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Life Must Go On: Serving People without Ulterior Motives as Responses to Mount Sinabung Eruption

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Abstract: Disasters have become part of the realities of life on this earth. Global disasters such as nuclear war, pandemics, earthquakes, and mount eruptions threaten the sustainability of human civilization. The purpose of this research is to provide services to victims of the eruption of Mount Sinabung, that life must go on. The eruption of Mount Sinabung, which has reached its eleventh year, is a fact of the severity of the struggles experienced by the people of Karo Land, North Sumatra, Indonesia. Natural disasters have an impact not only physically but also psychologically. The disaster victims must be accompanied by mental, spiritual, and spirit because life must go on. This condition needs to get responses from many stakeholders, one of which is the church. The church as a community of believers cannot be separated from the social life that surrounds it. The church exists in a public space filled with various struggles. For this task, the church is challenged to carry out its mission without ulterior motives because it is solely driven by compassion rooted in God's love for humankind. The novelty of this research is on the technique of motivating that God loves his people.

Keywords: church, diakonia, disaster, ulterior motives, public space.

生活必須繼續：服務沒有別有用心的人作為對錫納朋火山噴發的回應

摘要：災難已成為地球上生活現實的一部分。核戰爭、流行病、地震和火山噴發等全球性災難威脅著人類文明的可持續性。這項研究的目的是為錫納朋火山噴發的受害者提供服務，讓生活必須繼續。錫納朋火山噴發已經進入第十一個年頭，這是印度尼西亞北蘇門答臘卡洛地人民經歷的激烈鬥爭的事實。自然災害不僅會影響身體，還會影響心理。災民必須有精神、精神和精神的陪伴，因為生活還得繼續。這種情況需要得到許多利益相關者的回應，其中之一就是教會。教會作為一個信徒團體，不能與圍繞它的社會生活分開。教會存在於一個充滿各種鬥爭的公共空間中。為完成這項任務，教會面臨的挑戰是在沒有別有用心的情況下執行其使命，因為它完全是由植根於上帝對人類之愛的同情驅動的。這項研究的新穎之處在於激勵上帝愛他的子民的技巧。

关键词：教堂，迪亞科尼亞，災難，別有用心，公共空間。

1. Introduction

Humans live in a location where they struggle and survive day by day. The environment in which they live is never single because humans live side by side with God's other creations. Nature, oceans, land, forests, mountains, animals, and various plants are God's gifts to the universe with which we live together.

However, when a natural disaster strikes (whether it is caused by man's exploitative actions or due to the process of natural evolution), it will cause human suffering. Adila [1] Porfiriev defines a disaster as a state/condition destabilizing the social system that manifests itself in a malfunctioning or disruption of connections and communications between its elements

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or social units (communities, social groups, and individuals); partial or total destruction/demolition; physical and psychological overloads suffered by some of these elements; thus, making it necessary to take extraordinary or emergency countermeasures to reestablish stability [2]. Disasters cause social, psychological, and economic changes that are painful and require new adaptations [3]. In this new adaptation process, the church needs to be present in the public space because, for the victims, life must go on, even though it is no longer the same as before.

This article wants to explore the church's response through the action of diakonia without ulterior motive in the midst Sinabung eruption. Here is the example of the Karo Batak Protestant Church (GBKP) [4], which responded quickly and sustainably to the natural disasters that occurred in Karo Land. GBKP is one of the tribal churches located in North Sumatra, Indonesia. The church's vision is "To be God's fellow-workers to manifest God's mercy to the world". As the largest church in Karo Land, GBKP's presence is an extension of God's hand to express love to the world. This role can be seen from the GBKP diaconal service.

This article begins with an overview of the eruption of Mount Sinabung that hit Karo Land in mid-2010. After that, the weaving of GBKP's public theology in diaconal actions without ulterior motives will become the peculiarity of GBKP in its work which is present during human concrete struggles in their context. In the end, this will formulate a critical reflection on the responses of various stakeholders who play a role in realizing peace on earth among humans who are pleasing to God.

