

Research Horizon

ISSN: 2808-0696 (p), 2807-9531 (e)

Research Horizon

Volume: 04

Issue: 05

Year: 2024

Page: 103-119

Optimizing Home Yards as an Effort to Ensure Family Food Security in Villages

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Abstract

The role of women to be important in an attempt creating food security. Woman in families in general, ensuring that access to food is sufficient, safe and nutritious for every member family. Contribution concrete from role Woman in development is its membership through roles and participation in Women's Groups Farmers. One of the Women Farmers Groups that has a role in food security family is Group Woman Farmer Aisiyah Which is at in Desa Sei Rotan. The potential of Desa Sei Rotan in this case is the availability of extensive land so that its utilization... Good land can have a big impact on society. Empowerment activities Group Woman Farmer Aisiyah aiming for increase knowledge, skills, and independence Group Woman Farmer in optimize yard to create family food independence and economic income. The goal is housewives who are active members of the Aisiyah Women Farmers Group use method counseling, training and mentoring with approach Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). Approach PRA done with method involving community participation in planning and formulating problems experienced by community. The PRA approach is the right choice to provide opportunities for women to be active in empowerment activities and increase their role in family and public.

Keywords

Role Girl, Group Women Farming, Endurance Food

1. Introduction

Women have great potential in agricultural development. In general, we can see that women's income in rural areas and agriculture contributes significantly to household income. The 23 million heads of farming families in Indonesia, most of them are women, wives or mothers who are also involved in the agricultural sector. However, in reality, the role of women in the agricultural sector is often marginalised due to the patriarchal culture that has developed in society, which has led to a gender division of labour in agriculture, differences in working hours and wage levels in agriculture. Regarding the role of women in agriculture, they are involved in heavy agricultural activities such as cultivating rice fields, as well as light agricultural activities such as cultivating yards as in the Sustainable Food House Programme (Connor & San, 2021). One of the contributions of women in development is their involvement in realising food security. According to Wijayanti & Nursalim, (2023), women are involved in on-farm production, processing and distribution of food.

They not only produce food, but also become the main person responsible for the nutritional intake needs of all family members. Women are the determining factor in food security for their families, starting from the production process on the farm, marketing to providing food at the dinner table and being responsible for fulfilling family nutrition so that women have a very important contribution to family food security (Priminingtyas & Yuliati, 2016). Women's involvement in efforts to realise food security is through joining farmer groups (Kwuta et al., 2024). Farmer groups are defined as a group of farmers/ranchers/gardeners formed based on the interests of environmental conditions, as well as familiarity to improve and develop member businesses (Minkoff-Zern, 2019; Adiaksa & Ilham, 2023). Farmer groups are non-formal organisations that develop from, by, and for farmers with characteristics of knowing each other, trusting each other, being familiar and having a division of tasks and mutual agreements.

Women Farmers Group has an important role in improving economic, social, environmental, education, and advocacy for its members and rural communities (Arintyas, 2024). The focus of the Women Farmers Group in this empowerment is the Women Farmers Group in Desa Sei Rotan. Desa Sei Rotan has a women's farmer group known as 'Women Farmers Group Aisyiyah' which is a Women's Farmer Group that carries out its agricultural activities by utilising yard land to grow crops in making efforts to diversify and food independence in the village. Aisyiyah Women Farmers Group is a community social group of 30 housewives who conduct food diversification programmed by utilising their land and home yards as agricultural centres and freshwater fish farms. Utilising home gardens as an alternative to realising food security in the household will certainly make the community familiar and educated in utilising the potential that exists even if it is only an inch of land (Lam, 2022; Thomas, 2022).



Figure 1. House yard used as an agricultural center

Based on the initial survey, information was found based on information from one of the members of the Aisyiyah Women Farmers Group that the beginning of the formation of this group was from the awareness of a member, Mrs Siti Fatimah Lubis, who is currently the manager of Women Farmers Group Aisyiyah. She utilised the empty land in front of her house to do farming activities. In the beginning, Siti Fatimah planted five chilli trees. Seeing the rapid development of the trees, Mrs Siti Fatimah considered that the land she planted the chilli was fertile soil so that a few months later she began to plant other food variations on the empty land. Until even now, the empty land that she originally planted 5 chilli trees has become a source of varied food needs. Starting from vegetable crops to fruits on the land. Seeing the success of Ibu Siti Fatimah in utilising the empty land in front of her yard, other Women Farmers Group members were interested in doing the same agricultural activities by utilising the land behind their house or the land in front of their house to grow crops.

