

KEEPING TRADITION, CULTURE, AND COMMUNITY THROUGH SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A CASE OF LAMERENAN

Agnes Harnadi^{1*}; Rosdiana Sijabat²; Pristiana Widyastuti³; Yerik Afrianto Singgalen⁴

^{1,4}Tourism Department, Atma Jaya Catholic University of Indonesia

^{2,3}Business Administration Department, Atma Jaya Catholic University of Indonesia

Jl. Jend. Sudirman No.51, Karet Semanggi, Setiabudi, South Jakarta 12930, Indonesia

¹agnes.harnadi@atmajaya.ac.id; ²rosdiana.sijabat@atmajaya.ac.id; ³pristiana.widyastuti@atmajaya.ac.id;

⁴Yerik.Afrianto@atmajaya.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

The research discussed social entrepreneurship that aimed to create social impacts. These impacts could be not only economic, yet cultural. Lamerenan was a social enterprise focused on Tanimbar's tenun cloth (handwoven fabric) through community empowerment. This foundation was chosen because it encouraged the local community to preserve tradition and culture by persuading them to use traditional methods to produce the cloth. Although this foundation was categorized as a micro-small-medium enterprise (MSME) with age less than ten years old, Lamerenan had a mission to restore the quality of Tanimbar's tenun cloth, by keeping the tradition using traditional weaving loom, which was called "Tenun Gedog Loom" or "Gedogan" and natural dyes. The research utilized the qualitative method. An in-depth interview was conducted with the founder of Lamerenan, Hiyashinta Klise, on December 2021 via Zoom meeting. Secondary data about Lamerenan and Tanimbar's tenun cloth was collected from online news and Lamerenan's social media (Instagram). The research finds how Lamerenan keeps the Tanimbar's weaving tradition, culture, and women weaver community through social entrepreneurship. Furthermore, how the community returns to the traditional way, using natural dyes in producing the cloth. The result of the research is expected to bring insight into local traditions and culture that can be useful in developing empowerment in the local community.

Keywords: social entrepreneurship, Tanimbar Islands, weaving community, tenun cloth, Lamerenan

INTRODUCTION

Many scholars define social entrepreneurship by stressing the combination of two activities: entrepreneurial activities and a social mission (Saebi, Foss, & Linder, 2019). Social entrepreneurs do not always desire to focus on themselves to gain profit; however, they strive to solve social problems in their surroundings and to create social value (Utomo et al., 2019).

Social entrepreneurship is the process of running a business and creating innovation opportunities that aim to make a social change (Chandra & Shang, 2021). Social entrepreneurs should have a mission to

create social value. They are able to identify business opportunities to accomplish their mission, do some innovative actions, and have a sense of responsibility for socially excluded groups. Social entrepreneurs should also have a social commitment to the community they deal with (García-Jurado, Pérez-Barea, & Nova, 2021). Therefore, social entrepreneurship is a combination of product and process innovation, business practices, and empowerment aspects. Social entrepreneurship interventions can be a range of activities, processes, procedures, and any other actions entrepreneurs adopt to solve social problems (Chandra & Shang, 2021).

Based on Figure 1, the behaviors and attitudes of social entrepreneurs have to involve the dimension of

entrepreneurially virtuous. Not only the universal ones such as compassion or honesty, yet they must include the specific virtues related to the social entrepreneurial context, like innovative attitudes to a social problem. Furthermore, they are expected to show their ability to form balanced judgments. All the stakeholders should be positioned equally to understand and maximize the return of social value while at the same time developing income-generating capacity that leads to making a superior social value. Social opportunity recognition as the third dimension allows social entrepreneurs to seek market opportunities to create better social value for their partners. Finally, tolerance for risk, proactiveness, and innovativeness should be premised in the decision-making process (Mort, Weerawardena, & Carnegie, 2003)

