

The Contribution of the “Barmulita” Women's Farmer Group to Household Economic Improvement in Pusakamulya Village, Purwakarta Regency

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ABSTRACT: Women’s farmer groups play a pivotal role in strengthening rural economies, yet empirical evidence on their direct economic impact remains limited. This study investigates the contribution of the “Barmulita” Women Farmers’ Group (KWT Barmulita) to the economic empowerment of its members in Pusakamulya Village, West Java, Indonesia. A qualitative descriptive method was employed, involving participatory observation, structured interviews, and questionnaire-based surveys with 10 purposively selected respondents from a total of 30 active members. Findings indicate that KWT Barmulita performs effectively in three core functions: as a learning platform, a collaborative institution, and a production unit. These roles have led to measurable outcomes, including improved agricultural knowledge and skills, reduced household expenditure through home-grown food production, and supplemental income from group-based marketing initiatives. The group’s partnerships with agricultural extension services and local traders further enhance its institutional strength. This study underscores the strategic role of gender-inclusive farmer groups in promoting household-level resilience and sustainable rural development. The findings offer valuable insights for policymakers and development practitioners aiming to replicate such models in similar socio-economic contexts.

KEYWORDS: women farmers' group, rural economy, household income, agricultural extension, participatory development, Indonesia

1. INTRODUCTION

Agricultural development remains a fundamental pillar of rural livelihoods in Indonesia. Besides ensuring national food security, the agricultural sector also contributes significantly to employment, poverty alleviation, and sustainable resource use. The Indonesian government continues to promote the empowerment of smallholders, including women farmers, through institutional strengthening at the grassroots level. One of the key institutions in this context is the farmer group (kelompok tani), including its gender-specific form, the Women Farmers’ Group (Kelompok Wanita Tani or KWT).

KWTs function not only as agricultural collectives but also as social learning and production units that enhance the capacities and bargaining positions of rural women. According to Indonesia’s Ministry of Agriculture Regulation No. 67/Permentan/SM.050/12/2016, farmer groups are expected to fulfill three core functions: as learning classes, cooperation forums, and production units. However, limited studies have examined how these groups translate these roles into tangible economic outcomes at the household level, particularly in marginalized rural settings.

This study aims to explore how KWT Barmulita, located in Pusakamulya Village, Purwakarta Regency, contributes to the economic well-being of its members. The research focuses on understanding the mechanisms through which this group enhances agricultural knowledge, facilitates cooperation, and generates income, thus supporting broader rural development objectives.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design and Location

A qualitative descriptive approach was adopted to gain an in-depth understanding of KWT Barmulita’s activities and impacts. The study was conducted in Legokbarong Hamlet, RW 004 and RW 005, Pusakamulya Village, Kiarapedes District, Purwakarta Regency, West Java, Indonesia. This location was selected due to the active presence of KWT Barmulita and its recognition by local extension agencies.

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2.2. Data Collection

Data were collected through multiple methods:

Participant observation during routine group activities; Structured interviews with group leaders and agricultural extension agents; Questionnaires administered to 10 purposively selected members out of 30 active participants. The questionnaire included 10 Likert-scale statements and one open-ended question, addressing aspects such as knowledge acquisition, cooperation, production, and perceived economic benefits.

2.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis followed a qualitative descriptive framework involving data reduction, categorization, and interpretation. The focus was on identifying recurring patterns and triangulating findings across different sources.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Functioning as a Learning Platform

All respondents agreed that participation in KWT Barmulita enhanced their agricultural knowledge and skills. Members reported improvements in crop cultivation techniques, pest management, and organic fertilizer production. These findings highlight the importance of peer-to-peer learning facilitated by group structures, consistent with the "learning class" function stipulated in government policy.

3.2. Facilitating Cooperation and External Linkages

The group successfully fosters internal cooperation among members through collective planting, maintenance, and harvesting activities. Additionally, KWT Barmulita has established partnerships with local stakeholders, including:

Balai Penyuluhan Pertanian (BPP) Garokgek, for agricultural extension and technical support; Barong Mulya Farmer Group, for integrated knowledge-sharing; Local vegetable traders, for marketing surplus produce; External technical consultants, for capacity building in niche skills (e.g., composting, biochar production).

These networks enhance the group's institutional credibility and provide members with broader market access.

3.3. Serving as a Production Unit

KWT Barmulita collectively recommends certain crops (e.g., chili, tomatoes, leafy greens) for household cultivation. Members who produce surplus can market their yields through the group's informal sales system, improving household liquidity. While most members prioritize home consumption, the option to commercialize surplus ensures resilience during financial shocks.

3.4. Economic and Social Outcomes

Respondents overwhelmingly reported reduced household expenses due to access to fresh, self-produced food. Some members also generated additional income from selling vegetables through KWT channels. Furthermore, members noted increased motivation, time management, and productivity as intangible yet significant outcomes.

4. CONCLUSION

KWT Barmulita has demonstrated its capacity to function effectively as a multi-role institution, fulfilling educational, cooperative, and productive mandates. These roles have contributed meaningfully to improving household economic resilience among rural women in Pusakamulya Village. The study affirms the relevance of gender-responsive farmer groups in promoting inclusive rural development. Strengthening such grassroots institutions through targeted policy and extension support can amplify their impact across similar rural contexts in Indonesia.

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