

Strengthening Economic Independence for People with Deaf Disabilities at SEHJIRA Foundation-Tangerang-Banten through Improving Entrepreneurship Skills in the Creative Economy Sector

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Abstract

SEHJIRA, a deaf foundation in Tangerang, Banten, faces various challenges in empowering deaf people, including low self-confidence, lack of creative economic skills, and lack of understanding about digital business. This Community Service Program is designed to address these issues with three main solutions: psychological training to build self-confidence, skills training in convection, screen printing, and tie-dyed batik to produce creative products, and business management and digital marketing training. The goal is to empower deaf people to become financially and emotionally independent through the creative economy sector. Lecturers and students collaborate in training that includes increasing self-confidence, production skills, and product marketing. The results showed an increase in self-confidence, skills in producing creative products, and the ability to market products digitally. Participants were enthusiastic and motivated to apply the training for economic independence. This program produced outcomes in the form of improved skills, production tools, scientific publications, and an increase in the positive image of the SEHJIRA Foundation.

INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic era of the creative economy, which relies heavily on innovation and creativity, empowering all segments of society is a key factor in achieving inclusive and equitable economic growth. This means ensuring that every individual, without exception, has equal opportunities to participate in and benefit from economic development. Unfortunately, persons with disabilities—particularly those with hearing impairments—still face various systemic and social barriers in accessing economic opportunities and fully developing their potential. Garberoglio et al. (2019) note that despite some progress, the unemployment rate among people with disabilities remains twice as high as that of the general population. Limited access to inclusive education, relevant vocational training, and disability-friendly employment opportunities are among the critical challenges that demand serious attention.

Several previous studies have highlighted the importance of entrepreneurial skills applicable to individuals with hearing impairments, such as skills in handicraft production, sewing, screen printing, small business management, and digital marketing (Pujianto & Tjahjono, 2019; Harahap, 2019). Practice-based training, particularly in the creative and service sectors, is considered effective because it aligns with market needs and leverages the strong visual expression potential within the deaf community. This approach demonstrates that economic empowerment involves not only technical skill enhancement but also motivational and social aspects that strengthen self-confidence and individual adaptability. Top of Form Data from the Central Bureau of Statistics in 2021 shows that the labour force participation rate of people with disabilities in Indonesia is still very low, at 52.3%, compared to the non-disabled labour force participation rate of 69.6%. This low participation is influenced by various factors, including limited access to education, skills training, and equal employment opportunities.

In Indonesia, awareness of the importance of inclusivity and economic empowerment for persons with disabilities continues to grow. Various efforts have been made to strengthen the economic independence of this group, one of which is through the Sehjira Foundation in Tangerang, Banten. The foundation was established on December 5, 2001, by a group of volunteers with hearing impairments, with the aim of fostering resilient and independent deaf individuals through a range of programs in advocacy, counseling, education, and empowerment, so they can achieve equality with those without hearing disabilities. The choice of the creative economy sector as the focus of empowerment is based on several factors, among others: low barriers to entry, high growth potential, and suitability to market needs. As explained in (Surwanti & Puspitosari, 2021), economic empowerment of people with disabilities can be done through skills training that is relevant to market needs. Sehjira Foundation endeavours to equip people with hearing disabilities with the skills needed to create innovative, competitive, and market-driven products or services. Through a focused and sustainable approach, Sehjira Foundation hopes to help people with hearing disabilities to not only be economically independent, but also become important actors in the development of the creative economy in Indonesia.

In addition to skill enhancement, access to resources, technology, markets, and demand are also important components in supporting the economic independence of people with disabilities (Palupi et al., 2022). Thus, a holistic approach that pays attention to various dimensions of economic empowerment, from increasing individual capacity to expanding access, is an effective strategy to strengthen the economic independence of people with hearing disabilities at Sehjira Foundation (Surwanti & Puspitosari, 2021; Palupi et al., 2022).