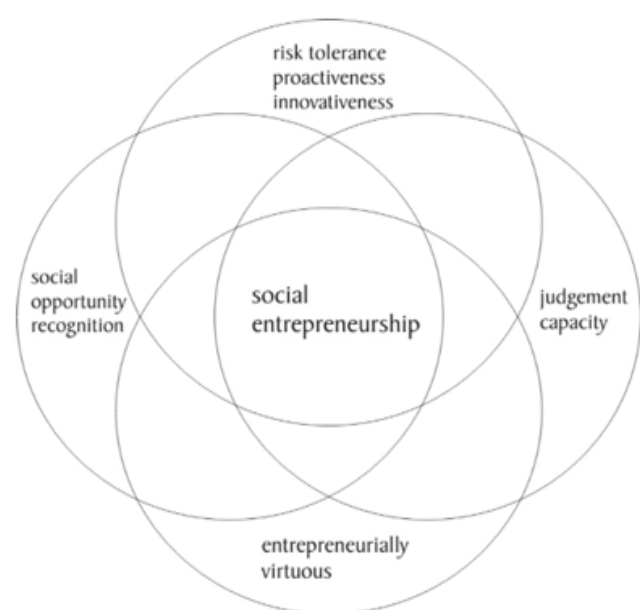


Figure 1 Multidimensional Social Entrepreneurship Construct (Mort, Weerawardena, & Carnegie, 2003)

Lamerenan is a community-based social enterprise in Jakarta (CMSE) founded in 2014. According to British Council (2020), CMSE is a social enterprise that strives to solve problems in their community and focus on improving local resource allocation to benefit the community, where the resources belong to the community, which adopts village-owned enterprise or other informal models. Although its base is located in the capital, Lamerenan aims to assist Tanimbar weaving communities. Tanimbar Islands are located in Maluku province, Indonesia. Tanimbar, besides being known for its natural tourism beauty, has a distinctive traditional textile (*wastra*) which can be seen from the motifs and traditions. Lamerenan aims to preserve Tanimbar's *tenun* cloth and develop the communities that produce the cloth traditionally. Apart from helping in terms of marketing and promotion of *tenun* cloth that is created by Tanimbar weavers, Lamerenan also encourages

the weavers to use natural dyes and produce the cloth traditionally, which refers to its cultural inheritance and heredity.

When discussing Indonesia's textiles, Batik fabric always comes to mind first. Nevertheless, *tenun* cloth is also part of Indonesia's cultural heritage. Joko Widodo, the President of the Republic of Indonesia, on 16 August 2021, signed the Presidential Decree declaring 7 September as National *Tenun* Day (*Hari Tenun Nasional/HTN*) (Harry, 2021). This country has a wide variety of *tenun*. A piece of *tenun* cloth has a unique pattern that represents the culture it originates from. The production is also complicated since it involves woven color threads (Lukman, 2019).

Lamerenan is chosen as a research subject for some reasons: (1) Tanimbar has a traditional textile (In Bahasa Indonesia, called *wastra*) with unique motifs produced by the local community. This textile is a heredity culture from the ancestors; (2) Lamerenan is categorized as a micro-small-medium enterprise (MSME) that focuses on empowering the local community; (3) the founder of Lamerenan is a young entrepreneur who has the vision to promote Tanimbar's handwoven fabric as well as assisting and encouraging the community.

Lamerenan and Tanimbar's *tenun* can be considered creative entrepreneurship and industry since it refers to innovative ideas that come from knowledge through imagination, inspiration, ingenuity, and inventiveness. Creativity and innovation are needed by creative industries to grow and develop (Sutapa, Mulyana, & Wasitowati, 2017). It is realized that today, creative industries can support cultural identity as well as develop creative economics (Wanniarachchi, Dissanayake, & Downs, 2020). Nowadays, the creative industry drives economic growth and regional development (Mayasari & Chandra, 2020).

Apart from being a creative entrepreneur, Lamerenan can be classified as a social entrepreneur. As mentioned by Baskaran, Chandran, and Ng (2019), social entrepreneurship aims to solve social, cultural, and environmental problems in a suitable manner. Hence, they have said that a social enterprise has a purpose beyond making a profit and must have a social mission. Its performance is measured by the scale of the potentially positive impact that can be made on society (socially or environmentally) as a result of its activities.

Mair and Martí opine that social entrepreneurship has different aspects according to socioeconomic and cultural environments (Littlewood & Holt, 2018). Moreover, sociocultural factors also must be considered since the social environment is of great importance in stimulating entrepreneurial activity (Méndez-Picazo, Galindo-Martín, & Castaño-Martínez, 2021).

The process of change is necessary for empowerment (Kabeer, 1999). According to Kabeer (1999), the ability to make a choice is an important element of empowerment. Community empowerment can incline the community's ability to access resources (Muchtar & Trisnamasyah, 2019). There are three

interrelated dimensions imposed for women to be empowered to make decisions in their lives: (1) access to resources, including preconditions; (2) agency, including process; and (3) achievements, including outcomes (Kabeer, 1999). Resources can be economic and social resources. Human resources is also can be included. This is a multiplicity of social relationships which make up a society, such as family, market, or community (Kabeer, 1999). The agency has the ability to define one's goals. Furthermore, the agency is to include meaning, motivation, and purpose. The agency can have positive and negative sides related to power. As a positive meaning, agency refers to one's capacity to determine life choices; however, in a negative sense, the agency can be 'overpower.'

