

**EMPOWERING  
SANTRIPRENEUR THROUGH  
CATFISH FARMING  
BASED ON ASSET-BASED  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
AT PESANTREN AL-HIJRAH**

Sopian Sinaga<sup>1</sup>, Nur Rafidah  
Mahdiyyah Simbolon<sup>2</sup>, Dea Alfina<sup>3</sup>,  
Asma Sahira<sup>4</sup>, Hidayani<sup>5</sup>, Wita Siti  
Maryam<sup>6</sup>, Nur Hafizah<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1,3,5,7</sup>Pendidikan Bahasa Arab, STAI As-  
Sunnah Deli Serdang

<sup>2,4,6</sup>Pendidikan Agama Islam, STAI As-  
Sunnah Deli Serdang

**Corresponding author**

Email:  
abumuhammadsinaga@gmail.com

**Abstract**

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) play a strategic role in fostering santripreneurship by integrating religious values with entrepreneurial skills to achieve economic independence. Pesantren Al-Hijrah owns 2,000 m<sup>2</sup> of waqf land and an idle fish pond; however, limited knowledge and skills in catfish farming hinder the utilization of these assets. This community service program aimed to enhance the knowledge and skills of santri and teachers in catfish farming and to optimize pesantren assets for economic empowerment. The program was conducted from March 2–17, 2025, involving 13 santri and four teachers, using an action research design with an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach through four stages: Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, and analyzed descriptively. The results show a significant increase in participants' competencies, with 100% able to explain the stages of farming, 94% able to select high-quality fingerlings, 88% able to master feeding and disease control, and 82% able to understand marketing strategies. Technical skills improved, with full participation in pond preparation and stocking, while entrepreneurial motivation reached 88%. Pesantren assets were successfully activated through the productive utilization of ponds and the strengthening of local practitioner networks. The ABCD approach proved effective in empowering santri and teachers toward sustainable santripreneurship. Continuous mentoring and institutional partnerships are recommended to ensure program sustainability.

*Keywords:* santripreneur; catfish farming; Asset-Based Community Development; entrepreneurship education

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## Introduction

Becoming a beneficial person to others is of paramount importance. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ emphasized this in his saying: "*The best of people are those who are most beneficial to others.*"<sup>1</sup> Similarly, parents and teachers should teach students to become self-reliant, capable of living without dependence on others. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ condemned beggars and advocated self-reliance rather than dependence on others. He said, "*If one of you goes to the forest to gather firewood and sell it in the market, that is better for him than begging from others.*"<sup>2</sup> In another hadith, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, "*The upper hand is better than the lower hand.*"<sup>3</sup> This means that we should prioritize giving over asking. All of this teaches us that Islam desires self-sufficiency for its ummah (community). Thus, we become a progressive and dignified ummah, achieving the status of the best community as Allah's decree states: "*You are the best community brought forth for humanity.*"<sup>4</sup> Given the importance of self-reliance for the Muslim ummah, it is crucial to provide entrepreneurship education to students in all Islamic educational institutions, particularly in pesantren (Islamic boarding schools).

Pesantren, as traditional Islamic educational institutions, play a strategic role in shaping the character and skills of santri (Islamic boarding school students). Beyond serving as centers for religious education, pesantren also have the potential to become bases for developing the economic capacity of the ummah through the concept of santripreneur—santri who not only master religious knowledge but also possess entrepreneurial abilities and spirit.<sup>5</sup> The existence of santripreneurs has attracted significant attention from various parties, including the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Industry, as they are viewed as a means to enhance the economic self-sufficiency of pesantren while empowering santri as agents of socio-economic change in society.<sup>6</sup> Previous research demonstrates that entrepreneurship education in pesantren can increase santri motivation and business skills, although challenges remain, including capital constraints, limited practical training, and minimal market access.<sup>7</sup> The development of santripreneurs requires a combination of religious knowledge, business skills, and the ability to apply Islamic values in business, thereby creating ventures that are halal (permissible), blessed (barakah), and sustainable.<sup>8</sup>

Catfish farming holds significant potential as a sustainable source of income, particularly in pesantren environments, which typically possess waqf (endowment) underutilized land. Catfish farming can be a promising business opportunity due to several advantages, including relatively low initial capital requirements, a short harvest cycle (2-3 months), high market demand, and cultivation techniques that are not overly complex.<sup>9</sup> However, the lack of skills and understanding regarding proper cultivation techniques constitutes the primary obstacle for santri and teachers in developing this enterprise. This condition creates a gap between available resource potential and the capacity to utilize it productively. In fact, with appropriate training, catfish farming can become

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<sup>1</sup> Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani, "Sahih Al-Jami' Al-Saghir Wa Ziyadatuhu" (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1988).

<sup>2</sup> Muhammad ibn Ismail Al-Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Riyadh: Darussalam Publishers, 1997).

<sup>3</sup> Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, *Sahih Muslim, The Authentic Collection of Muslim*, vol. 5 volumes (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> *Al-Qur'an Al-Karim*, n.d.

<sup>5</sup> Sri Mulyantini et al., "Menumbuhkan Jiwa Wirausaha Siswa/Siswi Pondok Pesantren Melalui Rangkaian Program Santripreneur," *IKRA-ITH ABDIMAS: Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat* 8, no. 1 (2024): 294–302.

