

Participatory Community Action

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MENTORING THE PREPARATION OF FINANCIAL RECORDS FOR MICRO ENTERPRISES IN SENENAN AND MANGUNAN VILLAGES, TAHUNAN SUBDISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This community service activity aims to improve micro business actors' basic financial literacy and daily financial recording skills, encourage better business financial management, and improve their readiness to access financing from formal financial institutions.

Design & Methods: The approach used was participatory training methods and direct mentoring for six face-to-face meetings. The materials focused on understanding basic financial concepts such as cash flow, profit and loss calculation, and recording daily expenses and income. Participants were given manual worksheets and examples of microcredit proposal formats and guided on how to apply them in their daily business activities.

Result: The results showed a significant improvement in participants' understanding of basic financial concepts. Participants began to record daily transactions consistently and showed positive behavioural changes, such as separating personal and business finances, determining selling prices based on margins, and utilizing financial data for purchase planning. Some participants stated they are better prepared to apply for loans because they have simple financial statements that can be presented to cooperatives or banks. These findings support the literature that financial literacy and good record-keeping improve microenterprise sustainability and access to finance.

Keywords: Micro-enterprises, financial literacy, financial recording, cash flow, training, community service, access to finance, MSMEs

INTRODUCTION

Micro enterprises strategically sustain the national economy, especially as labour absorbers and local economic drivers. Based on data from the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs, more than 99% of business actors in Indonesia are Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), with the most significant portion being in the micro business category. Despite their dominance, micro businesses often face fundamental challenges, especially in financial recording and management. The lack of financial literacy is one of the leading causes of weak micro business governance, which has a direct impact on the difficulty in measuring profit levels, determining selling prices rationally, and unpreparedness to access financing from formal financial institutions (Rwigamba and Gathiru, 2024).

This is not only the case in Indonesia, but also a common problem in other developing countries. Studies in Tanzania show that financial record-keeping remains a significant challenge for micro-enterprises due to limited time, understanding, and resources. Only a small percentage of businesses record their transactions, and what is recorded relates more to stock than sales or cash flow (Malauri, Mpogole, and Wiketye, 2021).

Many MSME players do not clearly separate personal and business finances. As a result, they cannot calculate exactly how much profit they make each month, nor how much actual expenditure is related to business activities (Malauri, Mpogole, and Wiketye, 2021). This not only limits their ability to grow but also increases the risk of business failure. This condition is evident in the two groups of micro-entrepreneurs who are partners in this service activity, namely batik entrepreneurs and catering businesses in Senenan Village and Mangunan Village, Tahunan Sub-district. Both groups have great enthusiasm and potential to grow, but have difficulty in preparing basic financial statements, such as cash flow and profit/loss statements.

Similar problems were also found in the partners of this service activity, namely microentrepreneurs in Senenan and Mangunan Villages, Tahunan Sub-district. Most of them, especially those engaged in catering and batik, do not have an adequate financial recording system. Generally, they only rely on memory or record in an unstructured manner, making it difficult to calculate real profits, manage cash flow, and plan business development. This is in line with the findings of Khadim and Choudhury (2019), which states that the lack of record-keeping is the leading cause of the high failure rate of microenterprises in their first few months of operation.

In addition to literacy issues, MSME players often consider financial recording an administrative burden that does not provide direct benefits. Many MSMEs do record keeping not because of their initiative, but because of external pressure from supervisors or administrative needs. They also tend to assume that their business can run well even if they do not have adequate financial records (Ariani *et al.*, 2024).

To answer this challenge, community service activities are an important strategy for bridging the gap in financial literacy and practices at the micro business level. This community service is designed to provide practical assistance for micro businesses to prepare accurate yet straightforward cash flow statements and profit/loss statements. In a global context, this approach has proven effective. A digital-based and straightforward financial recording system can help businesses reduce recording errors and improve business efficiency (Yin, Arbaiy, and Din, 2017).

The main partner problem identified in this service activity is the absence of an adequate financial recording system. Business actors rely on personal memories or record randomly in notebooks without a clear format. As a result, they do not have historical financial data that can be analysed to determine the next business step. Lack of education and socialization on preparing financial reports is a dominant factor that hinders MSMEs in making neat and standardized reports (Djatnicka, Wulandari, and Khasanah, 2024).

