

Research Article

International Community Development Program

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Abstract

The International Community Development Program for community service is an initiative that involves collaboration between universities or institutions and international communities in efforts to improve societal well-being. Through international service activities, educational institutions can expand their network of cooperation with institutions from other countries. This opens opportunities for the exchange of knowledge, experiences, and cross-cultural resources. The program focuses on community empowerment through various activities such as outreach in senior citizen care centers aimed at providing education and special attention to the elderly who need care in terms of well-being. Additionally, a sharing session for the younger generation is conducted to enhance their capacity in facing future challenges. Another activity is a workshop on promoting batik weaving products to the youth, aimed at preserving local culture while encouraging innovation in the creative economy sector. The final activity, tree planting for environmental sustainability, serves as one of the climate change mitigation efforts and helps preserve biodiversity. The outcomes of this international community service program not only have a direct impact but also open opportunities for sustainable development across various sectors including social, cultural, and environmental areas in Palembang City.

Keywords: Local community empowerment, knowledge and experience exchange, international cooperation network development, elderly welfare, preservation of local culture, environmental conservation.



INTRODUCTION

Community service activities are a tangible form of the tri dharma of higher education aimed at contributing to society, especially in this era of globalization. This particular community service activity is conducted internationally in collaboration with several universities in Indonesia. The activity becomes increasingly important to strengthen cooperation between regions and countries and enrich the experiences and knowledge of various parties. Palembang, as one of the cities rich in history and culture, holds great potential in the economic and tourism sectors. With its diverse culture and abundant natural resources, Palembang has become a unique destination to be further developed. Through this collaboration, we aim to empower the local community by involving the knowledge and best practices from Indonesia, Malaysia, Timor Leste, and Japan. These three countries not only have experience in economic and tourism development, but also have unique cultures that can inspire the people of Palembang.

The international community service activity involving Indonesia, Malaysia, Timor Leste, and Japan is a concrete manifestation of social responsibility aimed at improving the quality of life and supporting sustainable development. In the Palembang area of South Sumatra, various social, environmental, and economic challenges remain areas of concern, including the welfare of the elderly, youth engagement, local cultural preservation, and environmental protection, particularly in the Palembang area. Therefore, this community service program is designed to provide positive impacts through various agendas that target social, economic, and environmental aspects holistically.

The community service agenda, which is a collaboration between Indonesia, Malaysia, Timor Leste, and Japan and takes place over four days, includes four activities: outreach at an elderly social care facility, sharing sessions for the youth, promotion of woven fabric products for cultural preservation, and tree planting and road painting for environmental sustainability.

Based on the 2023 BPS data, the elderly dependency ratio is projected at 17.08, meaning that for every 100 productive-age people (15-59 years old), there are about 17 elderly people. In terms of health, around two out of five (41.49 percent) elderly individuals reported health complaints in the past month, with a morbidity rate of 19.72 percent. The health complaints recorded in the March 2023 Susenas include common issues such as fever, cough, cold, diarrhea, headaches, as well as complaints due to chronic illnesses, disabilities, accidents, or other health problems. The morbidity rate or illness rate for the elderly is calculated based on elderly individuals who experience health complaints that disrupt their daily activities.

The first agenda, which is outreach at the elderly social care facility, aims to provide education and special attention to vulnerable elderly groups who need focused care in terms of well-being. The elderly are a group susceptible to various social issues.

This activity is expected to have a positive impact on their quality of life, allowing the elderly to feel the attention they have often lacked.

The next agenda is a sharing session for the youth aimed at increasing the capacity of the younger generation to face future challenges. The youth play a strategic role in national development, yet they face various challenges related to education and empowerment. The younger generation is crucial in economic and social development. Therefore, the provision of material by lecturers in their fields of expertise, such as financial management, accounting, and promotion, aims to equip the youth with relevant knowledge and skills.

Additionally, another activity is a promotion session for batik woven fabric products targeting the youth, aimed at preserving local culture while encouraging innovation in the creative economy sector. This activity supports the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy's vision to advance the culture-based creative industry as a pillar of the national economy that should be proud of and introduced internationally, showcasing Indonesia's local handmade products. The creative industry, including weaving and batik crafts, has a significant potential to enhance the local economy. The promotional strategy guidance for batik woven fabric products is designed to help local artisans expand their market and increase the selling value of their products.

The next activity is tree planting for environmental preservation, which is an effort to mitigate climate change and preserve biodiversity, in line with the Ministry of Environment and Forestry's policy on critical land rehabilitation. Road painting at the Wisma BPSDM Palembang is another initiative to create a comfortable environment that supports local community activities, in accordance with the spirit of mutual cooperation, a hallmark of Indonesian society. Environmental sustainability is a shared responsibility. The tree planting activity by students aims to raise awareness of the importance of environmental conservation and contribute to climate change mitigation efforts.

