



Empowering Women in Bakcirim Village Through MSME Training: Home-Based Entrepreneurship with Ready-to-Sell Food Products

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Abstract

This community service training was conducted in Gampong Bak Cirih, located in the central area of Montasik Subdistrict, where the majority of the population works as farmers, while homemakers are engaged in domestic activities. The main objective of this program was to provide socialisation and training on the production of attractive, colourful sponge cakes, aimed at motivating housewives to develop entrepreneurial skills and strengthen household and community economies. The training employed lectures, discussions, and hands-on demonstrations. The results revealed three key outcomes: (1) an increase in homemakers' skills and motivation to engage in entrepreneurship, (2) active curiosity and participation from participants during the training sessions, and (3) improved understanding of sponge cake production and enhanced motivation to contribute to family and community income generation. These findings suggest that practical skill training can significantly empower rural women to establish and manage small-scale, home-based enterprises.

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1. Introduction

Bak Cirih Village is one of the rural communities located in Montasik Subdistrict, Aceh Besar Regency. Historically, this village evolved from an agrarian society whose livelihood was largely dependent on agriculture and plantations. The name "Bak Cirih" is derived from a local term believed to be associated with environmental conditions and the historical role of traditional leaders. Over time, the village has undergone gradual development in terms of population growth, economic growth, and public facilities [1]–[3]. Despite its potential, Bak Cirih Village also faces several challenges that require serious attention. These include low levels of economic literacy and savings habits among children, limited economic empowerment for housewives, underutilization of local resources in productive activities, and insufficient education on health, environmental sanitation, and the maintenance of agricultural tools. In addition, community participation in environmental management, such as waste management, biopore creation, and organic waste utilisation, still requires improvement [4]–[6].

Within every rural community, homemakers play a crucial role in maintaining family and social well-being. Consciously or unconsciously, many community activities begin at home. Homemakers serve as the driving force in household activities and, in some circumstances, even become the primary breadwinners for their families. This reality is also evident in Bak Cirih Village, Montasik. As multitaskers, homemakers can manage various responsibilities simultaneously, thereby making

significant contributions to their families' livelihoods [7]–[9]. Recognising this situation, the PKM (Community Service Program) team collaborated with the village head and local homemakers to initiate socialisation and training programs on small-scale entrepreneurship. Specifically, the program focused on training homemakers to become home-based entrepreneurs by producing marketable food products, such as colourful sponge cakes, which are simple to prepare and widely accepted by different consumer groups [10]–[12].

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of empowering women in rural areas through skill-based training and small business development. For instance, Hasan [1] demonstrated how the empowerment of traditional cake-making groups increased household income and preserved local culinary traditions. Similarly, Setiawati and Ningsih [4] emphasised the role of financial management training in improving the sustainability of small-scale food processing enterprises. Other community service initiatives also showed that skill development in food innovation, such as substituting alternative flours in sponge cake production, can create market differentiation and enhance local economic resilience [13]–[15]. These findings underscore that empowering rural women through entrepreneurship training not only strengthens family economies but also fosters broader community development.

Based on the situational analysis described above, the PKM team, together with its partners, concluded that the main problems faced by the community of Bak Cirih Village, particularly among homemakers, were closely related to the lack of skills possessed by the local population. This condition was further influenced by the absence of motivation and limited support from the village government, which in turn reduced the community's willingness to engage in entrepreneurship. During the implementation of the community service program, the PKM team also identified several common challenges frequently encountered in rural areas, including limited capacity in financial management, particularly in separating business and personal finances, as well as low productivity among homemakers and a lack of entrepreneurial motivation. In response to these issues, the PKM team introduced socialisation activities and skill development training, with a specific focus on producing colourful sponge cakes. This product was chosen because it is simple to process, widely appealing to both children and adults, and has strong potential as a marketable food product that could contribute to household income and community economic growth.

2. Methodology

The methods employed in this community service program included lectures, discussions, and practical demonstrations. In the first stage, participants received socialisation sessions designed to provide motivation and encouragement for entrepreneurship, particularly for homemakers, enabling them to utilise their skills and generate additional household income. This introductory session emphasised the importance of mindset transformation, self-confidence, and awareness of potential business opportunities within the local environment. In the second stage, the PKM team facilitated interactive discussions with participants regarding the problems they commonly faced. These discussions explored issues such as how to build motivation, foster entrepreneurial interest, and manage small-scale businesses effectively and attractively. Through this stage, participants were encouraged to share their personal experiences and challenges, thereby creating a participatory learning environment where knowledge could be exchanged between the PKM team and the community.

