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Increasing The Utilization of Technology And Economic Empowerment of The Maria Immaculata Lekebai Parish

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Abstract: This community service program aims to increase the use of technology and empower the Catholic Youth (OMK) community at the Santa Maria Immaculata Lekebai Parish. This activity is motivated by the significant potential of young people in technology mastery and their strategic role in community economic development. Through intensive training, mentoring, and access to digital platforms, this program encourages OMK to develop skills in information technology and locally-based entrepreneurship. Implementation methods include a participatory approach, knowledge transfer, and hands-on practice in micro-enterprise management and digital marketing. The results of the activity demonstrate an increase in OMK members' understanding and ability to use technology productively and the growth of sustainable creative economic initiatives. This service program is expected to become a model for church-based youth community empowerment that is adaptive to current developments.

Keywords: Technology, Economic Empowerment, Catholic Youth, Community Service, Lakebai Parish.

INTRODUCTION

Young Catholics (OMK) are a strategic group within the Church that needs to be nurtured not only spiritually but also in developing their potential and achieving economic independence. Amidst the challenges of an era that demands creativity and the use of technology, OMK need to be empowered to become agents of change, both within the Church and society.

The Santa Maria Immaculata Parish in Lekebai has significant natural resource potential, such as agricultural land, plantations, and tourist attractions. However, this potential has not been optimally utilized, while young people (OMK) in this area are largely engaged in religious

activities. A lack of technological and entrepreneurial skills is a major challenge. (Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Indonesia, 2021)

This community service program aims to bridge the potential of young people (OMK) with existing natural resources through entrepreneurship training based on organic farming (drip irrigation), the use of social media for promotion, and strengthening an understanding of integral ecology in accordance with the call of *Laudato Si* (Pope Francis, 2015). Collaboration between universities and young people (OMK) is expected to foster the creation of an independent, creative, and competitive youth community.

METHOD

This community service activity was implemented using a participatory approach and based on community empowerment. The implementation method was divided into the following stages:

Observation and Problem Mapping

The initial stage involved field observations and discussions with parish officials and members of the Santa Maria Immaculata Lekebai Parish Youth Organization (OMK) to identify needs, potential natural resources, and challenges faced by the community. This activity also included mapping local economic potential and available technological readiness.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

FGDs were conducted to introduce and build a shared understanding of the concept of integral ecology, technology utilization, and entrepreneurial opportunities based on local potential. These discussions were also used to explore ideas and shared commitments from OMK members to implement sustainable programs.

Training and Workshops

- a. **Organic Vegetable Cultivation Workshop (Hydroponics/Drip Irrigation)**
This training focused on technical skills in farming using simple, environmentally friendly methods. The training was conducted with resource persons from the agricultural sector and included hands-on practice on parish land.
- b. **Social Media Utilization Training**
This workshop aims to provide understanding and skills in using social media as a means of product promotion, publication of OMK activities, and digital community image building.

Mentoring and Monitoring

After the training, regular mentoring is provided to ensure that the implementation of activities is proceeding according to plan. Monitoring is carried out through field visits, evaluation of results, and joint reflection sessions to identify obstacles and identify solutions.

Evaluation and Follow-up

Evaluation is conducted to assess the success of the activities in terms of participation, achievement of objectives, and impact on the youth (OMK) community. Evaluation results serve as the basis for developing follow-up plans, such as business development, market network expansion, or further training.

This method is designed to gradually encourage the independence of youth (OMK) communities through knowledge transfer, capacity building, and sustainable utilization of local resources.

Community Service Program Location and Time

The community service activities at St. Mary Immaculata Parish, Lekebai, will take place in several stages, as follows:

Stage 1

Location: St. Mary Immaculata Parish, Lekebai

Date: May 17, 2025

Time: 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM WITA

Stage 2

Location: St. Mary Immaculata Parish, Lekebai

Date: June 14, 2025

Time: 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM WITA

Stage 3

Location: St. Mary Immaculata Parish, Lekebai Maria Immaculata Lekebai

Date: June 20, 2025

Time: 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM WITA

Stage 4

Location: St. Maria Immaculata Lekebai Parish

Date: July 1, 2025

Time: 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM WITA

The selection of the PKM location at St. Mary Immaculata Lekebai Parish, Mego District, Sikka Regency, was based on considerations that included cultural, social, economic, and spiritual aspects. Culturally, the people in this region have strong values of mutual cooperation, solidarity, and togetherness, making it relevant to the spirit of *Laudato Si'* which emphasizes integral ecology and social responsibility (Pope Francis, 2015). From an economic aspect, Mego District has great natural resource potential, such as coffee, clove, cocoa, candlenut, and vegetable plantations, but these have not been optimally managed by the young community, including OMK. This opens up opportunities for PKM to develop an economic empowerment model based on local potential and is environmentally friendly. From a social perspective, the OMK in Lekebai Parish are active in spiritual activities, but are still limited in productive activities that can improve community welfare, so this research is important to bridge the gap between human resource potential and the utilization of natural resources. Spiritually, this Parish is also the right place because the development of OMK has so far focused more on charitable spiritual activities, so a new approach is needed that is able to integrate the dimensions of faith, ecological responsibility, and economic independence. Thus, St. Maria Immaculata Lekebai Parish was chosen because of its relevance to the local cultural context, regional economic potential, and the need to strengthen ecological spirituality in an effort to create a generation of young Catholics who are independent, creative, and useful for society and the environment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Activity Results