Well-maintained public facilities can enhance the quality of life for the community. The social service activity of painting the field by students at Wisma BPSDM Palembang aims to improve and beautify the facilities so they can be comfortably used by the community.

With the implementation of these activities, the community service program in Palembang, which collaborates with Malaysia and Timor Leste, is expected to act as a catalyst for positive change and provide sustainable benefits to various community groups, especially in the Palembang area of Indonesia. Community service is one of the pillars of Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi that aims to make a tangible contribution to improving community welfare and quality of life. The collaboration between educational institutions from Indonesia, Malaysia, Timor Leste, and Japan in community service activities not only broadens perspectives but also enriches experiences and best practices in its implementation. The collaboration between lecturers and students in this community service activity not only provides direct benefits to the people of Palembang but also strengthens the bilateral relations between the three countries through cooperation in education and social fields. This

activity is expected to serve as a model for other community service programs involving international cooperation to achieve sustainable development goals.

METHOD

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Community service is often faced with various complex issues, especially in the context of carrying out diverse activities such as outreach, youth empowerment, cultural preservation, and environmental protection. Some of the problems identified from the community service activities in Palembang include:

1. **Elderly Welfare**, where the elderly often face limited access to healthcare services, psychosocial support, and attention from society. However, programs designed to meet their needs are still unevenly distributed across regions, including in Palembang. According to BPJS data, the percentage of elderly people and the elderly dependency ratio in Indonesia has been steadily increasing. Below is the trend of the elderly percentage and elderly dependency ratio

(<https://www.bps.go.id/id/publication/2023/12/29/5d308763ac29278dd586ofad/statistics-of-aging-population-2023.html>).

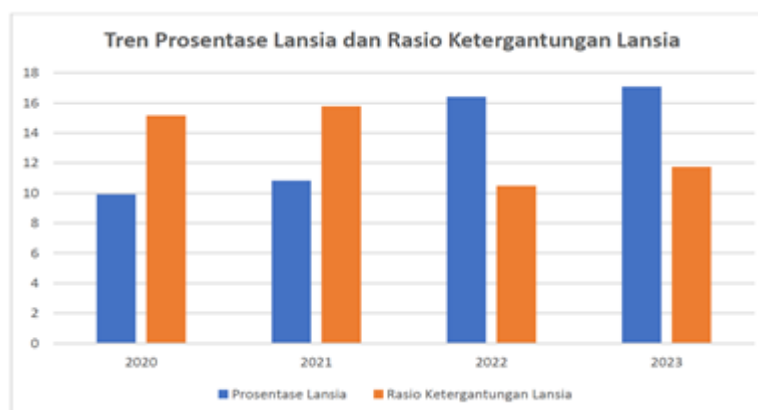


Table 1. Trend of Elderly Percentage and Elderly Dependency Ratio

Source: Central Statistics Agency, National Socio-Economic Survey (Susenas), March 2020-2023 and processed from the 2020-2050 Population Projection Publication

Based on the graph, the trend of elderly percentage and elderly dependency ratio has been increasing every year. The exact figures for 2024 are not yet available, as the survey results from the Central Statistics Agency have not been published. Given the Susenas data above, which is a population projection for the years 2020-2050, it is necessary to prepare the best programs for the elderly in the future. This issue must be addressed specifically, particularly for the current younger generation, who will face challenges in the digital era, as Indonesia is a country experiencing a demographic bonus.

2. **Youth Participation** often faces challenges such as a lack of effective platforms for self-development, particularly in facing the competitive digital era. Many

young people have yet to be fully empowered to take an active role in community development. This issue hinders the great potential held by the youth group.

Recognizing the importance of the role and functions inherent in youth, it is essential to develop the potential of youth through awareness, empowerment, and youth development in all sectors as part of national development. For this, accurate and up-to-date data and information are needed to support the success of youth development.

One of Indonesia's development goals for 2020-2024 is to build quality and competitive human resources, which are healthy, intelligent, adaptive, innovative, skilled, and have character. To achieve this goal, one of the development policies is directed towards improving the quality of youth. Youth development is significant for the continuity of the nation, as youth are the future leaders who will receive the baton of leadership and are a key factor in optimizing the demographic bonus (Bappenas 2019, 4).

The government has set three youth development focuses in the 2023 Government Work Plan (RKP). These include (i) strengthening cross-sector coordination in youth services, particularly synergy between central and regional governments, (ii) increasing active youth participation, especially through innovation and technology-based entrepreneurship, and (iii) preventing risky youth behaviors, including negative behaviors such as bullying, intolerance, HIV, drugs, free sex, and others (Ministry of Communication and Information, 2023).

