

FINANCIAL PLANNING FOR FEMALE MICRO-ENTREPRENEURS IN MALAYSIA

Erna Setiany^{1)*}, Nurul Hidayah²⁾, Deden Tarmidi³⁾, Khozaeni Bin Rahmad⁴⁾, Afzal Izzaz
Zahari⁵⁾

^{1),2),3)}Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Mercu Buana

⁴⁾Pertubuhan Masyarakat Masyarakat Indonesia, Penang Malaysia

⁵⁾School of Management, University Sains Malaysia

*e-mail: erna.setiany@mercubuana.ac.id

Abstract

Female migrant workers and Indonesian-descent micro-entrepreneurs in Malaysia face practical constraints in financial literacy, household–business cash-flow separation, and cross-border financial planning. This international joint community service—organized by Universitas Mercu Buana (UMB) with PERMAI Pulau Pinang and Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)—delivered a contextualized training on budgeting, saving, and simple record-keeping for Indonesian communities in Pulau Pinang. The method combined partner mobilization, needs scoping, a face-to-face workshop, and a post-activity focus group discussion to inform sustainability steps. Thirty-three participants attended on 27 April 2025 at Yayasan An-Nahdhoh. Immediate outcomes included clearer understanding of household budgeting, the importance of separating personal and micro-business cash flows, and better coordination of remittances with families in Indonesia. Public outputs (video and mass-media coverage) enhanced accountability and replication potential. The findings suggest that simple, behaviorally oriented tools—delivered via trusted diaspora partnerships—can improve planning readiness and support micro-enterprise resilience.

Keywords: *Financial Planning, Financial Literacy, Micro-Entrepreneurs, Migrant Workers, Community Service*

Abstrak

Pekerja migran perempuan dan wirausaha mikro keturunan Indonesia di Malaysia menghadapi kendala praktis dalam literasi keuangan, pemisahan arus kas rumah tangga-bisnis, dan perencanaan keuangan lintas batas. Pengabdian masyarakat gabungan internasional ini—diselenggarakan oleh Universitas Mercu Buana (UMB) dengan PERMAI Pulau Pinang dan Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)—memberikan pelatihan kontekstual tentang penganggaran, menabung, dan pencatatan sederhana bagi masyarakat Indonesia di Pulau Pinang. Metode ini menggabungkan mobilisasi mitra, penentuan kebutuhan, lokakarya tatap muka, dan diskusi kelompok terfokus pasca-kegiatan untuk menginformasikan langkah-langkah keberlanjutan. Tiga puluh tiga peserta hadir pada 27 April 2025 di Yayasan An-Nahdhoh. Hasil langsung meliputi pemahaman yang lebih jelas tentang penganggaran rumah tangga, pentingnya memisahkan arus kas pribadi dan usaha mikro, dan koordinasi remitansi yang lebih baik dengan keluarga di Indonesia. Keluaran publik (video dan liputan media massa) meningkatkan akuntabilitas dan potensi replikasi. Temuan tersebut menunjukkan bahwa alat yang sederhana dan berorientasi pada perilaku—yang disampaikan melalui kemitraan diaspora yang terpercaya—dapat meningkatkan kesiapan perencanaan dan mendukung ketahanan usaha mikro.

Kata Kunci: *Perencanaan Keuangan, Literasi Keuangan, Wirausaha Mikro, Pekerja Migran, Pengabdian Masyarakat*

This division of labor ensured local legitimacy and academic rigor.

INTRODUCTION

Female migrant workers and Indonesian-descent communities in Malaysia contribute significantly to household welfare and micro-enterprise activity, yet they often face practical constraints in financial literacy, record-keeping, and cross-border coordination of remittances. To address these gaps, Universitas Mercu Buana (UMB), Pertubuhan Masyarakat Indonesia (PERMAI) in Pulau Pinang, and Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) conducted an international joint community service program titled “Financial Planning for Female Micro-Entrepreneurs in Malaysia.” The initiative aligns with Indonesia’s Merdeka Belajar – Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) and contributes to IKU 3 (lecturers active outside campus) and IKU 5 (lecturer outputs used by the community) through off-campus engagement and public-facing outputs.

This activity also supports the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 8 on Decent Work and Economic Growth, and Goal 10 on Reducing Inequality (United Nations, 2015)

Given the prevalence of informal micro-businesses and mixed household–business cash flows, the program targeted essential capacities: (i) personal/household budgeting for income earners, (ii) separation of personal and business finances, (iii) goal-based saving and simple record-keeping, and (iv) improved coordination of remittances with families in Indonesia. These competencies are foundational to micro-enterprise sustainability and household resilience.

METHOD

Design and Partners

The activity was jointly organized by UMB, PERMAI, and USM. PERMAI and USM coordinated with local MSME associations, arranged the venue and field officers, and organized the local schedule. UMB prepared the implementation team, delivered the training and socialization sessions, and covered the team’s costs on site.

Staged Implementation

- a) Team Formation & Role Definition. UMB assembled a lecturer-led team and assigned tasks to two students (preparing presentation materials/posters and maintaining a logbook for credit documentation).
- b) Needs Scoping & Outreach. With PERMAI and USM, the team scoped local issues (limited planning literacy; mixed personal–business cash flows; cross-border income considerations) and mobilized participants through community networks.
- c) Curriculum & Delivery. The training emphasized (a) fundamentals of financial planning and literacy, (b) household budgeting for wage earners and micro-traders, (c) separating enterprise from personal cash flows, (d) goal-based saving and remittance planning with families in Indonesia, and (e) simple records for micro-enterprises.
- d) Evaluation & Sustainability Plan. Post-activity, an evaluation via focus group discussion (FGD) captured obstacles, comprehension, and replication needs. The evaluation was framed as both a conclusion of the initial activity and a starting point for further collaboration.