Meanwhile, measuring achievement is challenging since the community power dynamics are evolving. Therefore, rich qualitative data and sources of long-term outcomes should be provided (Kabeer, 1999). According to Kusumahadi in Sutawa (2012), empowerment is related to development. There are four dimensions, which are: (1) Economic empowerment which focuses on access to capital and resources; (2) Social empowerment, focusing on social life and community; (3) Cultural empowerment which concentrates on culture preservation, local wisdom, and value; (4) Political empowerment which stresses on community rights and collective action (Sutawa, 2012).

Furthermore, according to Rowland (Arul Paramanandam & Packirisamy, 2015), empowerment is a process that women can arrange themselves to increase their self-reliance. One of the examples is to manage resources. This is because women living in villages are the pillars of their families and communities. They do as caregivers and work to support others financially. They also act as a key to food security and poverty alleviation. Nevertheless, at the same time, they also have challenges in terms of capacity limits (Musiza, 2022).

METHODS

The research applies a qualitative approach because it requires valuable information and understanding from the founder of social entrepreneurship. The data are collected in two ways: Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and an in-depth interview with Hiyashinta Klise, the founder of Lamerenan. FGD with the research team is focused on experience sharing and discussion. Meanwhile, an in-depth interview is needed to gather further information concerning technical and organizational aspects to complete the data collected from FGD.

Since the pandemic continues, all research activities should be carried out online. FGD was conducted via Zoom Meeting on 29 December 2021, followed by an in-depth interview. The interview is realized through WhatsApp or Instagram due to the social distancing policy, easiness, and flexible

schedule. Secondary data for the research is gathered from trusted online news and the social media of Lamerenan (Instagram).

The data collection is divided into six sections: operational activities, challenges and obstacles, contribution to empowerment, support system, value creation, and social innovation. These sections are later classified based on three main aspects that Lamerenan is concerned about tradition-culture, community, and entrepreneurship.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Lamerenan started its operational activities in 2014. It means the foundation is still young, less than ten years old. Hiyashinta Klise (Shinta), the founder, views that the Tanimbar's culture and tradition, especially related to weaving, are endangered.

"... from my ancestor, from my father, from Tanimbar, Moluccas. I see that there is a problem concerning the culture and tradition. There is no regeneration. They don't have successors who would like to be a weaver ... So, the background of Lamerenan is preserving the culture because weaving represents the culture. Also, the cloth is used for traditional ceremonies."

Her ancestors are also weavers. Her family is experiencing a lack of successors; only her older cousin is able to weave.

"The problem is lassitude. There is no appreciation. The cloth is only used for traditional ceremonies. Actually, previously, there was a regulation that local civil servants and students were expected to wear traditional cloth (*tenun*) for working or going to school. However, the regulation had changed with batik textile. Nowadays, after the regulation was revoked, they returned to wearing *tenun*."

For Tanimbar's people, *tenun* is one of the valuable items because it is used and must be present in traditional ceremonies, such as births, marriages, or deaths (Balik & Hetharie, 2022). The people usually use or wear the clothes they have for the ceremonies; they do not buy new ones. Thus, the weavers seldom receive new orders for ceremonial use.

The Tanimbar's weavers still utilize traditional weaving looms. They call it "Tenun Gedog Loom" or "*Gedogan*" (Figure 2). The name of *gedog* comes from the sound of the weaving loom; then, they call the cloth so. Working on *tenun* needs accuracy, patience, and tenacity (Pattinama, 2019). The weaving process using *gedogan* is entirely manual and needs the effort to perform it. Therefore, Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs) could be detected among women weavers using this type of loom because of non-ergonomic factors, such as a high frequency of repetitive motion

and high workload (Ramdan, Candra, & Fitri, 2020).

Lamerean wishes to keep the tradition of using this loom and producing handwoven fabric, although it would take some time and more effort to finish just a single piece of cloth. This is because the end products are considered more valuable traditionally.

Lamerean has been chosen as a brand name. The name is derived from her grandmother as well as the first weaver she has known. She uses her late grandmother's name as a tribute and concern to the weavers and Tanimbar culture. As a brand, Lamerean is used to identify handwoven fabric from Tanimbar that is promoted and sold by her. Through Lamerean, Shinta hopes young women would like to continue this tradition as weavers, preserving the culture by producing the *tenun* cloth with *gedogan*.

