafsindo (Haidi, 2020).

Research has also been conducted by Ringgo Arman, et al with the title Grapevine of household life of former freelance oil palm plantation workers in Sei Mangkei Village. The results of the study from the index calculation results obtained that the results of the household food security index were 0.35. That means BHL household survival is low when there is a change in the landscape while competing (Arman et al., 2017). The next research was conducted by Indah Fatmawati, et al with the title The Effect of Mentoring Freelance Daily Working Mothers on the Academic Stress Level of Online Learning for Elementary School Students. Research results The results of the data analysis obtained a coefficient of determination value of -0.647 which showed that the assistance of freelance daily working mothers hurt the level of academic stress and the R square value of 0.418 which showed the contribution of maternal assistance had a significant effect of 41.8% on the academic stress level of online learning of elementary school students (Fatmawati et al., 2021). So mothers need to accompany their children in online learning. For BK teachers and homeroom teachers, they provide stress management skills that are appropriate to the stage of development of school students.

Unlike previous studies, this study focuses on the rational choices of labor workers in increasing family income in communities on the Forest Fringe of Rejang Lebong Regency in Indonesia. Research like this has never been done on a labor wage system focused on communities on the edge of the forest. Based on the data and studies above, this research is felt to be necessary to improve the welfare conditions of workers in rural areas. Based on these facts, this study aims to describe the rational choices of labor workers in increasing income in forest fringe communities, the focus studied is related to the selection of agricultural workers' jobs because there is no self-managed land, then look at the role of women in helping the family economy, as well as the efforts made by labor workers in increasing family income.

This study provides a different perspective from some previous studies that have been described, this study looks at the choice of people to become labor workers, the role of women cannot be separated in a family, and the efforts made by workers in increasing income, the results of the study can be used as a reference related to the rational choice of workers in the development of the agricultural sector, and become the basis for the government in developing distributable assistance programs For the welfare of workers.

2. METHOD

This research was conducted in Rejang Lebong Regency, Bengkulu Province in 2022. This research uses qualitative methods with an ethnographic approach, and this approach is considered appropriate as one of the methods in anthropological research to explore the traditions of people related to socio-culture that are still alive for generations. Research informants are determined by purposive sampling consisting of; Village heads, community members who work as laborers in plantations and fields, and plantation and farm owners who employ laborers.

Workers in this study are workers who work according to the request of land owners, some workers own land, and also who do not have land, while the object of this study is the selection of labor jobs, the role of women in helping the family economy and the efforts of labor workers in increasing income, so the researcher focuses on male and female workers. Researchers do not exclude the level of education.

The data collection process involved 3 local enumerators who were willing to help translate the language of labor workers into Indonesian because informants came from the Rejang tribe and some were not very fluent in Indonesian, so they were able to maintain comfort communicating with informants. Data collection techniques used to collect field data are: (1) Participant observation, by being directly involved in work activities as laborers in plantations and agriculture. Observations are made to see directly and feel working as a laborer so that it is expected in addition to knowing the responsibilities of work as a laborer, workload, work productivity, utilization of working time to the process of providing work wages (2) In-depth interviews examine aspects of labor job selection, the role of women in the family economy and efforts to increase income. (3) documentation, collecting secondary data related to the employment and wage system and the rationality of labor in plantations and agriculture.

This qualitative analysis process is an analysis model that is not one by one but integrative; For example, collecting data first then analyzing and presenting the data collection, then the data is reduced to be presented in conclusions, but the conclusions are checked back to the original data so that it will not be wrong in concluding something. This analysis mechanism is comparative and aims to formulate the concept of rational action of workers in plantations and livestock on the outskirts of the Rejang Lebong Regency Forest.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research was conducted in two sub-districts, namely Bermani Ulu District and Bermani Ulu Raya District, Rejang Lebong Regency. Geographically, the two sub-districts are bordered by the Bukit Barisan Protection Forest. From these two sub-districts 28 research informants were taken from 9 villages. With the number of informants as many as 28 people, the data needed to answer the problem formulation and research objectives.