2. Methods

This research is a case study with qualitative research that uses a method intended to obtain in-depth information about the eruption of Mount Sinabung, which has reached its eleventh year. It is a fact of the severity of the struggles experienced by the people of Karo Land, North Sumatra, Indonesia. Natural disasters have an impact not only physically but also psychologically. Qualitative research is generally described as any type of research that results in findings not obtained through statistical procedures or other measures [5]. The data used in this research are primary data and secondary data. Primary data is obtained directly from the first party using data collection techniques in interviews and observations. Secondary data is obtained from second parties or previous researchers, obtained natural disasters have an impact not only physically but also psychologically. The disaster victims must be accompanied by mental, spiritual, and spirit because life must go on. Data obtained from interviews and observations can be in notes, transcripts, audio recordings, then studied and

analyzed.

The next step is to conduct condensation, which is done by making an abstraction that summarizes the core, processes, and questions that need to be kept in the research context. Next, the data are arranged in units and then categorized. The next step is to check the validity of the data, followed by the interpretation and implication of the data. This research activity is inseparable from the following four activities: (1) data collection; (2) data condensation; (3) data presentation; (4) collection / verification. The data validity strategy that will be used in this research is triangulation. The triangulated type used in this research is source triangulation. The stages of data analysis can see in Fig. 1.

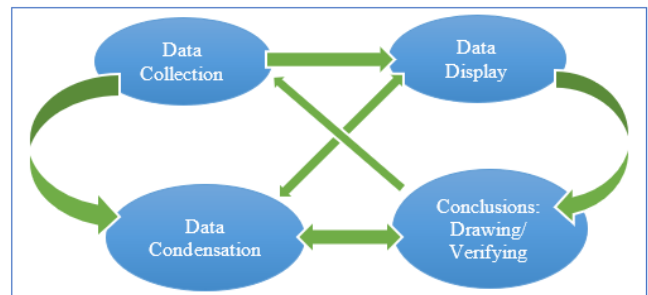


Fig. 1 Component model of data analysis

2.1. Research Subjects

Studying and analyzing the eruption of Mount Sinabung, which has reached its eleventh year, as a fact of the severity of the struggles experienced by the people of Karo Land, North Sumatra, Indonesia, respondents or research subjects are needed. In this study, the research subjects are the disaster victims that must be accompanied by mental, spiritual help, and spirit because life must go on. This condition needs to get responses from many stakeholders, one of which is the church. The church as a community of believers cannot be separated from the social life that surrounds it. Based on the criteria and willingness of respondents, the subjects or respondents of this study were ten people.

2.2. Data Collection

Researchers conducted interviews directly. Interview forms were collected, and coding was made according to the concepts taken from the data. The data is obtained from interviews with respondents. Coded data is collected and classified, and the subject area is determined from this classification. Statements that are considered prominent among respondents' points of view will be directly recorded as findings. The semi-structured interview technique used in this research provides flexibility for researchers; therefore, a very good response is obtained. With this technique, observing participants' non-verbal behavior controls the researcher's environment and provides in-depth information [6]. Therefore, the methods and techniques chosen are expected to be useful in obtaining data

following the objectives of this study. A semi-structured interview form was prepared for this study, and the interview form used was consulted with experts for the validity of the form.

2.3. Data Analysis

The content analysis method is used in the analysis of the data obtained. The content analysis aims to achieve concepts and relationships that can explain the data collected [6]. Therefore, the data analysis method was chosen for this study. The structured interview form was evaluated by content analysis. Content analysis is a systematic and iterative technique in which several words of the text are summarized with smaller content categories based on certain rule-based coding. The main objective of content analysis is to combine similar data in certain concepts and categories and interpret them so that readers can understand. In addition, thematic analysis was used for data analysis to find the same theme and sort it from small to large according to the frequency number. Thus, qualitative data is converted into quantitative data. Conclusions and comments are made on the respondent's message, and quotes are directly in the respondent's opinion. The answers given on the interview form are classified in order to keep their personal information confidential. Content analysis is carried out in three steps. First, answers are made into meaningful groups according to their content. Second, these answers are converted into tables. Finally, the responses and frequencies given for each item are first taken literally and then interpreted broadly by applying quantitative techniques to the data items obtained. Due to the number of answers, the number of answers that counts is not the number of respondents.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. A Grief That Comes Unexpectedly: Lamentation of People around the Mount Sinabung

From generation to generation, the people of Karo Land realize that Mount Sinabung and Mount Sibayak (the two big mountains in Karo Land) provide benefits in their lives, especially socio-economically. Volcanic material that has been decaying as a product of both the mountain's eruption hundreds of years ago, containing nutrients are suitable for the soil. This good soil fertility makes Karo Land known as *Taneh Karo Simalem*. This condition also becomes a magnet for most villagers to seek livelihood from the agricultural sector [7]. The comfort, welfare, and survival of its citizens are obtained from the land and mountains that "take care" of them from generation to generation.