<sup>6</sup> Nurwadjah Ahmad Eq, Andewi Suhartini, and J Sutarjo, "Pemberdayaan Santri Melalui Pendidikan Entrepreneurship," *Ri'ayah: Jurnal Sosial Dan Keagamaan* 5, no. 01 (2020): 52–64.

<sup>7</sup> Grisna Anggadwita et al., "Empowering Islamic Boarding Schools by Applying the Humane Entrepreneurship Approach: The Case of Indonesia," *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research* 27, no. 6 (2021): 1580–1604, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEER-11-2020-0797>.

<sup>8</sup> Ahmad Mujahidin, "Pengembangan Santripreneur Berbasis Nilai-Nilai Islam," *Jurnal Ekonomi Dan Bisnis Islam* 3, no. 1 (2018): 23–25.

<sup>9</sup> Kementerian Kelautan dan Perikanan Republik Indonesia, "Panduan Budidaya Ikan Lele," *Catfish Farming Guide* (Jakarta: Direktorat Jenderal Perikanan Budidaya, 2015).

a productive business model that not only provides economic benefits but also serves as an applied entrepreneurship learning medium for santri.

To address these challenges, this community service program employs an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach. The ABCD method was selected because it emphasizes identifying and leveraging existing community assets rather than addressing deficits or shortcomings.<sup>10</sup> Unlike conventional approaches that tend to be problem-oriented, ABCD emphasizes empowering communities from within by recognizing and optimizing existing local potential.<sup>11</sup> In the context of Pesantren Al-Hijrah, identified assets include: extensive waqf land that has not yet been productive, adequate water sources, the presence of an experienced catfish cultivation practitioner in the pesantren's vicinity (Pak Saidi with 20 years of experience), as well as the enthusiasm of santri and teachers to learn entrepreneurship. By leveraging these assets, this program is expected to create sustainable solutions appropriate to the local pesantren context.

Based on these conditions, the research questions for this community service are: (1) How can the knowledge and skills of santri and teachers at Pesantren Al-Hijrah in catfish farming be enhanced? (2) How can pesantren assets, particularly waqf land and local resources, be optimized to create economic self-sufficiency through a catfish farming program? The objectives of this community service are: (1) To provide comprehensive training on catfish farming to santri and teachers at Pesantren Al-Hijrah, encompassing technical aspects (pond preparation, fingerling selection, feeding, disease control) and managerial aspects (marketing strategies and business management); (2) To optimize the utilization of pesantren waqf land as a productive and sustainable catfish farming site; (3) To enhance the motivation and entrepreneurial spirit of santri and teachers through practice-based learning with guidance from experienced practitioners.

#### *Community Service Methodology*

This community service was conducted from March 2-17, 2025 (corresponding to 2-17 Ramadan 1446 H) at Pesantren Al-Hijrah, Dusun Pondok Batu, Desa Balimbingan, Kecamatan Tanah Jawa, Kabupaten Simalungun, North Sumatra. Participants in this program consisted of all santri and teachers at Pesantren Al-Hijrah, totaling 13 santri (9 male and 4 female, aged 13-18 years) and 4 teachers (2 male and 2 female). Participant selection was conducted purposively with the following criteria: (1) willingness to participate in the entire training series; (2) commitment to develop and maintain the cultivation ponds after the program's completion; and (3) sufficient time availability to engage in practical cultivation activities.

The form of community service undertaken was action research with an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach. The ABCD method was implemented through four main stages:<sup>12</sup> (1) Discovery (Finding): The Community Service Team conducted observations and interviews to identify the pesantren's assets, including physical assets (2,000 m<sup>2</sup> of waqf land, existing but unused ponds, clean water access), human assets (Pak Saidi as a catfish cultivation practitioner with 20 years of experience, enthusiasm of santri and teachers), and social assets (support from Yayasan Wakaf Bina Madani Center and local community leaders). (2) Dream (Envisioning): Together with pesantren leadership, santri, and teachers, the team formulated a shared vision to make Pesantren Al-Hijrah economically self-sufficient through the development of a catfish farming enterprise managed by santri and teachers, with targets to meet the pesantren's protein consumption needs and generate additional income within 6 months. (3) Design (Planning):

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<sup>10</sup> John P Kretzmann and John L McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets* (Chicago: ACTA Publications, 1993).

<sup>11</sup> Alison Mathie and Gord Cunningham, "From Clients to Citizens: Asset-Based Community Development as a Strategy for Community-Driven Development," *Development in Practice* 13, no. 5 (2003): 474–86, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0961452032000125857>.

<sup>12</sup> Gary Paul Green and Anna L Haines, *Asset Building & Community Development*, ed. 4 (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2016).

The team developed a training program design that included theoretical materials and direct practice, provision of cultivation facilities (800 catfish fingerlings, feed, medications, equipment), training activity scheduling adapted to pesantren activities, and establishment of program success indicators. (4) *Destiny (Implementation)*: The training program was conducted over 15 days with a total of 9 training sessions covering: pond preparation, fingerling selection and handling, feeding and disease control, broodstock selection and breeding, marketing strategies, post-harvest maintenance, and catfish product processing. Each training session was guided by an experienced practitioner (Pak Saidi) and facilitated by the Community Service Team.