The data in Table 1 shows a total of 28 research informants, consisting of 19 informants as farm laborers. The informants also consisted of 2 village heads, 5 plantation/agricultural land owners, and 2 cultivators who also worked as farm laborers. The data in the table above can also be seen by informants based on the known residence of 7 villages in two sub-districts, namely Bermani Ulu District and Bermani Ulu Raya District. Usually, work as a laborer is carried out by the community only during free time after the work on their land has been completed or there are work opportunities offered by neighbors or relatives. Some work as laborers in basic jobs. Generally, those who make work a basic occupation are people who do not own land or young couples who prefer to work as laborers because they immediately get wages and can be used to meet needs.

Informant education ranges from not going to school to high school equivalent. Only one informant could not read Latin but could read Arabic. The rest of the research informants can read and understand the whole language, and communicate with rejang and Indonesian. Data collection was carried out using Bengkulu rejang, Indonesian, and Rejang Language which are the languages of most research informants.

Table 1. Research Informant Profile

No	Name	Gender		Daily Wage (000)	Education	Work	Desa
		M	F				
1	M.Ali	✓	-	70	Primary school	Laborer	Taba Tn Luar
2	Piyek		✓	50	High School	Farming	Taba Tn Luar
3	Usman	✓	-	-	High School	Laborer	TabaTn Luar
4	Siti		✓	50	Junior high school	Laborer	Taba Tn Luar
5	Parida		✓	45/50	Junior high school	Laborer	Taba Tn Luar
6	Yoyon	✓		-	High School	Landowners	Taba Tn Luar
7	Ernawati		✓	50	Primary school	Laborer	Kampung Sajad
8	Arnaini		✓	50	Junior high school	Farming	Kampung Sajad
9	Nanda		✓	50	High School	Farming	Kampung Sajad
10	Tari		✓	50	Junior high school	Laborer	Kampung Sajad
11	Fahrizal	✓		-	High School	Village head	Tb Tn Luar
12	Pris		✓	-	High School	Village head	Pal 8
13	Kamsiah		✓	-	Primary school	Landowners	Pal 8
14	Agus	✓		-	High School	landowners	Pal 8
15	Sauni		✓	50	Primary school	Farming	Pal 8
16	Asep	✓		60	High School	Laborer	Pal 8
17	Nur Sinta		✓	50	Junior high school	Laborer	Air Mundu
18	Marlin		✓	75	Primary school	Farming	BaruManis
19	Mijan	✓		70	Primary school	Laborer	Air Mundu
20	Sulimin	✓		60	Not in school	Laborer	Air Mundu
21	Yulis gio	✓		70	High School	Laborer	Kp melayu
22	Rinawati		✓	50	High School	Laborer	Air mundu
23	Gianto	✓		70	Primary school	Laborer	Tb Tn Luar
24	Aito	✓		60	High School	Farming	Pal 9
25	Ichi	✓		70	Not in school	Farming	Talang Gambir
26	Sri wanti		✓	45	Not in school	Laborer	Pagar gunung
27	siska		✓	45	Primary school	Laborer	Pagar gunung
28	Titin		✓	-	High School	Laborer	Pagar Gunung

Selection of Labor work as the main job

Informants recognize work as a laborer to be the main work done by the community when there are job opportunities offered by neighbors or relatives. People who do not have land or young couples, prefer to work as laborers because they immediately get wages that can be used to meet their daily needs. Labor is the most decent and readily available job in rural areas because most of the population lives in agriculture and plantations. Labor such as laborers also come from underemployed youth in the community and 'outsider' migrants who still live in the area (Curry et al., 2015).