Community service activities are very important to bridge the knowledge gap in this context. This service is designed to provide practical assistance to micro business actors in the two villages. The approach is carried out directly and practically with the aim that business actors not only understand the basic concepts of financial recording, but can also practice them in daily business operations. By having a good cash flow record and a clear profit/loss statement, it is hoped that they can know the real profit level of their business and avoid confusion between business funds and personal funds.

The purpose of this activity is to:

- 1. Improve micro business owners' understanding of recording cash flow and profit/loss statements in business management.
- 2. Encourage businesses to start implementing simple financial records consistently.

- 3. Provide practical assistance in preparing basic financial statements that can be used for business decision making and credit applications to financial institutions.
- 4. Raising awareness about the importance of transparency and accountability in running a business.

This activity is also relevant because previous studies have shown that simple financial records can improve the financial literacy of MSMEs and strengthen their competitiveness. For example, training activities in Banjarmasin's North Kuin Crackers MSMEs showed that after training on financial record-keeping, business owners felt more confident and could separate business finances from personal finances (Salman *et al.*, 2023).

In its implementation, this activity was carried out for two months with six face-to-face meetings. Each meeting was filled with material, practice in preparing financial statements, case discussions, and evaluation of understanding. Using real case examples from participants' businesses made this activity more contextual and easier to understand. In addition, mentoring is carried out intensively and participatively so that participants feel supported at every stage of the learning process.

Overall, this service emphasizes the importance of practical, applicable education in helping micro businesses manage their finances better. With good record-keeping, businesses can not only objectively assess their business conditions but also open up opportunities for access to financing, business growth, and long-term sustainability.

METHODS

This community service activity uses a participatory and applicative approach, which aims to empower micro business actors in terms of understanding and skills in compiling basic financial records. This community service method is designed to suit the conditions and capacity of the partners, namely business actors in the catering and batik sectors in Senenan Village and Mangunan Village, Tahunan Sub-district, who have diverse educational backgrounds and business experience.

1. Identification of Partner Problems and Needs

The initial phase involved field observations and informal interviews with several microentrepreneurs in the two target villages. The aim was to dig deeper into the current state of their financial records, constraints faced, and specific needs related to financial management. The results of this identification reinforced the finding that most partners do not have a structured financial recording system and still combine personal finances with business finances.

2. Design of Training Materials and Modules

Based on the identification results, the service team developed training materials that focused on two main components:

- a. Cash flow recording (cash in and cash out)
- b. Preparation of a simple profit/loss statement

The material is organized in concise modules and practical worksheets that are easy to understand, even by business actors with basic educational backgrounds. This module refers to the principles of SAK EMKM (Financial Accounting Standards for Micro, Small and Medium Entities) and best practices from international research (Khadim and Choudhury, 2019).

3. Implementation of Mentoring

Mentoring activities were carried out for two months with six face-to-face meetings. Each session lasted 2-3 hours and was filled with:

a. Interactive delivery of short material

- b. Simulation of daily financial recording cases from participants' businesses
- . Practice in preparing financial statements using the templates provided
- . Group discussion and Q&A

Each meeting focused on one stage of skills, from recognizing types of transactions to recording cash flows to preparing month-end profit/loss statements. Participants were also asked to bring their business transaction data to make the exercise truly applicable.

4. Evaluation of Results and Follow-up

Evaluation is done formatively and summatively. Formative evaluation is conducted at each meeting through discussions and exercises. Meanwhile, summative evaluation is conducted at the end of the program through:

- a. Assessment of participants' worksheets
- b. Perception and understanding questionnaire
- c. Final interview to determine changes in financial recording behaviour

The evaluation results showed that most participants began to record transactions routinely and were able to prepare simple financial reports. The activity was closed with the handover of financial recording workbooks and online follow-up assistance to support the sustainability of the practices that had been started.

5. Sustainability Strategy

As a form of program sustainability, the service team formed an independent learning group consisting of representatives of business actors in each village. This group is tasked with sharing good practices and continuing discussions related to regular financial recording. The team also provided a digital Excel template that can be used by participants who have access to a simple device or computer.