According to Law No. 40 of 2009, youth are Indonesian citizens aged 16-30 years, so in 2023, youth include those born between 1993 and 2007. Based on the 2023 Susenas data, there are approximately 64.16 million young people (23.18%) in Indonesia. This significant number of youth has the potential to become a source of national strength if well-prepared.

In the past decade, the percentage of youth in Indonesia has shown a relatively decreasing trend, from 24.53% in 2014 to 23.18% in 2023 (Figure 2.1). This decline in percentage is likely related to the fact that the birth rate has been steadily decreasing over time, while the health of the elderly population has been steadily improving.



<https://www.bps.go.id>

3. Local Cultural Preservation

The dominant local culture in the community is the practice of weaving, with batik

woven fabric products being a part of local cultural heritage. However, this tradition is facing challenges due to the decreasing interest of the younger generation in continuing this craft. This issue is influenced by changing lifestyles and a lack of understanding of the cultural values embedded in these products, with many young people showing less interest in engaging in or learning about the art of batik weaving.

4. Environmental Issues

Environmental challenges, such as deforestation and the lack of green spaces in urban areas, continue to be major concerns in Palembang. The Ministry of Environment and Forestry has highlighted that environmental rehabilitation programs require greater involvement from various stakeholders, including the local community.

5. Limited Public Facilities

The condition of public facilities, such as fields and playgrounds in Palembang, still requires special attention from the surrounding community. Field painting and public facility repairs are often constrained by limited funds and a lack of community participation in the maintenance of existing facilities.

By recognizing and understanding these issues, it is hoped that the solutions provided through this community service program will be more targeted and effective in bringing about positive impacts on both the environment and society.

3. OBJECTIVES AND BENEFITS OF THE ACTIVITIES

OBJECTIVES

1. **Local Community Empowerment:** The goal is to empower the people of Palembang through training and providing access to information regarding economic and tourism development. By involving the best practices from the collaboration between Indonesia, Malaysia, Timor Leste, and Japan, the community is expected to develop its local potential, thus improving their quality of life.
2. **Knowledge and Experience Exchange:** This aims to create a forum for knowledge exchange between students, lecturers, and the community from the three countries. Through discussions and collaborations, it is hoped that innovative ideas will emerge, which can be applied in Palembang to develop the creative economy and tourism sectors.
3. **International Cooperation Network Development:** By involving institutions from Malaysia, Timor Leste, and Japan, this activity aims to build a strong international cooperation network. This will not only be beneficial for this particular community service initiative but can also open opportunities for collaboration on future projects.
4. **Improving Elderly Welfare:** This can be achieved by providing education, attention, and support to the elderly at the elderly social care facility, ensuring that they have better access to health, social welfare, and information.
5. **Empowering the Youth:** Through sharing sessions, this activity aims to enhance the skills, confidence, and knowledge of the younger generation,

preparing them to face the challenges of the modern era.

6. **Preserving Local Culture:** By encouraging the younger generation to understand the importance of preserving and promoting batik woven fabric products, this activity aims to reinforce Palembang's cultural identity within Indonesia.
7. **Supporting Environmental Sustainability:** Tree planting activities are intended to foster greater environmental awareness and contribute to climate change mitigation efforts, especially in Palembang.
8. **Improving Public Facilities:** By conducting field painting activities at the Wisma BPSDM Palembang, this program aims to create a more attractive and comfortable environment for local residents.

BENEFITS

- a. **For the Elderly:** The elderly will receive more attention, which can improve their psychological well-being and quality of life, allowing them to experience a new environment through visits from academics.
- b. **For the Youth:** By providing motivation and insight, the younger generation will be encouraged to take an active role in preserving local culture and contributing to national development.
- c. **For Local Cultural Preservation:** This program can stimulate the interest of the younger generation to preserve local cultural heritage, ensuring that cultural products such as batik fabric remain relevant and economically valuable, making them more accessible.
- d. **For the Environment:** Creating a greener, more comfortable, and healthier environment will bring long-term benefits, including improved air quality and a reduction in environmental disaster risks.
- e. **For the General Public:** Improvements to public facilities support more positive social interactions, create comfortable public spaces, and foster a spirit of mutual cooperation within the community.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Outreach at the Elderly Social Care Facility

The outcome of the outreach activity successfully increased the elderly participants' understanding of the importance of maintaining both physical and mental health. The participants expressed that they felt more emotionally supported and understood simple steps to take care of their daily health. The discussions during this session emphasized the importance of personal presence in providing attention to elderly individuals who often feel neglected. The interactive and tailored outreach approach had a significant impact on improving their psychological well-being.

Sharing Session for the Youth

The outcome of the sharing session showed that the youth participants experienced an increase in motivation to actively contribute to their communities. The interactive discussion about opportunities in the digital era and their roles in social development motivated the participants to think more innovatively. The discussions highlighted the need for the younger generation to have more access to programs that expand their perspectives. This activity provided an effective platform to encourage their involvement in solving social challenges in their environments.