The economic background requires the community to increase the number of their livelihoods, labor work is done to meet the needs of informant families who do not own land and have narrow land, and labor work is basic work. Informant Tari (27 years old) stated that the reason for working as a laborer was because there was no other job, no garden, and almost every day worked in other people's gardens. Sometimes in the family garden, but sometimes also in someone else's garden. Like now, working in people's gardens even outside the village. The proceeds of labor/wages are used to buy family needs; The same husband also worked as a laborer but built a job, from the results of labor as a laborer enough to provide for the family. People worked as laborers because they did not have their land and plantations. To meet the needs of the family, the job that may be done in the village is as a laborer.

Farmers who work as laborers, use the results/wages of their work to increase family expenses or sometimes used to buy fertilizers, or poison pests of their plantation crops. This was stated by Arnaini who worked only a few days, and took work in people's gardens because our gardens were all settled, they were clean. Instead of having no work at home, I work in people's gardens. A month is at most about four or five days. The wage money is usually used to buy basic food at stalls, or sometimes the money is used to buy grass poison or fertilizer. Low educational background and skills are social factors that are one of the reasons people choose to work as laborers, this job does not require special skills so it can be done by every community. Most of the informants had an educational background from elementary to high school.

Landowners usually seek directly people who are used to working as laborers in their villages or in villages where plantations or farms are located. Not all landowners have ever landed in their villages, but it is troublesome to have them in other villages even in other sub-districts. Workers are usually partly taken from the village where the land is located and partly from the village where the landowner is domiciled, and also usually from relatives of the landowner who need work. Most of the informants worked as laborers to provide clothing, food, and food for their families. This means the income is used to meet the primary needs of the family. Generally, workers who reason like this are workers who are less than 40 years old. Some informants had motherlands that were not very large and could not yet buy new land as a location for plantations or farms. Others do not have their plantations or farms as a source of family income.

The choice of employment as a laborer in plantations and agriculture is the most decent job for people in rural areas. In line with the sociological theory of rational choice, job attributes vary depending on individual characteristics, situation-specific requirements, and labor market opportunities (Möser et al., 2019). Landowners hire workers according to their needs, sometimes landowners also feel sympathy because there are people who have less economic conditions, so landowners have a wise nature in hiring workers in line with the theory of rational choice, trying to explain the behavior of people who behave wisely and want to maximize profits (Askari et al., 2019). Rural communities who do not own or who have little land as the main source of family income will seek additional by becoming laborers. The lack of availability of one's land for work and little and insufficient income to provide for the family requires the people of this group to strive to increase income to meet the basic needs of their families. In line with a rational choice theory which explains the behavior of actors using economic "cost-benefit" analysis broadly, landowners also take into account the costs incurred in the provision of salaries so that sometimes workers are given an overpay because if the benefits outweigh the costs, violations will be (Barlow et al., 2021).

The rational choice theory proposes that individuals behave in a rational economic sense to achieve goals or to maximize or optimize the desires of workers who act rationally to maximize their lifetime income (Shortland, 2021). The rational choice theory proposes that individuals behave in a rational economic sense to achieve goals or to maximize or optimize the desires of workers who act rationally to maximize their lifetime income. The living income for workers is different from that for workers; Workers often fall into poverty both conceptually and methodologically. (van de Ven et al., 2021). Workers need to be given extension programs so that they can provide knowledge aimed at increasing technical efficiency in work and also to increase production and supporting farmers' incomes (Higuchi et al., 2023). WHO suggests that the agricultural sector has a more significant impact compared to manufacturing so that the agricultural sector can reduce income inequality in developing countries (Raeskyesa, 2020).

The Role of Women in Helping the Family Economy

Economic background is one of the factors women have to become laborers, with increasing demands for household needs such as school fees, and daily necessities. In a family, women have an important role in helping the head of the family earn a living, in a pioneering family, husband, and wife have the same role to improve each other's family economy, and labor work is used as a basic job or side job, not only done by the head of the family but also carried out by housewives on their initiative, not at the behest or coercion of the husband or other family members. Women were considered an important part of trade and agriculture so women took on roles both as laborers and working in industry (Solina, 2020). The family works together to earn income to support daily needs. The background of women's involvement must come to work because the husband's income is still unable to meet household needs.