In the end, because they have the same interests and hobbies, the members decided to create a Women Farmers Group. Another interesting thing is that between one member and another member if they are neighbors, they also 'give up' their land to be planted and then when the harvest comes, they share the harvest with each other. However, there are still few people who realise the importance of this activity, so the activeness of members has also decreased. Problems such as limited knowledge and skills, access to capital and fertilisers, heavy workloads and discrimination and marginalisation are still a concern in this group. It was found that communities in Deli Serdang have problems with fluctuations in food prices that are increasingly expensive, followed by health problems. Based on the problems faced by the partners, this activity targets housewives who are members of the Aisyiyah Women Farmers Group to be given counseling, training and assistance related to the optimisation of the yard so as to realise food security and increase family economic income. In line with that, group members will also be provided with hands-on practice in planting activities. Thus, this activity focuses on the utilisation of the yard by members of the Aisyiyah Women Farmers Group.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Food security

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) explains that food security is a condition where every individual at all times, both physically and economically, has access to food that is fulfilling, safe, and nutritious for the fulfilment of daily nutritional needs. According to Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 18/2012,

food security is a condition of fulfilment of food needs for the State to individuals, which is seen from the availability of sufficient food, both in quantity and quality, safe, nutritious, diverse, affordable, and equitable and does not conflict with religion, beliefs, and culture prevailing in the community, to be able to live healthy and productive in a sustainable manner. There are four important components in achieving food security, among others, Food availability relates to the supply of food through the processes of production, distribution and exchange. One of the common production processes is the production of agricultural crops from small to large scale in a country (Nicholls et al., 2020; Mandang et al., 2020).

Agricultural crop production is not the only absolute necessity for a country to fulfill its food needs. Some countries such as Japan and Singapore do not have the natural resources to produce food optimally, but both countries are able to achieve food security. Food distribution involves the storage, processing, transportation, packaging and marketing of food. Technology, supply chain and transportation infrastructure can also affect food availability. Access to food availability refers to the ability to obtain food and the amount of food allocation (Kristiawan, 2021). The UN states that one of the main factors of hunger and malnutrition is not the unavailability of food, but the inability to access food due to poverty. There are two different types of access to food: 1) direct access, where households produce food themselves, and 2) economic access, where households purchase food from agricultural production elsewhere. Food safety is an effort to ensure the quality and quality of food ingredients to avoid biological contamination, chemical substances, and physical disturbances that can affect the quality of food products and endanger human health (Singh & Mondal, 2019; Pratama, 2024). Food processing must be in accordance with a predetermined method of manufacture to ensure its quality and safety. Food stability refers to an individual's ability to obtain food over a period of time (Mbow et al., 2020). Food stability covers the time dimension of food security, which is divided into chronic food insecurity and temporary food insecurity.

2.2. Women's Role in Food Security

Women have a very important role in food security, especially in the agricultural sector. They are involved in various activities ranging from production, processing, to providing food for the family. In the context of agriculture, women not only function as farm laborers, but also as land managers, marketers of agricultural products, and decision makers in terms of fulfilling family nutrition (Onyalo, 2019; Geovani, 2021). Women contribute more than 50% of global food production, including in Indonesia. They are involved in heavy activities such as cultivating rice fields and also in lighter activities such as managing yards (Teddu & Ahmad, 2023). However, their role is often marginalized due to the patriarchal culture that results in a gender division of labor. After the production process, women are also responsible for processing agricultural products into food that is ready for consumption. They ensure that the food prepared meets the nutritional standards required by family members. Processing errors can negatively affect the quality and quantity of nutrition received by the family. Women are often the main decision-makers when it comes to family nutrition. They determine the type of food served and organize a healthy diet. Thus, women's role in nutrition management is crucial to ensure the health and well-being of family members. Despite women's significant role, they often face challenges, including lack of access to resources, training and participation in agricultural programs. Policies that favor women and empower them in the agricultural sector are needed to increase their contribution to food security (Asadullah & Kambhampati, 2021).