Guidance on Promoting Batik Weaving Products

The outcome of this activity resulted in an increased awareness among the younger generation about the value of local culture. Some participants even showed interest in learning more about weaving techniques and developing culture-based creative products. The discussion revealed that the interest of the younger generation in cultural heritage can be enhanced through creative approaches, such as utilizing social media to promote local products. This activity demonstrated that technology-based and innovative approaches can accelerate the preservation of culture.

Tree Planting for Environmental Sustainability

The outcome of the tree planting activity saw 75 trees successfully planted in the designated area. This activity involved various parties, including lecturers, students, academics, and local residents, all of whom showed great enthusiasm for environmental preservation efforts. The discussions around the tree planting highlighted its long-term environmental impact, although its sustainability requires community commitment to care for the planted trees. Cross-party collaboration is key to the success of this program.

Social Service: Field Painting at Wisma BPSDM Palembang

The result of the social service carried out by students at the Wisma BPSDM Palembang field is that it is now more attractive and comfortable for the community to use for various activities. The project was completed in two days, involving volunteers from diverse backgrounds. The discussions on public facility improvements provided immediate benefits to the community. This activity also fostered a spirit of mutual cooperation and shared responsibility in maintaining public facilities.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of this international community service activity has proceeded according to the planned schedule and can be summarized as follows:

1. The international community service activity involving institutions from Indonesia, Malaysia, Timor Leste, and Japan in Palembang has been carried out as planned. This activity successfully created a positive synergy between students, lecturers, and the local community. All activities, from training, workshops, to cultural exchanges, ran smoothly and received positive feedback from participants.
2. The involvement of speakers from the two countries provided new and valuable perspectives for both the community and participants. In addition, the networks formed during this activity are expected to serve as a foundation for

future collaborations. This activity also demonstrated the importance of international cooperation in enhancing local capacities while strengthening inter-country relations.

3. The welfare of the elderly has been improved through outreach at the Elderly Social Care Facility, which provided real benefits in increasing the elderly participants' understanding of physical and mental health, as well as offering much-needed emotional support.
4. The empowerment of the younger generation through the sharing session successfully motivated them to be more actively involved in social and economic development.
5. The preservation of local culture through the promotion and guidance on batik weaving helped raise the younger generation's awareness of the importance of preserving local culture.
6. Environmental preservation through tree planting contributed positively to environmental sustainability by involving the local community directly.
7. The improvement of public facilities through field painting at Wisma BPSDM Palembang created a more comfortable and aesthetically pleasing public space for the community.

This activity not only provided direct impacts but also opened up opportunities for sustainable development in various social, cultural, and environmental sectors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To enhance the effectiveness and impact of future community service activities, the following recommendations should be considered:

1. **Sustainability of the Program:**

- a. Activities such as tree planting require follow-up actions, including the maintenance of the trees planted, to ensure that the environmental benefits are fully realized.
- b. Ongoing training for the younger generation regarding local cultural preservation can help maintain their interest and commitment.
- c. To ensure the sustainability of the benefits from these activities, it is recommended to have a continuous outreach program that helps the community implement the knowledge gained. Follow-up sessions or periodic mentorship could be organized to support this.

2. **Broader Collaboration:**

- a. Involve more local partners, such as local government, community groups, and the private sector, to support funding and program implementation.
- b. Establish collaborations with schools and universities to reach a wider group of young people.

3. **Utilizing Technology:**

- a. Leverage digital media for promotion and documentation of activities to reach a larger audience and inspire other regions.
- b. Encourage the use of apps or platforms that can facilitate community participation in service activities.

4. Development of Educational Modules:

- a. Develop educational materials for outreach that can be used by communities or other institutions to replicate the program in other areas.

5. Evaluation and Monitoring:

- a. Conduct regular evaluations of the activities to ensure that the set objectives are being met.
- b. Establish clear success indicators to monitor the progress of the activities.
- c. It is crucial to conduct a thorough evaluation of the implementation of this activity. Proper documentation will assist in formulating recommendations for future activities. By recognizing what worked well and what needs improvement, the quality of future community service can be enhanced.

6. Curriculum Development:

Based on the experiences gained during the activity, it is recommended to integrate the learning outcomes from this activity into the curriculum of the relevant study programs at each university. This will provide students with a deeper understanding of international cooperation and community service.

7. Increasing Community Participation:

To make such activities more effective, it is important to conduct early and targeted socialization with the community. Involve them in the planning process so they feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for the success of the program.

8. Collaboration with Third Parties:

It is recommended that future activities involve more stakeholders, such as local governments, NGOs, and the private sector. With broader collaboration, resources and expertise will increase, leading to greater and more sustainable impact.

By implementing these recommendations, it is expected that community service activities in Palembang will have a broader and more sustainable impact.

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