Data collection instruments in this community service included: (1) Participatory observation, whereby the Community Service Team was directly involved in all training activities while observing and recording participants' participation, enthusiasm, and skill development; (2) In-depth interviews, conducted with santri, teachers, pesantren leadership, and the practitioner (Pak Saidi) to explore their understanding, perceptions, and experiences related to the training program; (3) Documentation, in the form of photographs and videos of the entire series of activities as evidence of program implementation; and (4) Field notes, consisting of daily recording of the learning process, obstacles encountered, and participants' responses to training materials. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative methods with the following stages: (1) data reduction, namely selecting and focusing on data relevant to the community service objectives; (2) data presentation in narrative and tabular form to describe the process and results of activities; and (3) drawing conclusions based on findings obtained during program implementation.<sup>13</sup>

### *Ethical Considerations*

This community service activity received official approval and permission from Yayasan Wakaf Bina Madani Center, the managing body of Pesantren Al-Hijrah, represented by the Foundation Chair, Dr. Wagiman Manik, M.Pd.I., as well as from the leadership of Pesantren Al-Hijrah. All santri and teachers involved in this program provided verbal consent to participate voluntarily in the catfish farming training activities. For santri who were minors (under 18 years of age), permission was also obtained from their parents or guardians, in coordination with the pesantren. All data and documentation collected during the community service activities were maintained confidentially and used only for academic purposes and program evaluation. The identities of participants in this community service report have been anonymized to protect their privacy, except for the practitioner (Pak Saidi) and the foundation chair, who provided explicit permission to be named in connection with their contributions to the program. The pesantren and the relevant participants approved the use of photographic and video documentation in this report.

## **Results and Discussion**

### *Results*

#### Community Service Site Profile and Asset Identification (Discovery Phase)

Pesantren Al-Hijrah is located in Dusun Pondok Batu, Desa Balimbingan, Kecamatan Tanah Jawa, Kabupaten Simalungun, North Sumatra. The pesantren operates under the auspices of Yayasan Wakaf Bina Madani Center, with Dr. Wagiman Manik, M.Pd.I., serving as the Foundation Chair. As a relatively new pesantren, Pesantren Al-Hijrah has a limited number of santri: 13 (9 male and 4 female), aged 13-18 years, accompanied by 4 teachers. The pesantren's vision is to become an excellent institution in producing a Qur'anic generation with noble character, intelligence, leadership, and entrepreneurial spirit. This vision is highly relevant to the catfish farming training program, which emphasizes the development of santri's entrepreneurial spirit.

During the Discovery phase (asset identification), the Community Service Team conducted observations and in-depth interviews to identify the pesantren's assets. This identification

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<sup>13</sup> Ernest T Stringer, *Action Research*, ed. 4 (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2014).

employed the ABCD approach, which focuses on strengths and potential rather than deficiencies or problems.<sup>14</sup> The identification results revealed that the pesantren possesses several strategic assets that can be optimized for developing a catfish farming enterprise. Physical assets identified include: waqf land of approximately 2,000 m<sup>2</sup>, most of which remains vacant and is not being productively utilized; one cultivation pond unit that exists but is unused and requires repair; and adequate access to clean water sources for fish cultivation. A highly valuable human asset is Pak Saidi, a catfish cultivation practitioner residing in Dusun Pondok Batu with over 20 years of experience in fisheries. Pak Saidi possesses in-depth knowledge of catfish cultivation techniques, from fingerling selection, pond maintenance, feeding, disease control, and marketing strategies. Additionally, the enthusiasm and willingness of santri and teachers to learn new skills constitute important social capital. Social assets include full support from the Yayasan Wakaf Bina Madani Center, trust from local community leaders, and the STAI As-Sunnah alumni network, which can assist with future product marketing.

The asset identification process was conducted through several methods. First, a field observation was conducted on March 2, 2025, to assess the pesantren's physical condition, measure the available land area, and evaluate the feasibility of the existing pond. Second, in-depth interviews were conducted with pesantren leadership, teachers, and santri to understand their vision, readiness, and commitment to implementing the cultivation program. Third, an intensive discussion with Pak Saidi was held to confirm his willingness to serve as a resource person and to explore his knowledge and experience in catfish cultivation. The results of this asset identification then formed the basis for designing a training program appropriate to the pesantren's context and needs.

Table 1 below summarizes the identified assets and their potential utilization in the catfish farming program:

Table 1. Asset Identification of Pesantren Al-Hijrah

Asset Type	Asset Details	Potential Utilization
Physical Assets	Waqf land 2,000 m <sup>2</sup>	Cultivation site and business development
	Cultivation pond (unused)	Main pond for 800 catfish fingerlings
	Clean water access	Water source for cultivation
Human Assets	Pak Saidi (20-year practitioner)	Main resource person and mentor
	13 santri (eager to learn)	Workforce and prospective santripreneurs
	4 teachers (high commitment)	Supervisors and santri facilitators
Social Assets	Foundation support	Legitimacy and operational support
	STAI alumni network	Market potential and marketing networks
	Community trust	Easy access to local practitioners

### Program Planning and Preparation Process (Design Phase)

After assets were identified, the next stages were Dream (envisioning the future) and Design (program planning). During the Dream phase, the Community Service Team, together with pesantren leadership, teachers, and santri, formulated a shared vision regarding the desired future. The agreed-upon vision was to make Pesantren Al-Hijrah economically self-sufficient by developing a catfish-farming enterprise managed by santri and teachers to meet the pesantren's

<sup>14</sup> Kretzmann and McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*.