“I decided to have a brand name to introduce Tanimbar's *tenun* cloth and culture. With this, I wish that Tanimbar's young women would like to weave and keep the tradition. I should include the economic value to attract them. However, if I just concern to the economic value, these (activities) would not sustain. Therefore, it should be both (the economic and the cultural).”

Economy and culture are considered as two different things in social life. However, culture is embedded in economic life nowadays. Therefore, culture can create job opportunities and economic growth (Leriche & Daviet, 2010). Moreover, Shinta explains that sometimes the weavers only chase economic value, so they do not care about the design and pattern. They wish to have easy money, then just follow simple patterns and motifs. As a result, the quality is decreasing.

“It is a problem of mindset. They want to do everything instantly. They also use yarns that are produced by factories using artificial colors.

Thus, they do not need to spin the yarns and use natural dyes. With the simpler pattern and yarns from factory, they can produce and sell the *tenun* cloths quickly. ... I explain (and persuade) that natural one is better because it is long-lasting.”

Using natural dyes is in line with Verma & Gupta (2017). According to them, natural dyes are biodegradable and non-toxic. Natural dyes are also non-carcinogenic and renewable. Besides preserving tradition and culture, Lamerean has mission is to preserve the local community, especially weavers in Tanimbar. Through collaboration and support from the textile museum and traditional textiles (*wastra*) communities, Lamerean empowers weavers in Tanimbar. Most of them are women who have passion and willingness to continue their traditions and culture.

The effort of capacity building and empowerment for community development can be raised by indigenous tradition. Indigenous tradition is able to show specific characteristics. Some of them are benefits for local people, job opportunities, development of the capacity of local people, and unique experiences for external stakeholders (Widjojo & Gunawan, 2020).

As previously mentioned, Shinta persuades the weavers to use natural dyes and *Gedogan*. She states that since the cloth is handmade, the process takes time and needs more effort. Thus, the economic value should be higher. Lamerean uses this value as the gateway to invite and encourage local weavers. Lamerean does not limit the age and weaving ability. Most importantly, they are active weavers or have the will or passion for being a weaver of Tanimbar's *tenun* cloth. If the person is not able to weave, she can try to take the more superficial part, for example, winding yarn.

Since weaving is part of tradition and culture, in Tanimbar's family, at least one woman can weave the *tenun* cloth. *Tenun* cloth plays an important role

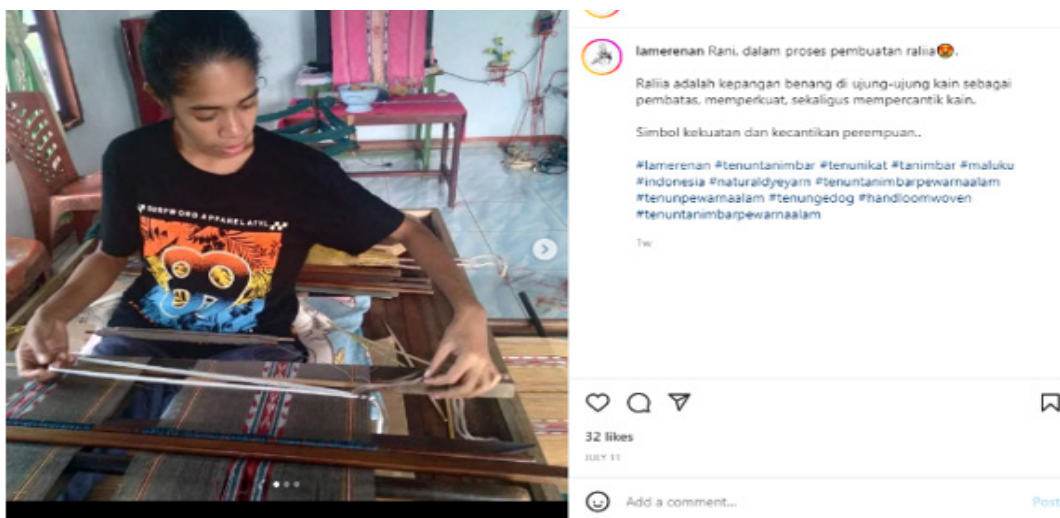


Figure 2 Tanimbar's Woman Is Weaving the *Tenun* Cloth with Traditional Loom (*Tenun Gedog Loom/Gedogan*) (Source: Instagram Lamerean)

in their culture; thus, for Tanimbar's women, weaving is a hereditary activity. Usually, young women are persuaded by their mothers to weave. A mother inherits her skill of weaving from her daughter since the daughter sees her mother how to weave with a loom manually in everyday life (Maswekan, Tahitu, & Nanuru, 2019). Nevertheless, in Lamerenan, the most important is the mindset that the tradition and culture should be preserved by the local people or communities.