Every Karo people have no collective memory of the catastrophic eruption of Mount Sinabung four centuries ago [7]. In their minds, Mount Sinabung is like a mother who has taken care of them and ensured

their well-being, until finally, one night in August of 2010, Mount Sinabung erupted again after "sleeping" for four hundred years. This incident seemed to clarify people's understanding of Mount Sinabung [8-10].

The eruption of Mount Sinabung in 2010 became a new chapter in Karo Land to deal with a new situation. They need new adaption. The entire Karo community, the church, and the government are ready or not ready to face this reality. The eruption of Mount Sinabung has had a multidimensional impact, be it the economy (agriculture, trade, tourism), infrastructure, and spirit. The Mount Sinabung eruptions in 2010 and 2013-2014 created various problems and a series of damage or losses reported by the *Neumann Development Center* (NDC) quoted by [7].

From various social and economic problems caused by Mount Sinabung, in January 2014, 28,221 people or 8,873 families were forced to evacuate from 27 villages and two hamlets. There were 2,209 units of permanent and semi-permanent houses heavily damaged, moderately damaged, and lightly damaged. The total loss of property is estimated at IDR 234,750,000,000. NDC said there were 10,408 hectares of damaged and truck agricultural areas and 19.78 hectares of crop failures. Damage to facilities and infrastructure affected five meeting hall units, ten houses of worship, twelve health facilities, seventy-nine educational rooms, and damaged roads along 5 km. All of these losses were estimated at IDR 1,703,000,000,000. Of the 27 villages and two hamlets, three villages were buried by lava, namely *Suka Meriah*, *Bekerah*, and *Simacem* villages. One thousand one hundred eighty-six people, or 347 families, inhabit the three villages. They have to be relocated and need a budget of IDR 3,102,500,000,000 [11].

Various changes that occurred due to the eruption of Mount Sinabung conduce various public anxiety. Friendly nature, fertile land, cool air, and villages that have been a collective identity all this time seem to be changing with horror after the horror that continues [12]. The necessity to leave the village (*Kuta*) is identical to evacuating from the ancestral land. For the people of Karo, *kuta* is an ancestral heritage that has been inhabited from generation to generation. Each *kuta* is a territorial unit as the hometown of particular clans or clans. The existence of *kuta* as an ancestral land is closely related to building or establishing a *kuta*. In every village, there is a typical clan of the village founder. The Sinabung eruption required them to leave their hometown (*kuta*) and collective identities.

Furthermore, some villages can no longer be occupied because they have been destroyed, are covered with volcanic ash, and are in the red zone area; now, they are relocated to a new place. To preserve the memory of the ancestors, the survivors transfer the bones of their ancestors to the new place. Before the new place (relocation) was officially occupied, they

had temporarily moved the bones of their ancestors to a safer village. If they do not move their ancestral bones immediately, there will be no time; their village will be covered by volcanic ash, which means the ancestral bones cannot be taken anymore. If this happens, the family will be very sorry because they will no longer visit the ancestral graves.

This suffering is truly unimaginable in the minds of the people of Karo Land. Is Karo Land still the *Taneh Karo Simalem* which gives peace, tranquillity, and prosperity? Or a new social construction of thinking is needed to continue life even though the Sinabung eruption has never really ended? The church needs to be present to bring the Good News in the pilgrimage of human life in the world.

3.2. Serving Other for Giving Endurance

GBKP is present in the middle of the public space. What kind of public space is that? As F. Budi Hardiman's study of public space based on the thoughts of Hannah Arendt and Jürgen Habermas, "Public space is not just a physical or geographic place, but citizens' communication that reproduces the space between them" [13, 14]. The public space becomes the locus of existence through communication born from various interactions of its citizens. According to Bradstock [15], when interpreting the concept of a public square, for Rauchfleisch [16], the public square is a social space, distinct from—and free from the control of—the state, the economy, and the family, in which individuals engage each other as private citizens deliberating about the common good. It is essentially a place for reasoning, a realm in which reasons are advanced and debated, accepted or rejected, and where the 'unforced force of the better argument wins' [17].