protein consumption needs and generate additional income within the next 6 months. This vision aligns with the concept of pesantren economic self-sufficiency, which emphasizes the pesantren's ability to manage its own resources productively and sustainably.<sup>15</sup>

Based on this vision, the Community Service Team then designed a comprehensive training program. The program design encompassed several main components. First, training materials were designed to cover both technical and managerial aspects of catfish farming. Technical aspects included: pond preparation and management, selection and handling of quality fingerlings, efficient feeding techniques, disease and pest control, and spawning and breeding techniques. Managerial aspects included capital calculation and business analysis, product marketing strategies, basic financial management, and the processing of catfish into value-added products. Second, provision of cultivation facilities and infrastructure, including: procurement of 800 catfish fingerlings sized 5-7 cm, quality catfish feed totaling one sack (30 kg), medications and vitamins for disease prevention, and cultivation equipment such as nets, buckets, and water quality measurement tools. Third, activity scheduling was adapted to the pesantren's routine during Ramadan, with training sessions scheduled in the afternoon after Qur'anic study and midday rest. Fourth, the establishment of program success indicators covering participant participation rates, increases in the knowledge and skills of santri and teachers, and the continuation of cultivation after program completion.

Coordination with various parties also constituted an important part of the planning stage. The Community Service Team held several coordination meetings with pesantren leadership to ensure the program would not disrupt santri's teaching-learning and worship activities. An intensive discussion with Pak Saidi was conducted to develop a systematic and practical training curriculum. Communication with local community leaders was undertaken to gain support and build trust that this program would provide long-term benefits for the pesantren and the surrounding community.

#### Training Program Implementation (Destiny Phase)

The Destiny stage (implementation and sustainability) comprised a 15-day training program execution phase, from March 2 to 17, 2025. This program consisted of 9 main training sessions that combined theoretical learning with direct practice in the cultivation pond. Each session was designed to build knowledge and skills progressively, starting from basic concepts to advanced skills.

#### Sessions 1-2: Program Opening and Pond Preparation (March 7-9, 2025)

The training program opening was held on March 7, 2025, near the cultivation pond at Pesantren Al-Hijrah. The event was attended by 13 santri, four teachers, the Community Service Team, Pak Saidi, the main resource person, and representatives from the Yayasan Wakaf Bina Madani Center. The attendance rate reached 100%, demonstrating high initial enthusiasm from all participants. Selecting the opening location near the pond implemented the contextual learning principle, allowing participants to directly observe the learning object and envision the cultivation process they would undertake.<sup>16</sup> This approach aligns with Kolb's experiential learning theory, which emphasizes concrete experience as the starting point of learning.<sup>17</sup>

During the pond preparation session, Pak Saidi explained that a good pond must meet several criteria: minimum depth of 80-100 cm, clear water quality with pH 6.5-8.5, and good water circulation to maintain dissolved oxygen levels. Participants then became directly involved in removing algae and sediment from the pond, repairing leaking embankments, and gradually filling

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<sup>15</sup> M Haris Hidayatulloh et al., "Entrepreneurship Education Grows Santri's Entrepreneurial Spirit: Evidence from Indonesia's Islamic Boarding School," *KnE Social Sciences*, 2019, 594–601, <https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v3i26.5409>.

<sup>16</sup> Elaine B Johnson, *Contextual Teaching and Learning: What It Is and Why It's Here to Stay*, *Choice Reviews Online*, vol. 40 (Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press, 2002), <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.40-1053>.

<sup>17</sup> David A Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*, ed. 1 (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1984).

the pond with water. This process not only provided participants with technical skills but also fostered a sense of ownership of the cultivation pond. According to observations by the Community Service Team, santri and teachers collaborated well, demonstrating cooperation (gotong royong) and a high collaborative spirit. This reflects Islamic values of collaboration and mutual assistance, which are embedded in pesantren culture.

### Session 3: Fingerling Stocking and Quality Fingerling Selection (March 8, 2025)

On March 8, 2025, 800 catfish fingerlings sized 5-7 cm were stocked into the prepared pond. Before stocking, Pak Saidi explained how to select quality catfish fingerlings: fingerlings must move actively and vigorously, have bright and uniform body color, show no wounds or physical defects, and maintain relatively uniform size to avoid cannibalism. The fingerling acclimatization process was conducted carefully to reduce stress on the fish, namely by immersing the plastic bag containing the fingerlings in the pond for 15-20 minutes, thereby allowing the water temperature inside the bag to equilibrate with the pond water temperature. Santri and teachers took turns practicing the correct fingerling stocking technique. According to interview data from this session, 12 of 13 santri (92%) reported understanding how to select and stock fingerlings properly and felt confident in doing so independently in the future.



Figure 1. Practical Catfish Farming Activities

### Sessions 4-5: Feeding and Disease Control (March 9-12, 2025)

Pak Saidi emphasized that proper feeding constitutes the key to successful catfish farming. He explained that feed must be given 3 times daily (morning, midday, and afternoon) at approximately 3-5% of total fish weight. Feed frequency and amount must be adjusted to fish age: small fingerlings require more frequent feeding with smaller portions, whereas adult catfish require only 2-3 feedings daily with larger portions. Participants were also taught to observe fish responses to feeding to assess whether the quantity of feed was sufficient or excessive. Excessive feeding can cause feed residue to settle at the pond bottom, contaminate the water, and promote pathogenic bacterial growth.