Economic empowerment of persons with disabilities, including at Sehjira Foundation, is not just a voluntary step, but an obligation mandated by law. Law No. 8/2016 on Persons with Disabilities explicitly guarantees the right of persons with disabilities to obtain employment and a decent livelihood. This law provides a strong legal foundation to ensure that persons with disabilities have equal opportunities to access the world of work and build economic independence. Through the improvement of entrepreneurial skills in the creative economy sector, people with hearing disabilities at Sehjira Foundation are expected to have strong economic independence. More than just providing a livelihood, this empowerment aims to equip them with the ability to adapt in the dynamic creative economy era. Thus, they will not only become part

of the labour force, but also become independent, productive individuals who are able to actively contribute to inclusive economic development.

Improving entrepreneurial skills in the creative economy sector is the main focus of Sehjira Foundation in its efforts to empower people with hearing disabilities. Through structured and sustainable trainings, they are not only equipped with the technical ability to produce creative products or services, but also equipped with knowledge and business strategies that are relevant to market demands. The hope is that they will not only be able to create a business that generates income, but also be able to develop the business so that it is sustainable and able to compete in the dynamic creative economy era.

More than just providing a livelihood, this empowerment aims to build strong economic independence for people with hearing disabilities. Economic independence here is defined as the ability to not only fulfil their daily needs, but also the ability to plan for the future, develop their potential, and actively contribute to economic development. By having economic independence, they can improve their quality of life, build self-confidence, and escape the negative stigma that is often attached to people with disabilities.

Thus, they not only become part of the labour force, but also become independent, productive individuals who are able to actively contribute to inclusive economic development. Their success in entrepreneurship in the creative economy sector is expected to inspire other people with disabilities, and encourage the creation of a more friendly and inclusive economic ecosystem for all.

METHOD

Based on the problems identified in this community service program, several solutions have been established to address the issues of self-confidence, work skills, and entrepreneurial ability. The proposed implementation method aims to increase the confidence of people with hearing disabilities, provide skills to produce products in the creative economy sector, and provide business management knowledge as well as technical capabilities and strategies in digital/online marketing.

This knowledge transfer was carried out through hands-on training, where participants learned every step of the production process—from the introduction of tools and materials to the stages of production and product marketing. This practical approach provided participants with direct understanding, enabling them to create creative products and market them independently. The implementation of the proposed solutions was outlined in the following concrete steps:

- I. Preliminary Stage:
This stage conducted observations and interviews in order to find out the internal and external conditions of the SEHJIRA foundation and the deafblind people who are its members. Identifying the problems of the training program from the side of the SEHJIRA foundation and self-confidence and economic independence from the side of deaf people.
- II. Implementation Stage of Competency Strengthening Training:
At this stage, knowledge transfer activities through training (workshops) to a total of 30 participants. In its implementation, it will be divided into several groups of training activities.

- **Self-confidence training**
This activity was carried out in 1 session with a duration of 150 minutes. The material provided is in the form of motivation to increase self-confidence through discussion of case studies faced by the participants. The indicator of the success of this activity is the courage of the participants to show their interests and talents, express ideas for developing talents into valuable creative products. After the training activities provided, the participants will continue to be monitored by psychologists from the creative product development stage to marketing.
- **Skills training in the field of convection**
This activity was carried out in 1 session with a duration of 300 minutes. The material provided is in the form of techniques for making totebag products with the stages of introducing types of materials, making basic patterns, cutting fabrics according to patterns, mapping patterns with fabrics, stabbing along the edges of the fabric to sewing fabrics into totebag products that are ready to be created. The indicator of the success of this activity is that participants understand the stages to successfully make totebag products that have the potential to be developed into creative economic products. After the training, the participants will be monitored by experts to maintain product quality and development.
- **Skills training in screen printing and tie-dye batik**
This activity uses totebag products from convection and t-shirt training. The technical implementation was 300 minutes and the participants were divided into two groups (15 participants/group). First, the screen printing skills group received material on the introduction of screen printing tools and materials, graphic design, film making techniques for the screen, and screen printing practice. Second, the ikat-dye batik group received materials on the introduction of ikat-dye batik tools and materials, ikat-dye batik techniques to produce certain patterns, ikat-dye batik practice, and drying techniques. The success indicator of this activity is that the participants are able to practice screen printing and tie-dye batik techniques with good quality results. After the training activities, the participants will be monitored for the implementation process to ensure the usefulness and impact of the training activities provided.
- **Skills training in marketing**
This activity was carried out in 1 session with a duration of 150 minutes. The material provided is an understanding of business management for business development, technical

and online product marketing strategies, product photos and copywriting for digital marketing content. The success indicator of this activity is that the participants are able to manage and market creative products developed through digital marketing through the Tokopedia, Shopee and social media platforms. After the training activities provided, the participants will be monitored by the community service implementation team to ensure the usefulness and positive impact of the activities carried out.