The third stage focused on hands-on practice. Homemakers and other participants were directly involved in the sponge cake production training, from preparing the raw materials to the baking process and presenting the final product. This practice-based approach enabled participants to acquire technical knowledge and develop skills that could be immediately applied at home. The choice of colourful sponge cake as the training material was based on its simplicity, popularity among diverse consumer groups, and strong market potential as a ready-to-sell product. Moreover, the PKM team emphasised food hygiene, packaging, and product innovation during the training process. These aspects were considered crucial to ensure not only the quality of the product but also its competitiveness in the local market. Discussions on financial literacy and simple bookkeeping were also integrated into the sessions

to help homemakers distinguish between household and business finances, which is essential for the sustainability of small-scale enterprises.

Overall, the combination of lectures, discussions, and direct practice provided a holistic learning experience that addressed both motivational and technical aspects of entrepreneurship. This method was deliberately chosen to ensure that participants not only received theoretical knowledge but also practical skills that could be directly applied in their daily lives, thereby enhancing their potential to contribute to the economic development of Bak Cirih Village.

3. Result & Discussion

The socialisation and training program conducted in Bak Cirih Village demonstrated a high level of success, as reflected in the seriousness and enthusiasm of the female teenagers and homemakers who actively participated throughout the sessions. Both the theoretical presentations and the hands-on practice in colourful sponge cake production were received with great interest, indicating strong community engagement and commitment to the training objectives. The direct involvement of the participants also highlighted the program's relevance to their daily lives and its potential impact on household economic improvement.

Based on direct observation during the training activities, several important outcomes were identified. First, there was a high level of attendance, with many homemakers and young women participating throughout the sessions. This reflects the community's willingness to adopt new knowledge and practical skills that can support their future entrepreneurial endeavours. Second, the participants demonstrated intense seriousness and enthusiasm in following the material presented, as evidenced by their participation in interactive discussions and question-and-answer sessions. They were eager to learn about the ingredients used and the techniques for processing colourful sponge cake, thereby demonstrating genuine interest in mastering the craft. Third, the participants expressed their hope that the colourful sponge cake product could become a distinctive culinary identity of Bak Cirih Village. Additionally, they expected the training to contribute to an increase in their daily household income. Beyond these immediate outcomes, the training also fostered a sense of collaboration and solidarity among the women of the village. The activities encouraged knowledge sharing and mutual support, strengthening community bonds and promoting collective motivation for entrepreneurship. This social aspect is crucial in rural contexts, where group-based initiatives often enhance sustainability and long-term impact. Furthermore, the training indirectly addressed issues of self-confidence and empowerment. Many homemakers, who previously lacked exposure to entrepreneurial opportunities, began to recognise their potential to generate income through home-based businesses. By equipping them with technical skills and business insights, the program helped shift their perspectives from being solely homemakers to becoming potential entrepreneurs who could contribute meaningfully to the economic growth of their families and communities.

Lastly, the community's positive response indicates that such initiatives can be scaled up or replicated in other rural areas facing similar challenges. The expectation that a colourful sponge cake could become a local speciality also opens up opportunities for product branding and wider market penetration. This aligns with broader strategies of rural economic empowerment, where local food products can serve as catalysts for sustainable micro-enterprises.

Figure 1 illustrates the atmosphere of a colored sponge cake-making training session. In the upper part of the figure, an instructor is seen demonstrating the process of mixing cake batter in front of participants who are seated in a circle, attentively observing the steps. This setting reflects a participatory learning environment where the instructor provides hands-on guidance, allowing participants to gain direct knowledge and skills through observation. In the lower part of the figure, the instructor is shown placing the colourful cake batter into a steamer. The vibrant colours of the sponge cakes highlight the creative aspect of the training, making the learning experience not only educational but also engaging and enjoyable. This stage also demonstrates the practical application of the knowledge shared, where participants can see the transformation of the mixed batter into ready-to-steam cakes, reinforcing both the technical process and the aesthetic value of the product.