Regarding disease control, Pak Saidi introduced several common diseases that affect catfish, including white spot, fungal infections, and *Aeromonas* infections. He explained how to identify diseases based on observable physical symptoms in the fish, as well as preventive measures such as maintaining water quality, avoiding excessive feeding, and conducting periodic water changes. Participants were taught how to use medications and vitamins for disease prevention and treatment. Based on observations by the Community Service Team, all participants (100%) were able to recognize disease symptoms in fish after this session, and 15 out of 17 participants (88%) could explain disease prevention measures correctly.

### Session 6: Spawning and Breeding Techniques (March 13-14, 2025)

This session discussed spawning and breeding techniques for catfish to achieve self-sufficiency in fingerling production. Pak Saidi explained how to select high-quality male and female broodstock,

prepare spawning ponds, and care for larvae until they are ready for stocking as fingerlings. Although this material was quite technical and required further experience, participants showed great interest. According to interview data, santri and teachers stated that knowledge of breeding would be highly useful in the future, when they sought to develop cultivation more independently, without always having to purchase fingerlings from external sources.

#### Session 7: Marketing Strategies and Product Processing (March 15, 2025)

The marketing session was highly anticipated because it directly addressed business and entrepreneurship. Pak Saidi shared his experience in marketing catfish, ranging from local marketing strategies (selling to food stalls, restaurants, and traditional markets) to digital marketing via social media. He emphasized the importance of building customer trust through consistent product quality, competitive prices, and good service. Participants were also taught to calculate production costs and appropriate profit margins. Additionally, participants were introduced to various processed catfish products, such as breaded fried catfish, pepes catfish, catfish meatballs, and catfish nuggets, which can increase product selling value.

#### Session 8: Post-Harvest Pond Maintenance (March 16, 2025)

Pak Saidi explained that post-harvest pond maintenance is crucial for maintaining pond quality and preparing for the next cultivation cycle. Steps taught included: draining the pond for 3-5 days under sunlight to kill bacteria and parasites, cleaning mud and sediment from the pond bottom, repairing damaged embankments, and liming the pond to neutralize soil pH. Participants practiced these steps directly and understood the importance of a sustainable cultivation cycle.



Figure 2. Interview and Discussion on Catfish Pond Care and Maintenance

#### Session 9: Online Seminar on the Importance of Entrepreneurship for the Muslim Ummah (March 17, 2025)

The final session consisted of an online seminar delivered by Ustadz Sopian Sinaga, a lecturer at STAI As-Sunnah and the Community Service coordinator. The seminar material emphasized entrepreneurial values from an Islamic perspective, such as honesty (amanah) in business, responsibility, hard work, and self-reliance. Ustadz Sopian also motivated santri and teachers to continue developing the catfish-farming business as a form of striving (ikhtiar) toward the pesantren's economic self-sufficiency. According to evaluation results, 16 of 17 participants (94%) reported that this seminar increased their motivation to become santripreneurs and to contribute to pesantren self-sufficiency.

#### Closing and Certificate Distribution (March 16, 2025)

The closing ceremony was held on March 16, 2025, with certificates distributed to all participants (13 santri and 4 teachers), as well as to Pak Saidi, the main resource person. The participation rate during the 15-day program reached an average of 98%, with only one or two participants

occasionally absent due to health reasons. This demonstrates a very high level of commitment and enthusiasm from participants throughout the program.



Figure 3. Closing Session and Certificate Presentation to Training Participants and Resource Persons

### Program Achievement Results

Evaluation of program achievements was conducted through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and field notes collected during the implementation of activities. Evaluation results revealed several important achievements in five key areas.

The first achievement pertains to the enhancement of santri and teacher knowledge. Knowledge enhancement was assessed qualitatively through pre- and post-program interviews and through observations during the learning process. Before the program began, only 2 of 17 participants (12%) had basic knowledge of catfish farming, whereas the remaining 15 participants (88%) had no knowledge of fish cultivation. After the program concluded, all participants (100%) were able to explain the basic stages of catfish farming from pond preparation to harvest. More specifically, 16 out of 17 participants (94%) were able to explain how to select quality catfish fingerlings, while 15 out of 17 participants (88%) were able to explain proper feeding techniques and disease control methods. Additionally, 14 out of 17 participants (82%) understood marketing strategies and cost of production calculations, and 12 out of 17 participants (71%) understood the basics of catfish spawning and breeding.

The second achievement relates to the enhancement of technical skills, which were assessed through direct observation when participants practiced various aspects of cultivation. Observation results showed that all participants (100%) were able to practice proper pond cleaning and preparation methods. Furthermore, 16 out of 17 participants (94%) were able to practice fingerling stocking methods with appropriate acclimatization techniques, and 15 out of 17 participants (88%) were able to provide feed with appropriate frequency and quantity. Meanwhile, 14 out of 17 participants (82%) were able to identify disease symptoms in fish and take preventive measures.

The third achievement concerns the enhancement of entrepreneurial motivation, which was assessed through participants' statements in post-program interviews. Interview results showed that 15 out of 17 participants (88%) stated they were motivated to develop catfish farming businesses at the pesantren. Moreover, 13 out of 17 participants (76%) had concrete plans to continue cultivation after program completion, including seeking additional funding sources and forming joint business groups. The program also successfully opened participants' perspectives on entrepreneurship, as evidenced by 16 out of 17 participants (94%) who stated that this program opened their perspective on the importance of entrepreneurship for pesantren self-sufficiency. Beyond catfish farming, 12 out of 17 participants (71%) were interested in exploring other business opportunities based on pesantren assets, such as vegetable farming or free-range chicken farming.