MBKM and IKU Integration

The program was designed to achieve MBKM objectives by placing lecturers and students in real community settings. Documented outputs and student involvement support IKU 3 and IKU 5, with the latter evidenced by public dissemination (video and mass media coverage).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Implementation Snapshot

- a) Day/Date/Time: Sunday, 27 April 2025, 09:00 (Penang time) until finish.
- b) Location: Yayasan An-Nahdhoh, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia.
- c) Participants: 33 people (Room A), comprising Indonesian citizens who live/work/trade in Pulau Pinang and Malaysian citizens with income from Indonesia.



Figure 1: Activity of Community service

Audience Starting Point

Many participants were unfamiliar with structured financial planning and had limited clarity on cross-border income issues between Indonesia and Malaysia. The major characteristics of the migrant workers in Asian countries are seriously exploited, marginalized, and infrequently looked from human rights perspective (Reza et al., 2019). This baseline confirmed the program's relevance: to move from ad-hoc money management toward a simple, goal-based plan that families can coordinate across borders.

Immediate Learning Outcomes

1. Clearer understanding of framing personal-household budgets for wage earners and micro-traders in Malaysia.
2. Recognition of the importance of separating personal and business cash flows for financial discipline and sustainability.
3. Initiation of communication with families in Indonesia to align remittance timing, earmarking, and savings targets.

Dissemination and Public Use

Public outputs were produced to strengthen IKU 5 evidence and encourage broader adoption: a video publication on the LPPM UMB YouTube channel, and mass-media coverage in *Republika* and *Media Indonesia*. These artifacts document the

activity and help reach other diaspora communities with similar needs.

Partner Contributions and Enablers

The collaboration model—PERMAI (diaspora organization), USM (local academic partner), and UMB (implementing university)—lowered participation barriers, ensured cultural proximity, and facilitated logistics. PERMAI and USM coordinated MSME associations, prepared the venue, and supported field operations; UMB delivered content, facilitation, and team financing.

Activity Constraints

No significant operational difficulties were encountered: cultural proximity, accessible location, and collaborative teams smoothed preparation, delivery, and post-activity follow-up. Language differences were minor and manageable, supporting replication potential in comparable diaspora hubs.

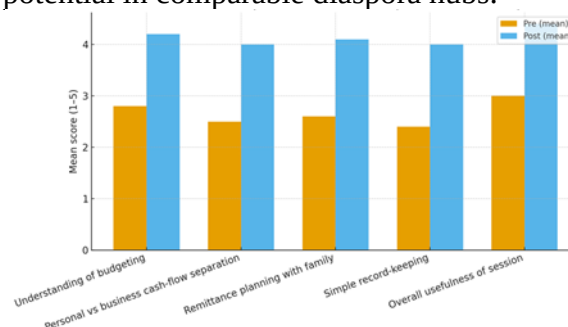


Figure 2: Questionnaire Result (Pre vs Post Means)

Analytical Discussion

1. Make planning concrete and context-bound. For migrants and micro-traders, tools must be simple, visual, and tied to daily cash realities (wage cycles, remittance windows, and basic stock/operating costs). Emphasizing budgeting, saving, and cash-flow separation sets a behavioral foundation. However, it should be noted that the presence of a family budget, but the lack of responsibility for its preparation, or any other financial decisions in the family cannot be considered financially sound behavior. Likewise, a person cannot be considered financially literate if he/she is responsible for financial decisions in a household but does not have a budget at all (Shanava & Vanishvili, 2021).
2. Leverage household coordination across borders. Many financial decisions involve families back home; coordination mechanisms (shared targets, remittance calendars, and simple records) are pivotal. Financial planning is closely related to financial literacy. Financial literacy The Indonesian population is divided into four parts according to (OJK, 2013), namely a) well literate: having knowledge and confidence about financial service institutions and financial service products, including features, benefits, risks, rights and obligations related to financial products and services, and having skills in using financial products and services; b) sufficient literate: have knowledge and confidence about financial institutions and financial products and services; c) less literate: only has knowledge about financial service institutions, financial products and services; d) not literate: does not have knowledge of financial service institutions, financial products and services, and does not have skills in using financial products and services[4].
3. Institutionalize dissemination and follow-up. Video and media coverage fulfill IKU accountability and extend reach. Embedding evaluation/FGD and a sustainability roadmap prepares the ground for clinics, templates, and mentoring.

Media Coverage

LPPM UMB YouTube channel published a video documenting the activity and key messages from the financial planning session. This supports transparency, public accountability, and replication by other communities.

Republika covered the international joint community service program, highlighting the collaboration between UMB, PERMAI, and USM and the benefits for Indonesian migrant workers in Pulau Pinang.

Media Indonesia reported on the empowerment aspects of the program, emphasizing practical budgeting, saving, and record-keeping for micro-entrepreneurs.

CONCLUSION

This joint community service successfully advanced practical financial-planning competencies among Indonesian and Indonesian-descent communities in Pulau Pinang. Participants moved from low familiarity with planning concepts toward actionable steps in budgeting, separating household and business cash flows, and coordinating remittances with families in Indonesia. The collaboration between UMB, PERMAI, and USM proved effective for outreach and logistics, and the activity generated public outputs that both demonstrate impact and enable replication—contributing to MBKM's experiential learning ethos as well as IKU 3 and IKU 5 targets.

Recommendations for the next cycle include: (1) follow-up clinics using real participant cases; (2) simple cash-book templates (household + business) and a remittance calendar; (3) peer mentoring groups coordinated by PERMAI/USM; and (4) structured pre/post evaluations to quantify literacy gains and guide continuous improvement.

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