It is a negotiation for the common good that must inspire mass communication. The best ideas are the driving force to create a better civilization. Departing from this definition of public space, GBKP and the government should ideally have one breath and one action to create the common good for the victims of the eruption of Mount Sinabung [18]. During the chaotic handling of refugees from the eruption of Mount Sinabung, GBKP was present with those who were suffering.

With the spirit of being a deacon, as Lord servant, GBKP continues to take part in helping and empowering the victims. E. Louise Williams saw the importance of the church manifesting Christ, who is the servant of this world so that everyone knows God's love and shares a fruitful life as God wants everyone. For Williams, "... it seems essential to consider again how the diaconate can provide critical leadership for this crucial calling. The goal is to unleash the people of God to 'Go in peace. Serve the Lord.'" [19, p. 185]. It is the vocation of believers that enables GBKP to "go outside." Now, the altar is not only in front of the

church alone but at the post-post evacuation. Lutheran World Federation (LWF) contribute to providing an understanding of Diakonia in Context Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment, that Diakonia grows out of worship and aims at thanksgiving to God for God's indescribable gift. Diakonia is a response to concrete situations of suffering, need, and injustice, the fulfillment of the commandment of love, and in all that IS an expression of what the church believes in and confesses the grace of God for the healing of the world. [19, pp. 187-188].

GBKP has made efforts to assist both materially and spiritually assist the victims. According to Matius P. Barus, one of the former GBKP chairpersons, GBKP's service to all disaster victims is not solely out of compassion or just carrying out social tasks, but because Jesus Christ loves all people and sided with those who suffer [7, p. 187]. Diakonia is theologically based on the theology of the cross and the resurrection; otherwise, we will not be able to see the deepest needs of mankind and the world's most terrible wounds.

GBKP simultaneously supports the needs of disaster victims, exceptionally the less fortunate, and intensifies socio-economic empowerment and independence programs [7, p. 189]. Programs that have been carried out include: providing cost waivers to children who attend GBKP kindergarten and early childhood education program (PAUD), facilitating tutoring for students interested in entering higher education, providing scholarships, fostering a foster parent system, and improving the quality of services. Health for disaster victims. In addition, GBKP has strengthened the GBKP Disaster Management Commission (KPB) institution by raising financial assistance from domestic and foreign partners for socio-economic empowerment and independence programs for disaster victims [7, p. 189]. The mothers were given the skills to make cakes, snacks, and flowers from plastic glass distributed to markets or churches. In addition, there are also casual daily laborers around Kabanjahe.

Children who are victims of disasters experience changes that are not easy in terms of education. They have to adapt to a new habit where since September 15, 2010, all refugee children can participate in the teaching and learning process using the SD 04, SMP 01, SMU 01 Kabanjahe building. They dress freely, and the lesson starts at 14.00 WIB [7, p. 102]. GBKP took the initiative to ask for support from the Karo District Education Office to ensure the children's education. In addition, students are threatened with dropping out of college because their parents are faced with economic difficulties. As Team Leader GBKP, Purba sent a letter to the campus beg to provide cost relief for children affected by the eruption of Sinabung. At the same time, GBKP Moderators collect donations. This educational incentive is provided regardless of

religion, ethnicity, and social background [7, pp. 102-103].

In the 35th GBKP Synod Session, several decisions related to handling the eruption of Mount Sinabung were also made. In economic assistance, the church provides training for developing the creative economy (*home industry*), including its marketing. Not only those who are still productive but senior citizens are also empowered to make crafts, such as chopsticks/webbing. Their work was marketed in a way coordinated with Klasis and the Church (*Runggun*). This leadership shows the cooperation of the entire congregation and congregation members to work hand in hand to support each other, victims of the Sinabung eruption. Williams emphasized, Diakonia in context also emphasizes the importance of competent leadership on all levels (individual, congregational, institutional, and international) in the context of the "deacon hood of all buy Evers" It also makes a case for the diaconate as an order of ministry so that the church's leadership reflects the intrinsic dimension of Diakonia the life of the Church [19, p. 188].

Leadership in the church that emphasizes diakonia without ulterior motives is an essential factor in responding to the various struggles in the public sphere because the victim's life must go on, even though the condition is uncertain.