2.3. Home Yard Utilization as a Family Food Security Effort

The utilization of home yards as a family food security effort is an important strategy to increase food self-sufficiency and reduce dependence on external food supplies. According to Patola (2018), the utilization of home yards can help families to grow various types of vegetables, fruits, and herbs that can meet their daily nutritional needs. In addition, a well-managed yard can increase the availability of local food and reduce the cost of family expenses to buy food from the market (Sakuntaladewi et al., 2020; Arini et al., 2024). Based on research conducted by the Food Security Agency of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Indonesia, home yards managed with sustainable agriculture principles can be a source of food that benefits families. Food Security Agency suggests approaches such as vertical farming and hydroponic systems that can be implemented in yards with limited space. This allows for efficient land utilization and increased crop productivity in a small area. Isni (2023), the benefits of yard utilization also include improved social welfare. Farming activities in home yards not only provide food but also strengthen family relationships through cooperation in plant care (Silondae et al., 2021; Karki & Bhandari, 2023). This activity can create a sense of accomplishment and togetherness that is psychologically beneficial. Non-governmental organizations such as Yayasan Mitra Mandiri also support the utilization of home yards by providing training and technical assistance to families who want to start farming activities in their yards. These programs aim to improve farming skills, as well as provide support in terms of access to seeds and farming tools. With this support, families can optimize the potential of their yards to achieve better food security.

3. Methods

This community service activity designed is included in the category in the field of agriculture. The target of counselling in this service is housewives who are members of the Aisiyiah Women Farmers Group. This activity was carried out from May to November 2024. The place chosen as the location of community service activities is Desa Sei Rotan, Percut Sei Tuan District, Kabupaten Deli Serdang, North Sumatra. The method of implementing community service activities used is counselling, training, and mentoring. The approach used is Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), which is an approach used to formulate planning and policies in rural areas by involving the community (Chambers, 1994). The PRA approach is used with the aim of being able to seek the utilisation of the yard in realising food security and increasing family economic income. This program aims to support the Aisiyiah Women Farmers Group in Desa Sei Rotan, Percut Sei Tuan Sub-district, Deli Serdang, North Sumatra. The initial stage of the activity is conducted through a survey to understand the current condition of the yards used by the community, ensuring that the planned activities can be effectively targeted. The survey helps identify issues and customize the needs of the local community. Following the survey, counseling sessions are held with the goal of educating the community on the potential of their yards, methods of cultivating plants, and knowledge about family food security and ways to increase household economic income. The material is delivered through lectures using PowerPoint presentations. A discussion session is also organized to clarify any unclear points from the material and allow participants to ask questions. This interactive discussion encourages participants to provide feedback, raise concerns, and collectively find solutions to common problems. The next phase involves practical activities, where participants, guided by an instructor and the head of the women's farmer group, plant vegetables. This hands-on activity serves as a follow-up to the training and guidance provided. Finally, monitoring is conducted to assess the outcomes of the training and address any issues that may arise during the plant

maintenance process. This monitoring also includes community support and follow-up assistance in the independent practice process.

4. Result

4.1. Socialisation of Aisyiyah Women Farmers Group

The initial stage of the implementation of community empowerment activities was the socialisation of Women Farmers Group Aisyiyah. In this socialisation activity, the speaker presented data on the potential of the Aisyiyah Women Farmers Group to be developed and optimised. The potential resources owned by Women Farmers Group Aisyiyah will be useful if they can be utilised as much as possible. The existence of empty land and yards around the house can be utilised as an agricultural medium to support their household food needs and can be marketed more widely if the agricultural results are good. The availability of these resources is a great start-up capital and central to improving their lives.



Figure 2. Socialisation of the Community Service Programmed

The presentation of data on the potentials of Women Farmers Group Aisyiyah is one of the main objectives of the Community Service Programme. One of the outcomes to be achieved in this Community Service Programme is to increase community awareness to be able to optimise the use of household yards by farming as an effort to achieve food self-sufficiency. That way, one of the activities carried out by the empowerment team to motivate the community to be enthusiastic in efforts to increase food self-sufficiency is by providing rewards and appreciation in the form of superior seeds to 10 selected people who have succeeded in developing their land so that efforts to optimise land and yards can be achieved.