- III. Business development and product marketing stage. At this stage, business management and product marketing are monitored by creative economy experts from the Mercu Buana University Entrepreneurship Bureau which is carried out during training through e-commerce platforms and social media.
- IV. Evaluation and Mentoring Stage. At this stage, evaluation and mentoring are carried out so that partners have improved. The evaluation stage aims to measure the overall success of the program. The evaluation is conducted through collecting feedback from participants and partners regarding aspects of the program that are considered useful and areas that need improvement. Mentoring is also conducted to ensure that the best practices taught are still implemented. In addition, an economic impact analysis was conducted to evaluate how the program affected the income of the participants.
- V. Reporting and output stage. After all activities were completed, data and findings from each stage were collated and compiled into a comprehensive report. In addition, video documentation of the training activities, including participant testimonials, was made for publication purposes. Articles about the program were also published in mass media to increase public awareness. Meanwhile, scientific articles were prepared for dissemination of results to the academic and practitioner communities. Although the Intellectual Property Rights (HAKI) process has not yet been finalised, steps have been taken for video production and media publications to ensure the program is well documented.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The activity was carried out two consecutive days started at Saturday (7th September 2024) and Sunday (8th September 2024). starting at 08.00 - 18.00 at Sehjira Community, Ciledug, West Jakarta, 40 participants attended the training.

Confidence-building training is an important foundation in the empowerment program at SEHJIRA Foundation. Deaf people often face negative stigma and social limitations that can erode their self-confidence. Through a series of activities such as motivational sessions, simulations, and role plays, participants are invited to recognize their potential, build a positive self-image, and develop communication and social interaction skills. The training not only focuses on psychological aspects, but also

equips participants with practical strategies to overcome social barriers and build positive relationships with the surrounding environment. It is hoped that with increased self-confidence, people with hearing disabilities at SEHJIRA Foundation can be more courageous in developing their potential, taking opportunities, and actively participating in society. In addition, SEHJIRA Foundation in Tangerang, Banten, is committed to empowering people with hearing disabilities to be economically and socially independent. One of the flagship programs initiated is training in batik dyeing, screen printing, and sewing patterns. This program is specifically designed to equip participants with practical and artistic skills that they can apply to produce creative products with selling value.

The training begins with an introduction to a variety of dip-dye batik techniques, from the coloring process to the creation of motifs. Participants were invited to experiment with various colors and patterns, exploring their creativity on fabric. Not only basic techniques, they were also equipped with knowledge about market trends and consumer tastes, so that they can create products that are not only beautiful, but also in demand by the market.



Figure 1. Dye Batik Training

Next, participants were introduced to screen printing techniques, which allow them to print their own designs on various media, such as t-shirts, bags or fabrics. They learned how to make a screen-printing screen, choose the right ink, and the precise printing process. These skills open up opportunities for them to be creative with unique designs and build their own brand.



Figure 2. Screen printing workshop

Equally important, the sewing pattern training provides participants with the tools to turn their designs into finished products. They learn the basic techniques of measuring,

cutting and sewing fabrics, and are taught to make basic patterns for various types of clothing. By mastering these skills, they can produce their own fashion products that are unique and in line with the latest trends.



Figure 3. Sewing pattern workshop

The training in batik dyeing, screen printing, and sewing patterns is a valuable provision for people with hearing disabilities at SEHJIRA Foundation to work and develop their potential. More than just technical skills, this program fosters self-confidence, independence, and entrepreneurial spirit. Hopefully, they can become productive, independent individuals who are able to contribute positively to society.