Community service activities conducted at St. Mary Immaculata Parish, Lekebai, demonstrated positive results and aligned with the program's objectives, namely to increase the capacity of Catholic Youth (OMK) in organic farming-based entrepreneurship and the use of digital technology. Some of the key outcomes achieved were:

a. Technical Knowledge and Skills

1. The training on organic vegetable cultivation using drip irrigation successfully enhanced participants' understanding of environmentally friendly agricultural

- techniques. Participants were able to design and implement a simple irrigation system on parish land.
2. Participants demonstrated high enthusiasm during field practice, and several youth groups have begun growing vegetables such as kale, mustard greens, and tomatoes in groups.
- b. Utilizing Social Media for Promotion
1. The social media workshop resulted in improved skills among OMK members in creating digital content, designing promotional materials, and managing community social media accounts.
 2. The official social media accounts of OMK Lekebai were established, which were used to publicize activities, promote agricultural products, and expand networks with the wider community.
- c. Fostering Awareness of Integral Ecology
1. Through focus group discussions and collective reflection, participants demonstrated a better understanding of the concept of integral ecology as outlined in the encyclical *Laudato Si'*. This was reflected in discussions emphasizing the relationship between faith, the environment, and social responsibility.
 2. A commitment emerged from young people to protect the environment and develop sustainable organic farming, as a concrete manifestation of their calling to faith.
- d. Mentoring and Monitoring
1. The PKM team, along with experts, conducted field visits to monitor the progress of the activities. An open dialogue was established between the team and participants to address technical challenges in the field, such as plant maintenance, water flow regulation, and irrigation equipment repair.
 2. Monitoring results showed that more than 75% of participants actively participated in all activities, with a success rate of 80% for drip irrigation implementation in the experimental field.

Discussion

This PKM activity successfully demonstrated that collaboration between universities, churches, and youth (OMK) communities can foster concrete and impactful social transformation. The discussion of the activity's results covered several key points:

a. Program Relevance to Local Needs

This program significantly addresses the needs of the youth community in Lekebai Parish, who have been less involved in productive activities. Using a participatory approach, the program successfully mapped local potential and connected it with youth capacity.

b. Effectiveness of the Drip Irrigation Method

The drip irrigation method has proven to be an efficient solution for agriculture in areas with limited water access. In addition to saving water, this method is also easy to implement and affordable, adapting to the community's economic conditions. This approach strengthens the technical skills of young people and opens up opportunities for sustainable agricultural businesses.

c. Faith-Based and Ecological Empowerment

The integration of Catholic faith values, particularly through the understanding of *Laudato Si'* (The Word of God), strengthens participants' spiritual motivation to actively engage in environmental issues and economic independence. This approach is an

innovation in youth youth development that is not only spiritual but also socio-ecological.

d. Strengthening Digital Capacity

The introduction of social media as a promotional tool is the first step in building market networks and expanding the positive influence of youth youth. This digitalization opens up opportunities for youth youth to enter the digital entrepreneurship ecosystem, which is highly relevant to current developments.

e. Challenges and Solutions

Some challenges faced included limited tools and practical materials, as well as participants' lack of prior experience. However, through a mentoring and reflection approach, these challenges were gradually overcome. Furthermore, the presence of communicative experts was instrumental in building participants' trust and interest in learning.

Implications and Impact

This activity has had a direct impact in the form of:

- a. Increasing the productivity of the youth community
- b. Creating a spirit of mutual cooperation in building the community economy
- c. Strengthening the identity of youth youth as agents of change within the church and society

Indirectly, this activity also opens up the potential for long-term collaboration between universities and parishes to develop follow-up programs, such as:

- a. Development of small-scale farming businesses
- b. Advanced digital entrepreneurship training
- c. Establishment of community seed houses



Figure 1. Observation and Problem Mapping



Figure 2. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Social Media Utilization Training



Figure 3. Organic Vegetable Cultivation Workshop (Hydroponics/drip irrigation)



Figure 4. Mentoring and Monitoring

Figure 5. Results of vegetable cultivation by the PKM team showing the successful application of organic planting techniques.

CONCLUSION

The Community Service (PKM) program held at St. Mary Immaculata Parish, Lekebai, has had a positive impact on empowering Catholic Youth (OMK) in organic farming-based entrepreneurship and digital media utilization. Through a participatory approach based on integral ecology, this activity not only improved participants' technical and digital skills but also fostered awareness of ecological responsibility as part of the Catholic faith.

The training on organic vegetable cultivation using drip irrigation provided the OMK with practical knowledge that can be implemented immediately, while the social media training encouraged them to think creatively and build a productive and competitive community image. Regular mentoring and monitoring ensure the program's sustainability.

Overall, this program has successfully bridged the potential of human resources (HR) with local natural resources (SDA), as well as creating a new space for OMK to contribute to the development of a community economy based on faith, the environment, and social solidarity.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the activity implementation, here are some suggestions that can be considered for future program development:

1. Strengthening the Follow-up Program

A follow-up program should be designed, including long-term mentoring, advanced entrepreneurship training, and the establishment of agricultural or local product-based youth business units.

2. Improving Supporting Facilities and Infrastructure

Collectively procuring organic farming tools and materials will significantly contribute to smooth production and consistent field practices. This includes the construction of seedling houses or permanent demonstration plots.

3. Expanding Networks and Partnerships

Youth should be facilitated to collaborate with other institutions, such as cooperatives, the agricultural office, or local businesses to support product marketing and business sustainability.

4. Integration into Parish Programs

It is hoped that this empowerment program will not operate in isolation but will be integrated into the parish's strategic pastoral plan, so that youth development encompasses spiritual, social, economic, and ecological aspects holistically.

5. Documentation and Publication

OMK activities and their products need to be documented and published regularly to increase visibility, garner support, and inspire other communities within the Catholic Church.

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