Figure 3. Submission of the aims and objectives of the empowerment team to be achieved together with KWT Aisyiyah

The speaker also explained the purpose and objectives of the existence of the community service programmed team from the University of North Sumatra. The aims and objectives of the community service programmed were explained in detail to all socialisation participants present. While conveying the aims and objectives of the empowerment team, the speaker also explained related education and knowledge about food security and how to be able to increase family economic income from agricultural activities in the yard. This activity was carried out so that both the empowerment team and KWT Aisyiyah have the same understanding and goals regarding the optimisation of yard land to support household food security.

4.2. Problem Identification

After the socialisation of potential resources by the speakers was completed, the next series of activities was the identification of problems and constraints that have been felt by all members of KWT Aisyiyah. In accordance with the design that has been proposed, the empowerment team uses a Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach to be able to seek the utilisation of yard land in realising food security and increasing family economic income. The Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach is a participatory research method to explore the potential and problems in a community. The application of the PRA approach and method can provide a great and directed opportunity to involve the community, so that programmes and activities that will be designed in the future can be in accordance with the needs of the community and the sustainability of the programme can be guaranteed. In the activity, all members of the KWT group who attended were asked to write down the obstacles and problems they experienced both personally and in groups related to the agricultural activities they had carried out so far.

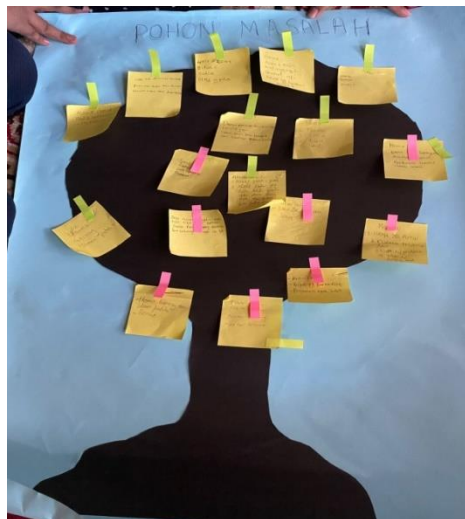


Figure 4. Problem tree of the constraints of Women Farmers Group Aisyiyah members

In this session, there was a joint discussion session where fellow members shared the constraints and problems, they felt with the empowerment team. The paper containing the points of problems and obstacles faced by each member of the group was then collected and discussed together. In this case, the head of the Service Team, Mrs Rahma Hayati Harahap, S.Sos., M.Sos and Mrs Murni (Women Farmers Group Aisyiyah Supervisor) guided the discussion session. After being discussed together, it was found that some of the main obstacles faced by the members of Women Farmers Group Aisyiyah include the use of yard land that is

not optimal because there are still some lands that are still empty and have not been planted with seeds or plant seeds, disturbances from pests and weather, limited tools for farming, lack of knowledge of group members in cultivating various crops, and their difficulty in marketing their commodity products, where one of the causes is due to fluctuations.



Figure 5. Discussing problems together related to the obstacles experienced by KWT Aisyiyah members

4.3 Training and Practice Phase 1: Handover of needs during the planting process to all members of Aisyiyah Women Farmers Group

The next activity carried out is the delivery of needs during the farming process to Women Farmers Group Aisyiyah. This activity was carried out directly by the empowerment team to all members of the Women Farmers Group Aisyiyah group. The handover of needs for farming activities aims to encourage community interest and facilitate the needs they need to be able to optimally utilise the home yard. This is in accordance with the solutions and targets to be achieved by the empowerment team, namely increasing community interest and awareness in optimising home yards as a medium for farming in order to maintain family food security.



Figure 6. Delivery of Women Farmers Group Aisyiyah's agricultural needs



Figure 7. Handover of seedlings and seeds to Women Farmers Group Aisiyah



Figure 8. Distribution of seeds and seedlings to Women Farmers Group Aisiyah members

The required equipment and materials for the program include 10 hoes, 2,000 polybags, 10 watering cans (gembor), and 10 shovels. In addition, there are 2,000 seeds and 1,000 seedlings of various plants such as green chilies, tomatoes, tip eggplant, index eggplant, chili ticks, papaya, cauliflower, sweet vegetables, soup leaves, bitter mustard greens, cayenne pepper, celery, mustard greens, pakcoy, and various medicinal plants. The program also requires 50 kg of NPK organic fertilizer and 10 cubic meters of fired husk, soil, and compost, priced at Rp. 200,000 per cubic meter. Lastly, 30 pieces of gloves and hats are needed for the participants.