"I mean the tradition, in Lamerenan, the mindset is that tradition and life are in harmony. With nature sustainability, we can live in abundance. ... For changing their mindset, I have to approach them personally. ... If there is a possible condition (because the pandemic continues), I would plan to conduct a training about natural dyes. It is important for the weavers to know about this. For now, I do call them by telephone to explain about the importance of using natural dyes. So, I do personal approach continuously."

Lamerenan and Shinta wish that this tradition makes them proud. She hopes that the weavers see not only the economic motif or livelihood but also their hereditary identity, which is weaving the Tanimbar's *tenun* cloth. Lamerenan considers two things: business and social activities. This foundation promotes the cloth produced by Tanimbar's women as well as preserving the tradition. Lamerenan introduces Tanimbar by creating stories about the islands when promoting *tenun* cloth and the brand. According to Haugh and Talwar (2016), female empowerment consists of economic and social dimensions. Economic empowerment refers to access to income and the decision to spend money; meanwhile, social empowerment is about increasing their status in the community.

To run and help the weavers, the *tenun* cloths that Tanimbar's women produce are sent to Jakarta in order to be sold. As mentioned by Shinta, producing traditional handwoven fabric or *tenun* cloth takes time and effort. Therefore, if there are orders, they share them with their neighbors.

"There is a terminology '*uang duduk*'. It means that the weaver receives the fee for weaving the cloth only. Meanwhile, the materials were given by the owner / buyer to be weaved."

Lamerenan usually participates in events such as bazaars and cultural exhibitions. To do so, Lamerenan is assisted by traditional textile communities and textile museums. This foundation also collaborates with creative industries, such as local bags and t-shirts, as shown in Figure 3.

Apart from the textile museum, communities, and creative industries, supports for Lamerenan are coming from the buyer. According to Shinta, by buying the products, the buyers support not only culture preservation, yet the weavers who made the clothes traditionally using natural dyes.

"Lamerenan feels proud because there is one young woman who decided to follow her mother, being a weaver, although she has to study at the university at the same time. For Lamerenan, it is an achievement. Her textile was purchased by a cloth designer. She also feels proud because she can gain money from selling her product."

These examples' economic and social value is in line with the economic and social empowerment mentioned by Haugh and Talwar (2016) previously. The production can be sustained if the money from product selling is used for operational costs such as materials procurement for the next production batch.

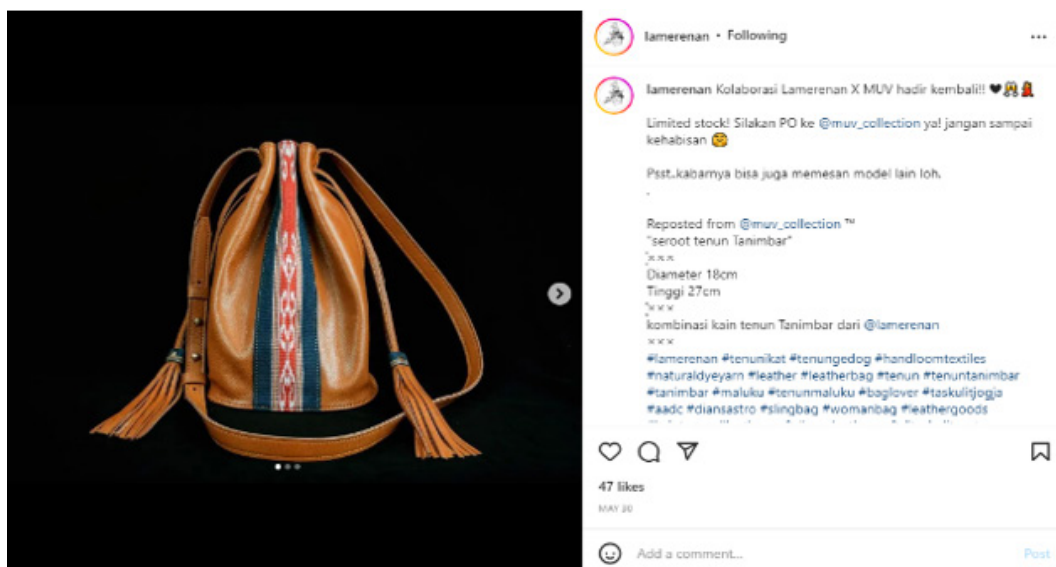


Figure 3 A Sling Bag Made from Leather from Collaboration between Lamerenan and MUV (Source: Instagram Lamerenan)

The empowerment created by Lamerenan is not based on workshops or training, although some workshops are held before the pandemic. Lamerenan works based on the project. Therefore, it does not have contracted weavers. When receiving orders, Lamerenan contacts available weavers as partners.