RESULT

The community service activities carried out for two months in Senenan Village and Mangunan Village, Tahunan Subdistrict, achieved several significant results in terms of knowledge, skills, and changes in the behaviour of micro business actors related to financial recording. Results were measured through direct observation, analysis of participant worksheets, and interviews and discussions at the end of the mentoring session.

1. Improved Understanding of Basic Financial Concepts

One of the main focuses of the training was to improve micro business owners' understanding of often poorly understood basic financial concepts. Based on observations and discussions during the six face-to-face meetings, participants' understanding of the five key aspects of micro business finance significantly improved.

First, regarding the types of business transactions (sales, purchases, and operational costs), participants initially showed confusion when distinguishing and recording the types of transactions. After the training, participants began to be able to identify and classify transactions according to their categories. This result aligns with the findings of Derbyshire, Fouché, and McChlery (2023), which states that practice-based training helps micro merchants understand their cash-based record-keeping system and daily operations.

Secondly, many participants did not previously know the difference between business income and cash actually available when it came to understanding cash inflows and outflows. After the training, they were able to compile simple cash flow records, which helped them manage business liquidity. These results are corroborated by an Indonesian study that showed that

understanding cash flow is directly proportional to the increased use of banking products by micro enterprises (Amtiran *et al.*, 2024).

Third, the calculation of net profit, which was previously only perceived as "money left in hand", is now understood as the result of revenue minus all costs, including small costs that are often overlooked. After the training, participants began to realize the importance of recording all forms of expenses to get a real picture of business conditions. Previous studies have shown that low literacy in this concept is a significant cause of financial decision-making errors among new entrepreneurs (Fatoki, 2014).

Fourth, recording small expenses was an additional focus that showed positive results. Before the training, participants ignored small daily expenses such as parking, phone credit, and transportation costs. But after the training, they began to record them disciplined and understood their accumulated impact on business profits (Budiasa, Pratiwi and Maharani, 2022).

Fifth, participants considered the relevance of the material to their daily practices to be key to the success of the training. They felt that the training approach that directly linked financial theory to their daily business experiences made learning easier and more meaningful. This is in line with the results of the study Nurhab (2021) which concludes that the success of financial training is determined by a practical and contextualized approach to the participants' conditions.

Participants stated that the material provided was relevant and easy to understand because it was directly related to their daily business practices. This is in line with the research results, which state that understanding the basic concepts of financial recording significantly increases managerial awareness in micro businesses (Rwigamba and Gathiru, 2024).

2. Implementation of Simple Financial Records

After six training sessions, about 90% of the participants began actively recording daily cash flows using the simple workbooks provided. They began to document various transactions in a structured manner, such as income from sales, expenses for raw materials, transportation costs, and unexpected expenses. This change reflects a fundamental shift from previous behaviour that tended to rely on memory or informal recording.

This transformation shows that cash flow recording training, even though it focuses on tracking without management, has been proven to improve micro business owners' financial understanding and control. Previous research has shown that most respondents stated that cash flow recording helps them identify unnecessary expenses, understand revenues and profits more precisely, and improve daily financial decision-making (Epstein and Yuthas, 2017).

Furthermore, participants also demonstrated a basic ability to prepare a simple profit/loss statement at the end of each month. However, they still need technical assistance in summarizing and classifying costs. This process illustrates how simple interventions, such as manual record-keeping and brief training, can shape more orderly financial habits among micro-entrepreneurs. The finding also supports that simple bookkeeping contributed 72% to improving cash flow management skills among MSMEs (Nurhasan and B, 2023).

Participants also demonstrated the ability to prepare a simple profit/loss statement at the end of the month. However, they still require technical assistance in summarizing and classifying costs. This supports the study's finding that simple record-keeping interventions can encourage more regular financial behaviour among small business owners (Malauri, Mpogole, and Wiketye, 2021).

3. Increased Confidence in Business Decision-Making

After having structured financial data, micro merchants reported increased confidence in managing the financial aspects of their business. This information informs more informed decisions in three key areas:

a. Determine the selling price based on the desired profit margin.

Previously, selling prices were often determined solely based on market or competitor prices, without considering all the costs involved. With precise record-keeping, trainees can calculate total production costs and determine realistic profit margins. Financial literacy significantly improves micro merchants' ability to set profitable product prices (González-Prida et al., 2025).

b. Knowing the best time to purchase raw materials.