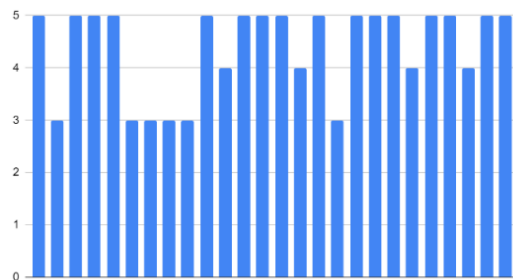
Figure 4. Training participants show the results of dyed batik produced

Furthermore, to complement the skills training in making creative products, digital marketing training is a powerful weapon for people with hearing disabilities at SEHJIRA Foundation to penetrate geographical boundaries and expand market reach. In the connected digital era, the ability to market products online is the key to success, including for people with disabilities. This training equips them with knowledge and practical skills about online marketing strategies, from building a brand, utilizing social media, to managing an online store. Through digital platforms, they can market their creative products to a wider audience without being constrained by physical limitations. Thus, they are not only able to increase sales and income, but also build economic independence and show the world that they are able to compete and excel in the digital era.

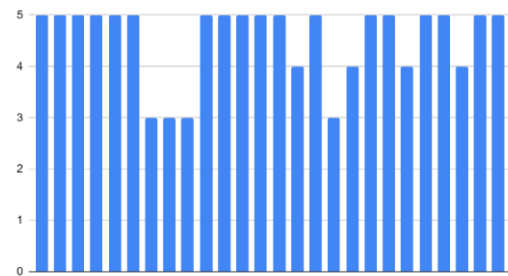


Figure 5. Digital marketing workshop

During the activity, an evaluation was conducted to assess the improvement in competence resulting from the community service activity by distributing questionnaires to the participants. The following is a summary the implementation of the activity, using the following rating scales, performance Measurement (Satisfaction): 1 = Not Satisfied; 2 = Slightly Satisfied; 3 = Moderately Satisfied; 4 = Satisfied; 5= Very Satisfied. The given graphs show that most of participant agreed that this community activity was really important for them since it believed that will bring beneficial impact to the Sehjira community and people who live as disabled people especially deaf in the community. According to Graph 1. This conclusion demonstrates that the community service program implemented is fairly effective in addressing issues within the community.

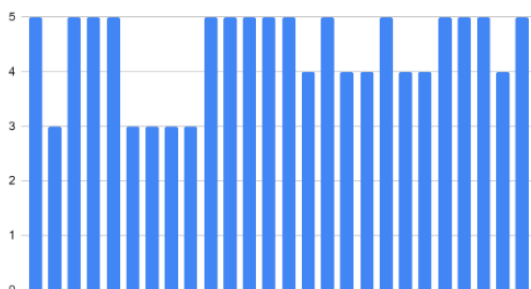


Graph 1. Community Solution

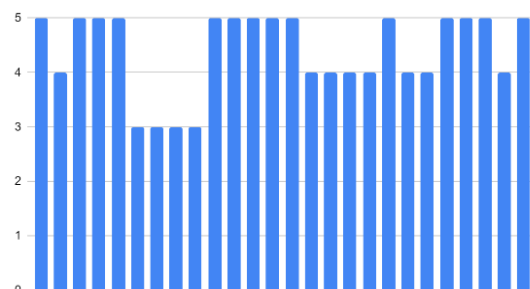


Graph 2. Actively engaged in activities

According Graph 2. This conclusion highlights the important role of the committee in the success of the community service program, ensuring that the desired objectives were met, even though the difference was not too significant. However, the result remains positive, as it shows that the committee's involvement and strategy are on the right track. With some adjustments or improvements, performance can be further enhanced to achieve a higher level of satisfaction.