4.4. Training and Practice Phase 2: Seed Sowing and Seedling Planting (I)

The next stage of training and practice after the handover of Women Farmers Group Aisiyah's agricultural needs was the sowing of seeds and planting of seedlings that had been given. The seeds and seedlings were then distributed to all Women Farmers Group Aisiyah members equally. At this stage, all Women Farmers Group Aisiyah members will plant the seeds in their own backyards. Women Farmers Group Aisiyah members are also very allowed to use all the materials that have been given to facilitate the planting process.



Figure 9. Seed sowing practice in the home yard of Women Farmers Group Aisyiyah members

Seeding is the initial stage in the farming process. The seeding process will greatly affect the growth of strong, healthy, and quality plant seedlings from the start. Seed sowing is done in the yard of each Women Farmers Group Aisyiyah member's house. The planting media and tools used in seeding are soil, polybags, a mixture of soil and compost, fertiliser, paddles, and hoes. The seeding media used has been ensured to be sterile in order to avoid pests and disease infections that can damage plant seeds and seedlings. Then, the seeding container is filled up to $\frac{3}{4}$ of the seeding media. After planting the seeds, the soil is patted to make it compact so that the roots can grow well.



Figure 10. Watering the seeds

The next step is to water thoroughly and regularly so that good contact between the soil and the planting seeds can result in germination. In addition, it is also important to maintain temperature and pressure during the seed sowing process.



Figure 11. Planting seedlings in the yard of Women Farmers Group Aisiyah member's house



Figure 12. Planting seedlings in the empty yards of Women Farmers Group Aisiyah members' homes

Planting of seedlings is done in the home yard with planting media and tools such as soil, a mixture of soil and compost, hoes, shovels, and fertiliser. Quality seedlings are then planted directly into the soil media by ensuring that the soil used is fertile soil in order to produce quality commodities. Planting seedlings is done in several yards and vacant land owned by residents so that the optimisation of household yards can be utilised to the fullest.

4.5. Training and Practice 3: Seed Sowing and Seedling Planting (II)

Apart from sowing seeds and planting seedlings in the yard, sowing seeds and planting seedlings are also done in seedling houses. A seedling house is a place or area specifically designated as a place for processing plant seeds into seedlings or seedlings so that they can be planted in a wider soil medium. The seedling house used is part of the land owned by the head of Women Farmers Group Aisiyah which is designated as a place for processing plant seeds. The nursery is located next to the house of the head of Women Farmers Group Aisiyah, Ibu Fatimah. Sowing of other seeds is done in the nursery house in order to optimise the growth of seeds with stable temperature, evenly distributed air humidity, and protect the seeds from direct rain and strong winds as well as the seeds can be protected from pest attacks.



Figure 12. Seed sowing and seedling planting in the seedling house



Figure 13. Progress of seed sowing and seedling planting in the seedling house

5. Discussion

Community empowerment activities have been carried out up to 70%. After carrying out community empowerment activities that have been designed using the PRA method, significant progress has been made (Margayaningsih, 2018). Previously empty yards have been planted with horticultural and medicinal plants. Socialisation given to members of Women Farmers Group Aisyiyah was able to increase their awareness and motivation in optimising the yard as an agricultural medium. Through this empowerment activity, it is expected that each member of KWT Aisyiyah can maintain the family's food balance through food self-sufficiency that has been taught to them. The existence of Women Farmers Group Aisyiyah has strengthened the position and role of women in maintaining food security, especially family food security. With this, it is expected that local and national food security in Indonesia can also be well maintained in line with increasing public awareness and strengthening the role of women in food security (Kunyanti & Mujiono, 2021). The implementation of this Community Service Programme has not been completed, so there are still work programmes that will be implemented in the future.