There are stages in the production process. Each stage of the process will be worked on or done by the appointed weaver. For example, there is a weaver to work the *ikat motif* and another weaver to deal with color dyeing. Lamerenan does not work with the same groups of weavers. If there are orders, the orders are shared based on the availability of the weavers, whether individually or in a group.

When Lamerenan is invited to a certain cultural fair in Jakarta, Lamerenan often opens pre-orders (sometimes the people call it PO. It refers to Purchase Order) to accommodate the flight fare from Tanimbar to Jakarta and vice versa.

“To cover the flight and accommodation, I open pre-order through social media. People who know Lamerenan often participate in this open pre-order. Although, they have to pay first before receiving the product, they trust Lamerenan. By participating in this open pre-order, serious buyers should transfer some money for down payment. This amount of money is used to cover the *tenun* cloths production as well as the air fares.”

The price of a piece of Tanimbar’s *tenun* cloth offered by Lamerenan is based on components of cost: production, labor, research, and social activities provided by Lamerenan, such as training for the weavers. Profit is also included in the given price.

As a social entrepreneur, Lamerenan pushes itself to make some initiatives for social change. For this matter, Lamerenan is striving to self-sufficiency its raw material and not to depend on yarns from factories or synthetic dyes. Lamerenan would like to wish to bring back the culture of cotton planting.

“I hope that every weaver could produce their own yarns, cotton from their garden or forest, and, the cotton can be processed into yarns. Previously, the local weavers could do this. However, nowadays, they depend more on yarns from factories. ... Therefore, I plan to educate them to plant cotton seeds. ... Hence, the innovation is about back to nature.”

Furthermore, Shinta gives an example of independence in Tuban. The weavers in that area can use cotton from their fields around the house. The raw materials are from their surroundings, the yarns, the dyes, and the traditional weaving looms.

“In Tanimbar, I have a family land. There, I want to make a pilot, a natural dyes field, cotton field. ... Thus, we can be independent. We can

produce the clothing independently.”

Finally, according to Shinta, this business is related to culture, not a textile business in general with mass production. Therefore, it requires an understanding, especially regarding traditional textiles (*wastra*) and indigenous people.

The last is the dimension of risk tolerance, proactiveness, and innovativeness. Decision-making is based on these three key dimensions. What Lamerenan has done is in line with Slater and Naver (Mort, Weerawardena, & Carnegie, 2003), where these characteristics are related to knowledge acquisition through exploration, challenging assumptions to create generative learning, and the rapid development of new behaviors to leverage learning.

CONCLUSIONS

As social entrepreneurship, Lamerenan can fulfill the multidimensional social entrepreneurship construct. Lamerenan not only involves compassion as virtuous, yet this foundation is trying to be innovative, although there are some problems, such as finance and distance from Tanimbar and Jakarta. Lamerenan can benefit from social media and other means of communication to encourage the weavers.

While empowering the weavers, Lamerenan is persuading, not pushing them to have a new mindset where natural dyes and using traditional weaving looms in the process of making the *tenun* cloth. Lamerenan is trying to position itself equally to the weavers. Lamerenan considers the weavers as partners as well as other stakeholders such as textile museums and traditional communities.

Penultimately, the social opportunity recognition dimension is also fulfilled by Lamerenan by seeking market opportunity. In this dimension, Lamerenan can empower the weavers to produce the *tenun* cloth in traditional ways with natural dyes. The products are sold in Jakarta to end buyers or clothing designers. Lamerenan also collaborates with indie companies to design t-shirts, bags, or watches. Lamerenan continuously assists and persuades the weavers, collaborates with indie companies, and participates in events related to traditional handwoven fabric (Tanimbar’s *tenun* cloth). These activities enable Lamerenan to create social value. Based on Kusumahadi’s empowerment dimensions, Lamerenan is doing three out of four dimensions, which are: the economic, the social, and the cultural.

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