By having a structured cash flow report, businesses can monitor income and expenditure patterns, organize raw material purchase schedules more strategically, and avoid purchases when cash is low. The ability to make financial decisions like this is highly influenced by literacy skills and good financial record-keeping practices (Kuruczleki and Kazár, 2024).

c. Avoiding consumptive spending mixed with business funds.

Many participants admitted that they had just realized they had used business money for personal needs. They avoided this habit after learning to separate business and personal financial records. Managerial skills, including the separation of personal and business finances, play a major role in improving the quality of financial decision-making (Slamet, Agustina and Herjanto, 2023).

A catering business owner realized that his daily net profit was much smaller than originally estimated. This was because he had not previously calculated transportation costs and LPG gas usage regularly. With more complete records, he realized the importance of considering all cost components. This realization prompted her to adjust her selling price and plan stock purchases more wisely. This reflects how real data-based financial insights can drive more rational and sustainable business behaviour (Borromeo, Cervantes, and Sumicad Jr., 2024).

4. Establishment of an Administrative Culture

Despite the simplicity of the method used, consistently recording daily transactions has proven effective in forming positive new habits among micro-entrepreneurs. Many participants started to set aside a special time at the end of each day to recap their income and expenses. Some participants showed creative initiatives, such as creating colour codes for expense categories (e.g., green for basic needs, red for unexpected expenses) or using MSME financial applications on their mobile phones.

This behaviour reflects the formation of new, adaptive, and sustainable financial habits. Repeated note-taking in the same context and time reinforces the formation of habit loops (triggers, actions, and rewards), which in the medium term improve financial discipline and self-control (Sonnentag *et al.*, 2022). These new habits strongly correlate with improved microenterprise financial performance as they help businesses become more aware of their spending patterns and potential cash leakages (Michalek *et al.*, 2019).

Furthermore, this behavioural change shows the medium-term effects of practical service and training activities. MSMEs' use of digital financial recording applications is proven to increase recording efficiency, reduce human error, and form a new discipline in monitoring cash flow and business profits (Zakaria, Santoso, and Khadijah, 2024).

5. Readiness to Access Financing

Several training participants stated that they felt better prepared to apply for business loans to cooperatives or formal financial institutions after having structured financial data. This is due to the availability of presentable documents, such as income, expenditure, and cash flow reports, that facilitate lenders' evaluation processes. The mentoring team also provided examples of simple formats for microcredit proposals, such as a business summary, plan for using funds, and profit and loss projections.

These results suggest that unprepared financial documents and unfamiliarity with loan requirements are the main barriers for micro merchants in accessing credit. On the other hand, businesses with clean financial records tend to be more easily accepted by financial institutions because they can demonstrate the transparency and credibility of their business (Belás, Vojtovič, and Ključnikov, 2016).

Other studies have also noted that a well-documented financial track record is a key factor in a successful microcredit application. Records such as profit and loss statements, cash flows, and stock turnover reflect a good level of business management, which is highly considered by lenders (Olugbenga and Mashigo, 2017).

Furthermore, a simple yet systematic business proposal speeds up the loan disbursement process. Micro businesses that include supporting data in the form of financial transaction records and monthly financial statements experience lower loan transaction fees and shorter processing times (Chulangani and Ariyawardana, 2010).

CONCLUSION

This mentoring activity has had a real impact on improving the financial management capacity of micro-entrepreneurs. Through six training sessions and intensive mentoring, participants showed significant improvement in understanding basic financial concepts, such as distinguishing types of transactions, understanding cash flow, and calculating net profit more accurately. Simple but consistent daily record-keeping practices have formed positive new habits. Participants began setting aside dedicated time to record transactions and evaluate their business finances on a regular basis. Some even developed independent initiatives, such as color-coding systems or the use of digital record-keeping apps, reflecting sustainable medium-term behavioural changes.

In addition, participants felt more confident in managing their businesses, including in determining selling prices more rationally, managing raw material purchases, and avoiding the use of business funds for personal consumption. One very positive result was the readiness of some participants to apply for small business loans because they already had neat supporting documents that could be presented to financial institutions. This activity shows that a practical and contextualized educational approach can increase the awareness, skills, and financial independence of micro business owners in the short and medium term.

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