The fourth achievement involves the optimization of pesantren assets, which constituted one of the main objectives of this program, particularly regarding the utilization of waqf land that was

previously unproductive. The cultivation pond that was previously unused has now been repaired and functions well, accommodating 800 catfish fingerlings. The 2,000 m<sup>2</sup> waqf land now has potential for further development, not only for catfish farming but also for other agribusiness ventures. This program also facilitated the establishment of networks between the pesantren and local practitioners, particularly Pak Saidi, who can become an ongoing mentor for santri and teachers. Furthermore, the program succeeded in identifying local market potential through the STAI As-Sunnah alumni network and the surrounding pesantren community.

The fifth achievement pertains to the commitment to program sustainability, which constitutes a crucial aspect of the ABCD approach. Interview results with pesantren leadership and participants demonstrated a strong commitment to continue catfish farming after the Community Service program concluded. Pesantren leadership expressed its willingness to allocate the pesantren's operational budget to the purchase of feed and fingerlings for the next cultivation cycle. Santri and teachers agreed to form a cultivation management team responsible for maintaining the pond and its fish on a rotational basis. Pak Saidi also expressed his willingness to continue providing consultation and mentoring to the pesantren without requesting compensation, as a form of his contribution to education and community economics.

### *Discussion*

#### Effectiveness of the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Method

The results of this program's implementation demonstrate that the ABCD approach effectively empowered santri and teachers at Pesantren Al-Hijrah to develop a catfish-farming enterprise. This effectiveness is evident from several indicators. First, the participant participation rate, which averaged 98%, indicates that programs designed to utilize local assets are more readily accepted and followed by the community than programs imposed from outside without consideration of the local context.<sup>18</sup> This aligns with the basic principles of ABCD, which emphasize empowerment from within and active community participation across all program stages.<sup>19</sup>

Second, the program's success in optimizing previously underutilized pesantren assets (waqf land and unused ponds) provides concrete evidence that an asset-based approach is more sustainable than a deficit-based approach. As articulated by Kretzmann and McKnight, the ABCD approach helps communities recognize their potential and strengths rather than merely focusing on their deficits.<sup>20</sup> In the context of Pesantren Al-Hijrah, collaboration with Pak Saidi, an experienced local practitioner, constitutes a concrete example of leveraging existing human resources in the surrounding community, without the need to bring in external personnel at high cost.

Third, participant commitment to program sustainability demonstrates that ABCD succeeded in building a sense of ownership and responsibility within the community. Unlike charitable or top-down assistance programs, ABCD positions the community as an active agent, designing and implementing programs tailored to its own needs and context.<sup>21</sup> This is evident from participants' initiatives to form a cultivation management team, seek additional funding sources, and plan the development of other businesses based on pesantren assets.

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<sup>18</sup> Mathie and Cunningham, "From Clients to Citizens: Asset-Based Community Development as a Strategy for Community-Driven Development."

<sup>19</sup> John P Kretzmann and John L McKnight, "Assets-Based Community Development," *National Civic Review* 85, no. 4 (1996): 23–29, <https://doi.org/10.1002/ncr.4100850405>.

<sup>20</sup> Kretzmann and McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*.

<sup>21</sup> Susan B Rifkin, "Examining the Links between Community Participation and Health Outcomes: A Review of the Literature," *Health Policy and Planning* 29, no. suppl\_2 (2014): ii98–106, <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapol/czu076>.

## Contribution to Santripreneur Development

This catfish farming training program made a significant contribution to the development of santripreneurship at Pesantren Al-Hijrah. The concept of santripreneur, as defined by Eq et al., refers to santri who not only master religious knowledge but also possess entrepreneurial abilities and spirit to create independent, productive enterprises that align with Islamic shari'ah values.<sup>22</sup> This program successfully integrated three important dimensions in santripreneur development: the knowledge dimension (through theoretical materials on cultivation and entrepreneurship), the skills dimension (through direct practice and intensive mentoring), and the values dimension (through seminars on entrepreneurial values in Islam).

Research findings by Mulyantini et al. demonstrate that santripreneur programs can increase santri's entrepreneurial motivation and skills. However, a lack of practical training and business capital often constrains their ability to operate.<sup>23</sup> This program addresses these challenges by providing practical training in cultivation ponds and by providing cultivation facilities (fingerlings, feed, medications) that enable santri to practice the skills they have learned. Moreover, by leveraging the pesantren's own assets (existing waqf land and pond), this program minimizes external capital requirements. It demonstrates that santripreneurs can be developed using resources already available at the pesantren.

The reported enhancement of entrepreneurial motivation among 88% of participants also aligns with Mujahidin's findings, underscoring the importance of Islamic values in encouraging santri to pursue entrepreneurship.<sup>24</sup> In the seminar on Islamic entrepreneurship, participants were taught that entrepreneurship is not merely about seeking material profit but also constitutes a form of worship (*ibadah*) and contribution to the ummah's welfare. Values such as honesty (*amanah*), hard work (work ethic), and self-reliance (*istiqamah*), emphasized in Islam, provide a strong foundation for santri to develop enterprises that are not only economically profitable but also blessed (*barakah*) and in accordance with shari'ah principles.