Siti's informant said that she worked to increase family income, because if she only relied on her husband's salary, it was still less for daily needs, even though the salary earned by women was less still to be grateful, in addition to working as a laborer, Siti's informant also took care of the house, children like housewives. Research conducted by (Kusrini & Suryani, 2022) explains that the role of women workers in Gemiring Kidull Village is quite large to increase family income, the impact of housewives who work as laborers is to get income used to meet household needs, improve the economy, and be able to finance children's education.

(Widnyani & Suwena, 2021) in her research revealed that women who work as casual laborers first prioritize their role as housewives and continue their role in the public sector as informal workers after completing their household affairs so that women have multiple roles in the household. In line with research by (Andayani et al., 2022) which explains that the impact of women's dual roles as agricultural workers on the family has a major impact on meeting daily needs, such as food needs, education costs, and other household needs. Despite having multiple roles, women still do a good job, in the process of work, women are faster and tidier at work while men rest and smoke more. The results of observations on grazing work on coffee plantations can be seen, and women workers make better use of working time; Generally, female workers rarely work, although chatting with their co-workers is always done while working. Women's labor

force is stronger in agricultural production than men, so the result of increased production can be the result of women's preferences (Yu et al., 2020). Meanwhile, male workers are seen chatting and smoking but have greater power than women, so male workers become the main promoters in increasing agricultural land area in the process of land clearing, and female workers from agriculture participate in decision-making around agricultural production and agricultural land transfer (Yu et al., 2020). Regarding workers' income, Siska stated that workers' wages between men and women are not the same in every village. The wages for men are higher, women's wages are only Rp. 50,000, some even Rp. 45,000 per day.

Another factor that is the background of women working as laborers is education and skills, informants only go to school from elementary to high school, so the possible job is as a laborer because other jobs require skills and expertise, Chayal et al 2013 research revealed that low levels of education, family income, and skills are one of the factors that influence women's decisions in choosing jobs as an agricultural laborer. This finding is in line with Sri Kurniawati's research which revealed that for Madurean women, low socioeconomic status and low education do not discourage them from working, because everyone has the same right to meet their needs by working and setting an example for their children (Kurniawati et al., 2021).

Women are able to do work to generate additional family income, although the energy possessed is not as strong as men but the enthusiasm to help the family economy is very high, women with multiple roles are not an obstacle and problem, precisely with these dual roles, women are able to help increase family income and meet daily needs and can improve family welfare. In line with Bawon Riski's research which explains that there is a change in the role of women in the agricultural sector, where women work on all roles in the agricultural sector, this role change can improve family welfare (Amalia et al., 2022). Another opinion of wardihan sabar's research is that the role of women is very significant in maintaining household economic resilience, urgent basic needs can be met even though most of them are at the minimum fulfillment level, but women farmworkers in managing and allocating income can have a positive impact on aspects of family economic resilience (Sabar et al., 2023).

Efforts of Labor Workers in Increasing Family Income

Labor workers often get insufficient crops, this type of harvest is due to limited land, so the harvest is not enough to meet the needs of the family until the next harvest season. In addition, due to the quantity and quality of crops or business production that is not optimal or not by what is expected, often called crop failure. Another factor is the problem of market prices of agricultural and plantation products. At the research site, there are often problems, such as the price of agricultural production during harvest becomes very low, especially in the price of agricultural production of vegetables, mustard types, tomatoes, pumpkins, chili, and so on. Food produced on farms and consumed by households represents the monetary value of agricultural produce worked by laborers and wages for production costs. (van de Ven et al., 2021).

The working time of laborers in plantations and farms ranges from eight (8) hours a day, from 08.00 to 16.00 WIB, including meal breaks. Laborers work according to the direction of the landowner. Not all landowners provided lunch for laborers working on their land. Most workers bring food and drinking water from home for lunch, but some landowners always provide lunch for laborers working on their plantations and farms, even if they are rough, such as rice, chili sauce, salted fish, and vegetables. Feeding was known to not affect the wages given to laborers, but no greater wages were given by landowners even though working laborers were given lunch.