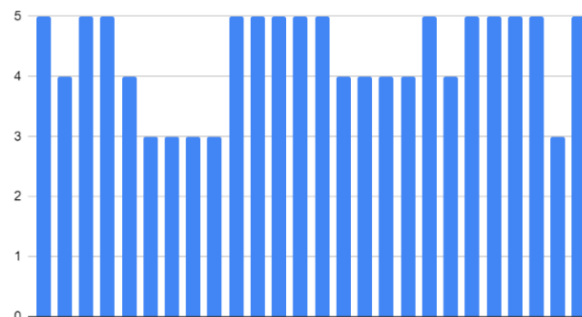
Graph 3. Provided Assistance



Graph 4. Knowledge Improvement

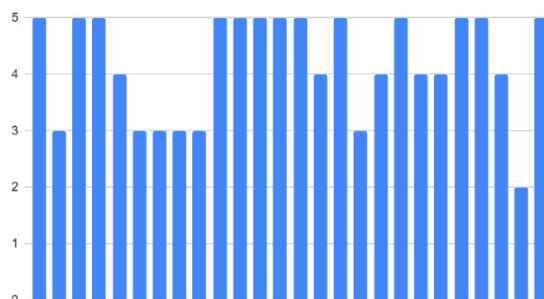
Based on Graph 3, the graph shows participant feedback on the frequency of assistance provided by the PPM team, with most respondents rating it as appropriate. The ratings are primarily clustered around 4 and 5, indicating that the majority of participants feel the frequency of support was satisfactory and met their needs. However, there are a few lower ratings around 3, suggesting that some participants may have felt the assistance frequency could be improved. Overall, the feedback reflects general satisfaction with the PPM team's involvement, though there is minor room for improvement.

In addition to Graph 4, the graph illustrates the participants' perceptions of the increase in independence or enhancement of knowledge and skills among partners as a result of the program. Most ratings are concentrated at 4 and 5, indicating a strong consensus that the program effectively contributed to improving the partners' abilities and confidence. While there are a few ratings around 3, suggesting some participants felt the improvements were moderate, the overall feedback is overwhelmingly positive, demonstrating the program's success in fostering greater self-sufficiency and skill development among its participants.



Graph 5. Overall Satisfaction

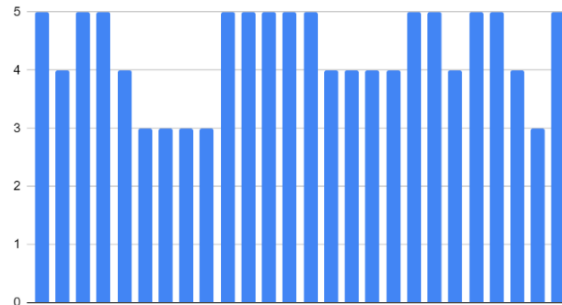
The graph 5. shows the partners' overall satisfaction with the implementation of the PPM activities. It appears that most respondents rated their satisfaction as consistently high, with many responses at the maximum value of 5. There is some variation, particularly in the middle section of the graph, where satisfaction ratings drop to lower values such as 3 or 4. However, the general trend remains dominated by positive values, indicating an overall high level of satisfaction.



Graph 6. Beneficial Impact

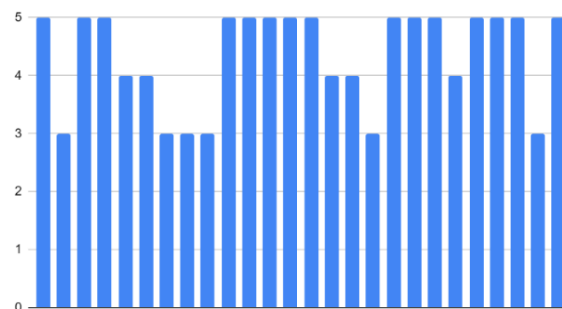
Based on graph 6, the survey results indicate that the majority of participants found the technology introduced through the community service program to be highly beneficial,

with most ratings falling between 4 and 5 on a 5-point scale. While the overall response is positive, with few participants rating the technology below 3, there are some variations suggesting room for improvement to ensure the technology meets the needs of all users more effectively.



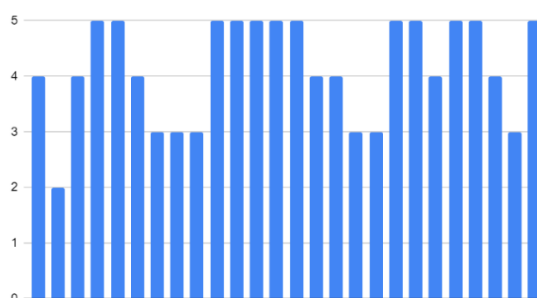
Graph 7. Based on need of community

The graph illustrates partner feedback on whether PPM activities align with their identified needs. The majority of respondents rated the alignment highly, with most ratings being 4 or 5. There are a few dips to 3, and one section shows a lower level of satisfaction at around 2. Overall, the responses indicate that the activities are generally considered to meet the partners' needs, with some room for improvement in specific areas.