Diakonia is intrinsic to the mission of the church. Do not the spin-out time when seeing sufferings that surrounds the church. The time to do service to the image of God is now; no need to stall for the spin-out time. Diakonia takes place in the actual period in each context. In his letter from Birmingham prison, Martin Luther King Jr once stressed the importance of the present and the immediate movement. According to King and other Negroes, *waiting* almost always means *never*; delayed too long is justice that is continually denied. That is why, in order to establish justice, we must do so as soon as possible because procrastination only means prolonging the suffering of others. Sometimes the delay comes from a different understanding of suffering, as King responded to a letter from his white Christian friend: "I have just received a letter from a white brother in Texas who writes: "All Christians know that the colored people will receive equal rights eventually, but you may be in too great a religious hurry. It has taken Christianity almost two thousand years to accomplish what it has. The teachings of Christ take time to come to earth."

King responded to this response harshly; he said, "Such an attitude stems from a tragic misconception of time, from the strangely irrational notion that there is something in the very flow of time that will surely cure all ills. Time itself is neutral; it can be used either destructively or constructively." The church needs to have a similar attitude in responding to public situations, especially disasters. That is why GBKP is

proactive and carries out its diaconal work as quickly as possible to respond and show love to humanity.

Everist has stressed several times that diaconians have been called upon to be agents of the church in society for centuries. Diakonia interprets and discovers needs and gives hope and concern in church and society [20, p. 179].

The GBKP Diakonia seeks to find the needs of spiritual and thinking paradigms. That is why in camps held prayer along with involves pastors and ministry GBKP pastoral counseling. In addition, for the children in the refugee camps, PAC (Joyful Children Post) is held every day coordinated by the GBKP Moderamen KAKR (Child Devotion Service) to assist children with psychosocial and psychotraumatic disorders. This action embraces all children (different religions and different ethnicities). They are invited to pray according to their beliefs, Bible stories, and children's songs are modified to be universal.

Diaconal fellowship that has been the call of believers is based on the participation of people who believe in the way that Jesus lived. Jesus exemplified the path of solidarity for all. This solidarity was also seen when GBKP youths (PERMATA) raised donations for basic food needs and were proactive in cleaning people's houses, public facilities, and houses of worship which were dirty because they were covered in volcanic ash. These young people volunteer at refugee posts managed by GBKP.

The diaconal alliance of GBKP residents was also seen working hand in hand in sending aid in vegetables, rice, fruit, instant noodles, soap, and others to the refugee camps. The high cost of daily living needs at the refugee camps encouraged every church member to donate various logistics. For example, in one of the posts managed by GBKP, on Mariam Ginting Street, Six Cross, the cost of food needed per day is around IDR 8,000 – IDR 10,000 per person. The number of refugees in the post is 1,500 people. That is, the cost of consumption per day amounting to IDR 12,000,000 – IDR 15,000,000. However, there are always generous in assisting in the form of solidarity among human beings. This kind of diaconal fellowship is the fruit of faith amid suffering and disaster. A diaconal church is called to action in places of power in the public world (that is, open to all), particularly those without access [20, p. 182].

What is the motive behind the diakonia service of the GBKP? In one of his writings [21], Abraham van de Beek emphasized that we must serve the Lord without any ulterior motive, a notion deeply rooted in Jewish, and thus Christian, religion. A noteworthy text is Hab 3:17: "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails, and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my

Saviour." If we lose everything – nevertheless, we can praise the Lord. Psalm 73 shows an awareness of the seductiveness of worldly life – but ends with the confession that even if heart and flesh fail, God will be the strength of my heart and my portion forever. Moreover, it is good to be near Him. That is the difference between people whose reward is in this life and those whose reward is the Lord, say other psalms (e.g., Ps 17:14; 49) [21].

Amid people's habits that expect something from various good deeds for others, Beek's thoughts have hit the pattern of giving and receiving life so far. Believers should have a positive impact on people's lives. Religion without ulterior motives is the proper attitude shared by Christians and Jews, and for all religious vocations ... we serve God for nothing. We must apply this to our relationship with God because God himself loves us for no reason or gain [21, p. 527].