The most common wage for any type of work is to pay a calculated amount of money per working day. The amount of wages given ranges from Rp. 45.000,- to Rp. 50.000,- per day for female workers, Rp. 60.000,- to Rp. 70.000,-/day for male workers. Differences in use also occur in the type of work performed. Salary is more significant for heavier types of work, such as clearing land, logging, and grazing land that is already too dirty. For grazing work alone, there is a difference in wages if the grass on the land is still small, with the cleared grass becoming dense, thick, and long. It was mentioned by worker Yulis Gio (29 years old) that working as a laborer sometimes does not use the promise of wages per day because both those who work and those who own land already know the wage range in this area. The wages of workers in our area range from Rp60,000 to Rp70,000 per day for male workers, while female workers range from Rp45,000 to Rp50,000 per day. For heavy work, usually Rp. 70.000,- for heavy work such as cutting, mowing (opening new land), and grazing on land with thick grass.

Income from one's farm or working on someone else's land is often not enough to meet the family's daily needs; This condition requires farmers to look for other jobs, and insufficient amounts of agricultural products can be caused by land that is not too large, natural conditions that cause production is not optimal, low prices of agricultural products at the time of the harvest and others. Insufficient quantity of agricultural products can be caused by land that is not too large, natural conditions that cause production to be not optimal, low prices of agricultural products at the time of harvest, and others. Although the results of

working as laborers are only enough to eat, as people on the edge of the forest, they are still able to meet the needs of life for survival. This condition is the main problem that farmers must face and face rationally in terms of economic benefits (Li et al., 2020). Workers, in addition to earning income, also look for food sources such as utilizing natural products to meet daily needs, fishing, and harvesting vegetables. Despite its challenges, the liberal world order has survived and flourished (Karim, 2017). Workers in the future can have a better life if they have the means and freedom of mobility so that workers' abilities and skills can develop (Xu & Islam, 2019).

The efforts of labor workers to earn additional income are by working in other places, in a day workers can work in two different places, informant Asep said that as laborers, work is done not only in one place but often in two different places, in this way, workers can earn additional income, other informants say additional work in the form of selling crops, as a builder, and an income-generating job. Workers who do more than one job can meet their daily needs compared to those with only one job, besides if farm workers are assisted by wives, income increases in line with research by Amalia revealed that increasing family income will indirectly improve the family economy (Amalia et al., 2022).

Another effort made by workers is to raise livestock, such as chickens, cows, and goats in this way when the demand for work is quiet, they can sell this livestock in line with research conducted (Anas & Rosyid, 2021) in Lamongan Regency found the results of research that the way farmers work for the needs of life which are done during the low season is to raise cows (private cows and neighboring cows), help neighbors (other farmers), and also migrate to the city.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the results of the research and discussion above, workers doing work as laborers have the aim of obtaining income to meet daily needs, agricultural workers have considered work experience, self-capacity, job opportunities, and income to choose appropriate jobs and can immediately obtain results to meet family needs. The difference in income between men and women, where women earn lower wages than men, does not cause a sense of coercion felt by farmers both from spouses and other family members, the role of women becomes a dual role in a family to increase income and meet family needs that are not met by men, with the involvement of women as laborers. The family's economic condition is more prosperous. The efforts of labor workers in increasing family income by doing more than one job, so that the income obtained can meet daily needs and improve the welfare of workers' lives.

Based on this, it can be concluded that the choice of work as a laborer in plantations and farms carried out by freelance workers at the research location is an act of rational choice. Theoretically, the results of this research are expected to be input in the scientific development and practice of social work, especially the setting of Social Workers for Community Development. This research contributes to the development of policies related to the development of community welfare, especially the Rejang Ethnic community on the outskirts of the Rejang Lebong Regency Forest.

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