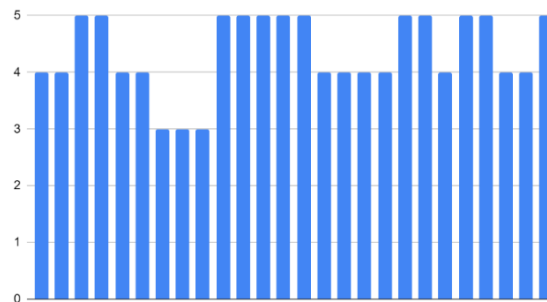
Graph 8. Socialization

The graph reflects how well the PPM team provided training or socialization that was easy for partners to understand. Most respondents rated this aspect positively, with many ratings at 4 or 5. However, there are noticeable variations, as some responses fall to 3 and even 2 in certain areas, indicating a moderate level of understanding. While the overall trend suggests that the majority of participants found the training comprehensible, there are areas where clarity and effectiveness could be improved.



Graph 9. Effective Communication

The graph shows that most respondents rated communication with the PPM team as effective, with the majority of ratings being 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 to 5. A smaller portion of respondents gave a neutral rating of 3, while lower ratings are rare. Overall, the feedback reflects a positive perception of communication, with only a few expressing less satisfaction.



Graph 10. Supports and Implementations

The graph represents feedback on the statement: "Tim PPM memberikan dukungan yang memadai setelah kegiatan selesai" (The PPM team provides adequate support after the activity is completed). Most of the responses fall in the 4 and 5 range, indicating that a majority of respondents feel satisfied with the support provided. A smaller portion rated the support at 3, indicating a more neutral stance. Very few rated below 3, showing minimal dissatisfaction. Overall, the sentiment is largely positive regarding the post-activity support from the PPM team.

The data concludes that the community service program has been effectively managed in terms of its implementation timeline, aligning with the plans and expectations of the participants. The consistency between expectations and actual performance indicates that the time allocated for the program was well-suited, fulfilling the established needs and expectations.

CONCLUSION

Conclusions and Suggestions

SEHJIRA Foundation's empowerment programs are comprehensively designed to equip people with hearing disabilities with the skills and confidence they need to be economically and socially independent. Starting with confidence-building training, participants are encouraged to recognize their potential, build a positive self-image, and develop effective communication skills. This is an important foundation for them to develop themselves and face challenges in the business world.

Furthermore, skills training in batik dyeing, screen printing techniques, and sewing patterns opened the door for them to enter the world of the creative economy. They are not only taught basic techniques, but also encouraged to create, innovate, and produce unique products that have selling value. Mastery of these skills gives them the tools to work and generate income.

In the fast-paced digital era, the ability to market products online is crucial. Through digital marketing training, participants are equipped with knowledge and strategies to market their products to a wider market. They learn about branding, social media strategies, and online store management. These skills enable them to reach consumers beyond geographical limitations and increase sales opportunities.

The success of this empowerment program is reflected in the enthusiasm and achievements of the participants. They are not only able to produce high-quality creative products, but also successfully market their products and build independent businesses. Moreover, the program has fostered self-confidence, independence, and entrepreneurial spirit among the deaf community at SEHJIRA Foundation. They have proven that with support and equal opportunities, they are able to work, be independent, and inspire.

However, there were several limitations in the implementation of this program, including limited training time, which did not allow for in-depth exploration of the material, as well as restricted access to advanced production tools and intensive post-training mentoring support. These limitations affected the sustainability of some participants' ventures, many of whom still require ongoing guidance to build stable independence.

Based on the results and identified limitations, this program recommends the development of follow-up initiatives in the form of business incubation and continuous mentoring, as well as strengthening collaboration with industry players and digital platforms to expand market access. Additionally, the training should be expanded to include advanced topics such as branding strategies, financial literacy, and e-commerce optimization. Mapping local potential and reinforcing disability community networks are also essential to foster a more inclusive and sustainable creative economy ecosystem.

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