## Comparison with Similar Programs at Other Pesantren

Compared with other pesantren's santripreneur development programs, the catfish farming program at Pesantren Al-Hijrah has several advantages. First, the systematic use of the ABCD method, with four stages (Discovery, Dream, Design, Destiny), provides a clear and measurable framework, unlike many ad hoc programs that lack mature planning. Second, intensive collaboration with a local practitioner (Pak Saidi), who has decades of experience, provides authentic and applicable knowledge transfer, rather than theory divorced from field reality. Third, this program not only focuses on the technical aspects of cultivation but also on managerial aspects (marketing and finance) and values (Islamic entrepreneurship), thereby providing a holistic learning experience.

Nevertheless, this program also faces challenges similar to those of other pesantren programs, particularly regarding post-program sustainability. As found in research by Eq et al., the main challenges in santripreneur development are a lack of ongoing mentoring and access to business capital.<sup>25</sup> To address these challenges, this program has designed an ongoing mentoring mechanism through Pak Saidi and the STAI As-Sunnah alumni network, and has explored possibilities for collaboration with zakat and infaq institutions to provide capital support.

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<sup>22</sup> Eq, Suhartini, and Sutarjo, "Pemberdayaan Santri Melalui Pendidikan Entrepreneurship."

<sup>23</sup> Mulyantini et al., "Menumbuhkan Jiwa Wirausaha Siswa/Siswi Pondok Pesantren Melalui Rangkaian Program Santripreneur."

<sup>24</sup> Mujahidin, "Pengembangan Santripreneur Berbasis Nilai-Nilai Islam."

<sup>25</sup> Eq, Suhartini, and Sutarjo, "Pemberdayaan Santri Melalui Pendidikan Entrepreneurship."

## Challenge Analysis and Development Strategies

Although this program demonstrated positive results, several challenges need to be addressed to ensure the sustainability and development of catfish farming businesses at Pesantren Al-Hijrah. The first challenge is the limited availability of operational funds for purchasing feed and fingerlings for the next cultivation cycle. Catfish feed constitutes the largest cost component in cultivation (approximately 60-70% of total production costs), so without adequate financial support, cultivation sustainability will be disrupted. The recommended strategy is to establish partnerships with zakat, infaq, and sadaqah collection institutions that have ummah economic empowerment programs, and to explore funding opportunities through the CSR programs of companies operating in Kabupaten Simalungun.

The second challenge is the minimal initial knowledge of santri and teachers about catfish farming and entrepreneurship in general. This is attributable to educational backgrounds in pesantren that place heavy emphasis on religious sciences (*tafaqquh fi al-din*), whereas vocational skills and entrepreneurship education remain minimal.<sup>26</sup> The recommended strategy is to integrate an entrepreneurship curriculum into the pesantren education system, so that santri not only study religious sciences but also acquire practical skills that can be used for livelihoods. This integrated curriculum approach has been implemented at several modern pesantren and has been shown to enhance santri readiness for economic self-sufficiency upon graduation.<sup>27</sup>

The third challenge is the limited program implementation time (15 days), which is relatively short for instilling complex cultivation skills. Catfish farming requires continuous learning processes and long-term practical experience to truly master all its aspects. The recommended strategy is to continue post-Community Service program mentoring via distance mentoring systems, such as WhatsApp groups or periodic visits by Pak Saidi, so that santri and teachers can consult when facing technical problems in the field.

The fourth challenge is still-limited market access. Although participants have been taught marketing strategies, field implementation requires extensive market networks and consumer trust that must be built gradually. The recommended approach is to leverage the STAI As-Sunnah alumni network and surrounding community leaders to promote Pesantren Al-Hijrah's catfish products and to develop value-added, longer-shelf-life processed catfish products, thereby enabling broader market access.

## Implications for Other Pesantren Development

The catfish farming training program at Pesantren Al-Hijrah offers several important lessons that can be replicated by other pesantrens seeking to achieve economic self-sufficiency through local asset-based enterprises. First, the importance of systematic asset identification before program design. Every pesantren possesses unique assets (land, human resources, social networks), and effective programs are those designed to utilize these assets rather than imitating programs from other pesantren without considering the local context. Second, collaboration with experienced local practitioners constitutes the key to successful knowledge transfer. Pesantren need not bring in experts from outside at high cost, but can utilize expertise already available in the surrounding environment. Third, a holistic approach that integrates technical, managerial, and Islamic values dimensions will be more effective in developing santripreneurs who are not only skilled but also possess a good work ethic and integrity.

Fourth, it is important to design sustainability mechanisms from the outset rather than focusing solely on short-term program implementation. Sustainability can be ensured through the

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<sup>26</sup> Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Pandangan Hidup Kyai Dan Visinya Mengenai Masa Depan Indonesia*, ed. Edisi Revisi (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2011).

<sup>27</sup> Ahmad Fauzi, Aan Komariah, and Wiswa Wardhana, "Manajemen Kurikulum Terpadu di Pesantren Modern," *Integrated Curriculum Management in Modern Pesantren* 28, no. 1 (2021): 91–104, <https://doi.org/10.17509/jap.v28i1.32432>.

commitment of pesantren leadership, the formation of responsible management teams, and partnerships with external parties for funding and market support. Fifth, good documentation during program implementation is crucial for evaluation and learning. Photographs, videos, and field notes collected during the program can serve as learning materials for new santri and as promotional materials for pesantren products to potential consumers.