It is this kind of virtue that inspires GBKP to handle disaster victims by embracing everyone. GBKP does not look at ethnicity, religion, church denomination, and various social backgrounds. GBKP prioritizes a humanitarian approach (*human interest*) by respecting the diversity of victims' identities (Karo, Toba, Simalungun, Java, and Nias) with varied religions (Protestant Christianity, Catholic Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism) as well as diverse occupations (farmers, traders, and a small number of civil servants and entrepreneurs) [7, p. 174]. Respect for diversity reflects an essential concept. GBKP does not dissolve in the "particular-exclusive" tendency but instead fosters a "universal-inclusive" spirit [7, p. 174]. GBKP does not intend to increase the number of its members through Christianization efforts amid ongoing suffering. GBKP realizes that this church is God's tool to serve others in need as the cross of Christ has saved everyone. It has been a consequence of the living church.

The presence of GBKP in the public sphere ideally creates a new paradigm rooted in God's word for everyone. Thus, when they negotiate in a public space, everyone has ideal Christian values as a characteristic of a servant of God, not a servant of money. People want to serve with all their heart, without expecting anything, like Christ, first-served humans until death on the cross.

3.3. For the Beauty of the Earth

From the stories of the struggles of the victims of the eruption of Mount Sinabung, we realize that no matter how bitter the path that will be taken forward, in reality, life must go on. The journey cannot be taken alone; we need other people who accompany us and become friends. It does not matter if the journey is slow because it requires adaptation and self-acceptance, which is not always easy. However, for sure, we need to convince ourselves that God is with us

on that foggy journey. At the same time, we were feeling the guidance of the True Friend's hand, the support of empathetic fellows.

Moreover, the church is caring, and we also need to be friendly with nature by giving space for natural processes to volcanoes that are erupting. From there, we can interpret the beauty of the universe as a masterpiece of the Creator. All this we do without ulterior motive but moved by the love of God. It is love that breeds harmony. It is in Christ that all this happened, as Paul emphasized in Colossians 1:16, "For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities, all things have been created through Him and for Him" (New International Version). Thus, all praise is only for Him, who in His love teaches us to love each other with all created beings in the beauty of the universe.

The lyrics of this song from Folliot Sandford Pierpoint (1835-1917), a graduate of Queens College, Cambridge (BA, 1857), and a classical teacher at Somersetshire College, may lead us to enter and experience the universe through love and beauty. The Beauty of the Earth, which became hymn No. 92 in Methodist Church, appears in 1864. This song seems to be singing prayers and praises born of deep reflection on the beauty of the Triune God's work for the universe. Hopefully, the lyrics of this song can "irrigate" our reflection space to continue living in the world even if time cannot be a prediction; the body is not always healthy, but hope is always there because God created this world fully beauty.

*For the beauty of the earth
For the beauty of the skies
For the love which from our birth
Over and around us lies
Over and around us lies*

*Lord of all, to thee we raise
This is our joyful hymn of praise*

*For the beauty of the hour
Of the day and the night
Hill and vale and tree and flower
Sun and moon and stars of light
Sun and moon and stars of light*

*Lord of all, to thee we raise
This is our joyful hymn of praise*

*For the joy of human love
Brother, sister, parent, child
Friends on earth and friends above
For all gentle thoughts and mild
For all gentle thoughts and mild*

*Lord of all, to thee we raise
This is our joyful hymn of praise*

*For each perfect gift of thine
To our race so freely given
Grace's human and divine
Flowers of earth and buds of heaven
Flowers of earth and buds of heaven*

*Lord of all, to thee we raise
This is our joyful hymn of praise*

4. Conclusion

The comfort, welfare, and survival of its citizens are obtained from the land and mountains that "take care" of them from generation to generation. Every Karo people have no collective memory of the catastrophic eruption of Mount Sinabung four centuries ago. Mount Sinabung is like a mother who has taken care of them and ensured their well-being, until finally, one night in August of 2010, Mount Sinabung erupted again after "sleeping" for four hundred years. This incident seemed to clarify people's understanding of Mount Sinabung. The entire Karo community, the church, and the government are ready or not ready to face this reality. The eruption of Mount Sinabung has had a multidimensional impact, be it the economy (agriculture, trade, tourism), infrastructure, and spirit. The Mount Sinabung eruptions in 2010 and 2013-2014 effect various problems and a series of damage or losses as reported by the *Neumann Development Center* (NDC) quoted by [7].

5. Limitations

The limitations of this study are due to the conditions of places that are difficult to reach, so technology is needed to reach remote places. Further research is needed to develop technology that can reach remote places.

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