Figure 1. Colored Sponge Cake Making Training

Figure 2 presents the results of the coloured sponge cake-making activity. On the table, a tray of beautifully steamed sponge cakes in vibrant colours, such as pink, green, and yellow, is displayed, representing the successful outcome of the training session. These colourful cakes not only showcase the participants' creativity but also reflect the effectiveness of the step-by-step guidance provided during the practice. The bright colours and soft texture highlight the appealing visual and culinary qualities of the product. Additionally, the figure depicts the instructor explaining and demonstrating the final stage of the steaming process to the participants. The presence of the finished cakes serves as tangible evidence of the knowledge and skills acquired during the session. This moment highlights the importance of practical learning in developing culinary skills, where participants can directly witness the transformation from raw batter to a delicious, visually appealing final product. The successful results motivate participants to apply these techniques independently in their daily lives or even as a potential business opportunity.



Figure 2: The Results of Colored Sponge Cake Making

The implementation of the coloured sponge cake-making training in Gampong Bak Cirih proceeded smoothly and successfully. From the very beginning, both the community partners and the organising team collaborated closely to prepare all the requirements for the activity. This included arranging facilities and infrastructure, as well as ensuring that all equipment used was clean, safe, and comfortable for participants. Such thorough preparation significantly contributed to the effectiveness of the training,

enabling the learning process to run efficiently and without significant obstacles. Several essential aspects emerged as outcomes of this training program. First, the uniqueness and advantages of the product itself became evident. The colored sponge cakes demonstrated distinctive product characteristics that highlight creativity and innovation in food preparation. As emphasised in the context of food product development, innovative efforts are essential in producing value-added products that not only enrich culinary diversity but also create new opportunities for entrepreneurship. The introduction of visually appealing and high-quality sponge cakes reflects this innovative spirit, showing their potential to become a marketable product with high selling value.

Second, the training highlighted the economic value of the product. Community acceptance and consumer response toward the cakes were perceived as promising, particularly if the production process is sustained and replicated. Market analysis indicated that the product received positive acceptance from the target community, reinforcing the feasibility of commercialisation. The colourful sponge cakes have strong potential to be developed into a small-scale business, supported by consumer demand and their attractive market appeal. Thus, the training not only provided knowledge and practical skills but also opened perspectives for participants to consider the economic viability of sponge cake production as a sustainable income-generating activity. In conclusion, this training successfully combined skill enhancement, product innovation, and economic potential into a comprehensive community empowerment program. The positive reception of the coloured sponge cakes demonstrates how traditional culinary practices can be transformed into innovative business opportunities, generating both cultural value and economic benefits. This highlights the importance of community-based training initiatives in promoting local entrepreneurship and enhancing economic resilience at the grassroots level.

4. Novelty of the Study and Community Service

This study introduces several novelties compared to previous community service initiatives focusing on women's empowerment and rural entrepreneurship. First, the training emphasised culinary innovation through the production of colourful sponge cakes, which combine simplicity in preparation with strong visual appeal. Unlike conventional cake-making programs, this approach emphasises product differentiation and creativity as a means of enhancing market competitiveness and consumer appeal. Second, the program not only transferred technical baking skills but also integrated aspects of entrepreneurial motivation, product innovation, and financial literacy into a single training package. This holistic model ensures that homemakers in Bak Cirih Village are not only equipped with practical abilities but also gain awareness of business opportunities, marketing strategies, and sustainable small-scale enterprise management.

Third, the initiative positions colourful sponge cakes as a potential local culinary identity of Bak Cirih Village, providing a branding opportunity that extends beyond household consumption. By encouraging participants to see their products as marketable goods with cultural and economic value, the program expands the scope of community-based training from mere skill-building toward long-term financial resilience. Finally, the study contributes to the literature on community service by demonstrating how participatory and practice-based learning methods, including direct involvement, group discussions, and collaborative problem-solving, can foster self-confidence, social solidarity, and entrepreneurial readiness among rural women. This integrated approach represents a significant advancement in designing empowerment programs that are replicable in other rural contexts with similar socioeconomic conditions.

5. Conclusion

The implementation of the community service program in Gampong Bak Cirih, Montasik, was carried out successfully in accordance with the objectives set by the organising team. The training on making coloured sponge cake received highly positive responses from community partners and residents. This activity not only provided new knowledge, particularly for homemakers, but also served as a motivation

for them to engage in entrepreneurship and contribute to improving their household's economic resilience. Moreover, the training instilled a strong sense of enthusiasm within the community, as participants recognised the potential of such activities to enhance their skills and generate additional income. The success of this program has led to expectations among residents for future socialisation and skill-based training in Montasik, reflecting the community's growing motivation and willingness to participate in similar initiatives actively. These findings underscore the importance of ongoing community empowerment programs in promoting sustainable economic development at the local level.

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