## **Conclusion**

The catfish farming training program at Pesantren Al-Hijrah has successfully addressed the research questions posed in this community service. First, regarding the enhancement of santri and teacher knowledge and skills in catfish farming, evaluation results demonstrate that all participants (13 santri and four teachers) experienced significant knowledge enhancement, from only 12% (2 out of 17 participants) possessing basic cultivation knowledge to 100% of participants being able to explain catfish farming stages comprehensively after program completion. Specifically, 94% of participants selected high-quality fingerlings, 88% applied feeding techniques and disease control, and 82% understood marketing strategies and cost-of-production calculations. In terms of technical skills, all participants (100%) were able to prepare ponds correctly, 94% were able to stock fingerlings with appropriate acclimatization techniques, and 82% were able to identify and prevent diseases in catfish.

Second, regarding the optimization of pesantren assets for economic self-sufficiency, this program has successfully transformed previously unproductive assets into learning resources and income potential. The initially unused cultivation pond has now been repaired and is accommodating 800 catfish fingerlings in good condition. The 2,000 m<sup>2</sup> waqf land, previously vacant, has now been identified as suitable for further development, including catfish farming and other agribusiness ventures, such as vegetable farming and poultry production. The collaboration between the pesantren and the local practitioner (Pak Saidi), with 20 years of experience, has built strong, sustainable networks, in which Pak Saidi is willing to provide ongoing consultation and mentoring without compensation, as a form of his contribution to education and community economics.

Third, the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) method proved effective in empowering santri and teachers at Pesantren Al-Hijrah. The participant participation rate, which averaged 98% during the 15-day program, demonstrates that local asset-based approaches are more readily accepted and followed by the community than top-down programs that do not consider local context. The implementation of the four ABCD stages (Discovery, Dream, Design, Destiny) provided a systematic, measurable framework, ensuring that the program did not proceed in an ad hoc manner but rather had mature planning and clear sustainability mechanisms. Participant commitment to program sustainability is evident in agreements to form a cultivation management team responsible for maintaining the pond on a rotational basis, as well as in plans by 76% of participants (13 out of 17) to continue cultivation after the Community Service program concluded.

Fourth, this program made a significant contribution to the development of santripreneurship at Pesantren Al-Hijrah. Enhancement of entrepreneurial motivation was demonstrated by 88% of participants who reported being motivated to develop catfish farming businesses, and 94% of participants who reported that this program broadened their perspective on the importance of entrepreneurship for pesantren self-sufficiency. The integration of the knowledge dimension (theoretical materials), the skills dimension (direct practice), and the values dimension (Islamic entrepreneurship seminar) has successfully produced santripreneurs who are not only skilled but also possess a strong work ethic and integrity in accordance with Islamic values.

Although this program demonstrated positive results, several limitations need to be acknowledged. First, the relatively short program implementation time (15 days) was insufficient to develop complex cultivation skills in depth. Catfish farming requires continuous learning and long-term practical experience to fully master all its aspects, including the ability to address technical problems that may arise in practice. Second, the evaluation of knowledge and skill enhancement was

conducted qualitatively through interviews and observations, without the use of standardized pre- and post-test instruments. Although qualitative data provide rich descriptions of the learning process, quantitative data from standardized instruments would confer greater validity on research findings. Third, this program has not yet reached the harvest stage, so it cannot yet measure cultivation success economically and the real impact on pesantren income. The catfish cultivation cycle requires 2-3 months from planting to harvest, whereas the Community Service program lasted only 15 days.

Based on the results and limitations of this program, several recommendations can be offered for the development of similar programs in the future. First, ongoing post-Community Service program mentoring is needed through distance mentoring systems (e.g., WhatsApp groups) or periodic visits by local practitioners, so that santri and teachers can consult when encountering technical problems in the field. This mentoring is crucial for ensuring the success of cultivation cycles until harvest and maintaining participant motivation from declining after program completion. Second, Pesantren Al-Hijrah needs to establish strategic partnerships with zakat, infaq, and sadaqah collection institutions that have ummah economic empowerment programs, as well as explore funding possibilities from CSR programs of companies operating in Kabupaten Simalungun, to obtain business capital support, especially for purchasing feed, which constitutes the largest cost component (60-70% of total production costs). Third, this catfish farming training program can be replicated at other pesantren by adapting it to respective local contexts, particularly with respect to identifying available assets (land, human resources, social networks) and the types of enterprises most suited to geographical conditions and local market needs. It is important not to merely imitate this program, but to adapt it while considering each pesantren's unique characteristics. Fourth, follow-up research is needed to assess the long-term economic impact of this program, including harvest success rates, income generated, and the contribution of catfish farming enterprises to overall pesantren economic self-sufficiency. Follow-up research can also explore factors that influence the sustainability of cultivation enterprises after the Community Service program concludes, as well as the most effective strategies for maintaining santri and teacher motivation and commitment in managing cultivation enterprises. Fifth, it is recommended that pesantren curricula integrate entrepreneurship education more systematically, not only through short-term programs such as Community Service, but also by making it part of the regular curriculum that santri study throughout their period at the pesantren. Thus, santri not only master religious sciences but also possess practical skills that can be used for livelihoods and contribute to the economic self-sufficiency of both the pesantren and the community after graduation.

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