Crop harvesting training and practice refers to the empowerment team's efforts to improve the community's agricultural skills in managing and harvesting agricultural products in an efficient and productive manner (Rivai, R. S., & Anugrah, 2011). This activity will generally begin with training covering basic techniques in the harvesting process, the importance of proper harvesting timing, and how to maintain the quality of the harvest over time. Women Farmers Group members will be socialised on various harvesting methods that are suitable for the type of crops they manage, as well as the equipment needed to minimise damage to the crops. Furthermore, field practice is an important part of the training. The empowered participants will be directly involved in the harvesting process. Participants will practice the harvesting techniques that have been socialised to

them previously, such as how to harvest horticultural crops without damaging the remaining plants, as well as how to group the crops according to their size and quality. This practice and training aims to provide new knowledge to participants in the practice of harvesting crops that are efficient and optimal (Bello et al., 2021).

The training also covers aspects of post-harvest management which includes how to store, pack and distribute the harvest to keep it fresh and of high quality. The participants will be socialised on proper storage methods to prevent crop damage and spoilage, as well as packaging techniques that can increase the marketability of their crops (Devi et al., 2023). This is important to do in accordance with the expected goal of this community empowerment programme, which is to ensure that the harvest can not only be enjoyed by consumers with good quality, but can also be marketed more effectively so that there is economic income obtained by participants. Finally, evaluation and feedback are part of this activity to assess the effectiveness of the training and practices that have been conducted. All participants were given the opportunity to ask questions, address challenges they faced, and share their experiences. This feedback helps the organisers to identify shortcomings that need to be improved and optimise future training programmed.

Evaluation and monitoring are two important aspects of project, programmed and other activity management (Maheshwari & Goyal, 2014). Evaluation and monitoring aim to ensure that the objectives that have been designed and determined from the beginning are adjusted to the target needs of the community so that potential resources can be utilised optimally and efficiently. Activity monitoring is an important aspect of empowerment to analyse programmed implementation in a sustainable manner (Utami et al. 2024). The process of monitoring activities is carried out by collecting data and information periodically during the implementation of empowerment activities. The main objective is to ensure that activities can run according to plan, identify and deal with problems that may arise, and improve programmed efficiency. Monitoring activities are carried out with several important components such as monitoring progress, resources used, budget, and results achieved. Monitoring activities can provide useful feedback for improvements and adjustments to strategies so that the maximum impact can be felt by the community (Khan & Bibi, 2011). Activity evaluation is an assessment process conducted to measure the effectiveness and impact of the activities undertaken. This process usually involves data related to the achievement of objectives, the results achieved, as well as feedback from the communities involved. The main purpose of an evaluation is to assess the extent to which a programmed has achieved its objectives, identified programmed successes and shortcomings, and provided information that will be useful for future improvements. Evaluation can help measure the long-term impact of the programmed on the community. Conducting a thorough evaluation, the organising team can optimise the strategies and approaches used, and ensure that the programmed that have been implemented can provide maximum benefits to the communities involved in the Community Service Program activities.

6. Conclusion

Community empowerment activities have been implemented up to 70%, with significant progress after using the PRA method. The utilization of empty yards into horticultural and medicinal plant areas has shown positive results. Socialization to Women Farmers Group Aisyiyah members increases their awareness and motivation to optimize land as an agricultural medium. This empowerment aims for Women Farmers Group members to be able to maintain family food balance through food independence. Women Farmers Group Aisyiyah plays a role in strengthening family food security, which will later have an impact

on local and national food security. Women Farmers Group members will be given training in effective and efficient harvesting techniques, including how to harvest without damaging plants and grouping the harvest based on size and quality. The training also includes post-harvest management, such as good storage and packaging to maintain product freshness. Through this activity, it is hoped that the harvest can be marketed effectively, so that Women Farmers Group members gain economic benefits. Evaluation and monitoring are important parts in ensuring that the program runs according to plan and achieves the goals that have been set. Monitoring is carried out periodically to identify problems and improve program efficiency. Evaluation helps measure the long-term impact of the program, assess success, and provide input for future improvements. Thus, empowerment strategies and approaches can be optimized to provide maximum benefits to the community.

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank the University of North Sumatra for supporting the community service program. I would also like to thank the Community Service Institute of the University of North Sumatra for holding the community empowerment program. Especially to all members of the Women Farmers Group Aisyiyah who have been willing to participate in this community service program from beginning to end, as well as to all stakeholders in Desa Sei Rotan who were involved. I also express my gratitude to fellow members of this empowerment program, namely Mrs. Lina Sudarwati and Mr. T. Ilham Saladin who have worked well together during the activity process. Also, to all students involved in this community empowerment program.

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