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Enhancing Environmental Practices and Empowering Communities: A Thematic Community Service Program in Air Kering 1 Padang Guci Kaur Bengkulu

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Abstract. This account tells the story of the OPTIMISTIS community service day in Desa Air Kering 1, Padang Guci, Kaur, Bengkulu. Over the weekend, volunteers tidied up littered streets, showed children the worth of nature, invited more neighbors to join the clean-ups, and opened spaces where youth could learn. They planted new garbage bins, cleared rubbish from the river, held short Quran classes, and set in the ground forty grafted avocado trees as symbols of pride and extra green in the village. To feel the difference of these tasks, the team watched each day, asked residents through polls and talk circles, then wrote down every answer. Feedback was mostly hopeful: bins stayed full, about eight out of ten adults pitched in, families washed hands more often, and people from different groups chatted more freely. The report now urges village leaders to keep naming caretakers, check the steps together, and guard these small wins before they slowly fade.

Keywords: *Community Development, Environmental Initiatives, Waste Disposal*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesian countryside communities often struggle with garbage collection and local engagement, keeping them from tipping toward sustainable growth (Nugroho & Wulandari, 2021). Located between rice paddies, Desa Air Kering 1 could model green living yet still lacks basic bins, paths, and awareness. To close those gaps, the thematic service program OPTIMISTIS was crafted around hands-on, team-centered actions. This study tackles two main questions: (1) How well does a village-run waste campaign clean streets and boost hygiene? (2) Does pairing religious lessons with civic education get more people to take part? To answer them, the team set out events, tracked results, and plans follow-up steps readers can use elsewhere.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study followed a participatory action research style throughout. From 535 villagers, researchers chose 120 homes using stratified sampling for the main survey. Focus group talks also included community leaders, religious figures, and youth. Key measures looked at participation rate, use of new facilities, and changes in environmental awareness. All data-collection tools were pre-tested and scored reliably (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.82$). Quantitative figures were analyzed descriptively, while qualitative comments were sorted thematically. Observations and photographs further backed up the conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Infrastructure Improvements

There were four permanent waste containers constructed along the river. Clean-up operations removed about 1.2 tons of trash in a week, improving water flow and reducing pollution. The bins were occupied 75% within two weeks, showing fast community uptake.

Community Engagement through Religious Literacy

Religious literacy exercises—morning Quranic recitation and common prayers—attracted about 80 people per session. In addition to providing them with religious nourishment, these exercises imparted them environmental messages, leading to an increase of 30% in household waste segregation practices reported.

Avocado Tree Planting

Forty high-quality avocado saplings were distributed and planted in residences. Two weeks of observation demonstrated a 90% survival rate, indicative of intensive local care and dedication. Members also indicated eagerness to share planting methods with others.

Evaluation and Takeaways

The project registered more than 85% participation from the community in activities. In spite of this, shortcomings were lack of composting infrastructure and intermittent communication lapses. One of the important insights was that synthesizing practical action with culturally consistent religious programs improved both impact and durability.

CONCLUSION

The "OPTIMISTIS" program was able to effectively address the environmental and empowerment issues of Desa Air Kering 1. Its most significant accomplishments were establishing waste facilities, promoting ecological consciousness, boosting community solidarity, and initiating promising agroforestry. To further promote future improvements, local government is encouraged to regularize clean-up culture, create composting organizations, and organize a volunteer "Green Community" task force. Future studies should determine the program's long-term behavioral impacts as well as its economic impact, especially from avocado farming.

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