



## Empowering Dasawisma with the Spirit of Independence toward Welfare

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**Abstract:** This community service program was motivated by the suboptimal role of Dasawisma as a grassroots community organization in improving family welfare. Several Dasawisma groups still faced challenges in organizational management, low member participation, and limited understanding of productive and sustainable activity management. The objective of this program was to strengthen the organizational capacity of Dasawisma, increase member participation, and foster a spirit of solidarity and independence toward family welfare. The methods applied included a participatory approach through counseling sessions, group discussions, simple organizational management practices, and mentoring of Dasawisma activities. The results indicated an improvement in members' understanding of organizational functions and the importance of structured activity planning. Members became more actively involved in preparing work programs, maintaining simple administrative records, and implementing productive and social activities. Behavioral changes were also observed, including increased collective responsibility, stronger cooperation among members, and the emergence of several local leaders. Furthermore, the program fostered a new awareness that Dasawisma is not merely a routine meeting forum, but a platform for empowering women and families toward sustainable welfare improvement.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Community welfare development at the grassroots level cannot be separated from the active role of family-based social groups. One community institution that holds a strategic position at the neighborhood level is *Dasawisma*, a group consisting of approximately 10–20 households that operates as part of the Family Welfare Movement (PKK). Empirically, *Dasawisma* plays an important role in family data collection, dissemination of government programs, and the implementation of social and community activities. However, in many areas, the role of *Dasawisma* remains limited to administrative tasks and routine ceremonial activities, resulting in its social and economic potential being underutilized. This condition reflects a gap between the ideal function of *Dasawisma* as a driver of family empowerment and its actual practice in the field (Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection 2012; Mardikanto 2014).

From a socio-economic perspective, many *Dasawisma* members come from lower- to middle-income households that continue to face challenges related to household economic resilience, financial management, and access to productive economic opportunities. National data indicate that family economic resilience is a key factor in achieving sustainable

community welfare, particularly when women play an active role in productive activities and household management (Statistics Indonesia 2022). In this context, Dasawisma possesses significant social capital, including close interpersonal relationships, intensive communication, and a strong culture of mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*). This social capital can serve as a critical foundation for promoting collective economic activities, enhancing member capacity, and strengthening social solidarity (Chambers 2012; Putnam 1993).

From a theoretical perspective, community empowerment emphasizes the importance of awareness-building, capacity development, and active citizen participation in shaping social change (Ife & Tesoriero, 2014; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). Freire argues that communities must be positioned as subjects with critical awareness of their socio-economic conditions in order to achieve independent transformation through processes of reflection and action (*praxis*) (Freire, 1970). In line with this view, community-based empowerment approaches highlight that sustainable change emerges from collective learning processes, the strengthening of local organizations, and the development of internal community potential (Mardikanto, 2014; Suharto, 2009). As a small, family-based group, *Dasawisma* represents a strategic space for fostering collective awareness, strengthening social capital, and mobilizing joint action toward improved household and community welfare.

The selection of Dasawisma as the subject of the Community Service Program (PkM) entitled “*Empowering Dasawisma with the Spirit of Independence toward Welfare*” is grounded in the values of independence and mutual cooperation that underpin Indonesia’s struggle for independence and remain highly relevant in contemporary community empowerment efforts. This program is conceptualized as an initiative to build family economic independence through strengthening Dasawisma organizations, enhancing member skills, and developing productive activities based on local potential. The focus of the program is directed toward strengthening organizational capacity, improving family economic literacy, and fostering collective business initiatives that support member welfare (Siagian 2016; Robbins and Coulter 2018).

The objective of this PkM activity is to cultivate collective awareness among Dasawisma members regarding the importance of family economic independence, enhance knowledge and skills in household-based business management, and strengthen the role of Dasawisma as a platform for learning and economic cooperation. The expected social changes include increased member participation in productive activities, the formation of joint business groups or household-scale creative economic activities, and the emergence of local change agents capable of sustaining program continuity. Ultimately, Dasawisma is expected to evolve

from a primarily administrative group into a learning and action-oriented community that makes a tangible contribution to improving family welfare and the surrounding community (Freire 1970; Chambers 2012).

## **2. METHOD**

The implementation of this Community Service Program (PkM) employed a participatory, community empowerment based approach, in which Dasawisma members were actively involved from the planning stage through evaluation. The subjects of the program were Dasawisma members in the assisted urban village area, predominantly housewives who play a strategic role in strengthening family welfare. Activities were conducted within the residential environment that serves as the operational base of Dasawisma, ensuring that the mentoring process remained closely connected to the participants' daily social context. Active community involvement was initiated through preliminary deliberations aimed at identifying needs, local potential, and key challenges related to organizational strengthening and family welfare improvement.

The strategy adopted in this program combined educational outreach, practical skills training, group discussions, and field-based mentoring. This approach was chosen based on the understanding that community empowerment requires more than the transfer of knowledge; it also involves awareness-building, capacity strengthening, and direct application in everyday life. Participatory discussions encouraged Dasawisma members to share experiences and articulate the challenges they faced, while training activities focused on enhancing group management skills, simple administrative record-keeping, and the development of household-based productive activities. Mentoring was conducted in stages to ensure that acquired knowledge was effectively implemented and gradually transformed into collective practice.

The PkM activities were carried out through several structured phases. The first phase involved preparation and initial observation, including coordination with Dasawisma leaders and local community figures. The second phase consisted of problem identification and joint planning through group discussion forums. The third phase was the implementation of educational outreach and training, covering topics such as organizational strengthening, Dasawisma activity management, and family empowerment motivation. The fourth phase involved practical mentoring, during which the service team facilitated the application of training outcomes in real group activities. The final phase was evaluation and collective reflection, aimed at assessing observed changes and formulating strategies for program sustainability.

### 3. RESULTS

The implementation of the Community Service Program (PkM) demonstrates that the participatory approach applied was effective in fostering active involvement of Dasawisma members from the initial stages of the program. During the problem identification phase, participants openly articulated various challenges they faced, including limited understanding of Dasawisma organizational management, minimal administrative record-keeping, and the underdevelopment of family-based productive activities. These discussions functioned as a collective reflection space that raised awareness that improving family welfare can begin with strengthening organizational capacity at the level of small community groups such as Dasawisma, as emphasized in participatory community empowerment approaches (Mardikanto 2014).

During the outreach and training phase, there was a noticeable increase in members' understanding of the importance of organizational governance, role distribution within the group, and simple documentation of activities and finances. The materials presented were not merely theoretical but were closely linked to the real conditions faced by participants. Training sessions were highly interactive, with members actively asking questions, sharing experiences, and discussing solutions appropriate to their capacities. This process reflects social learning through group interaction that contributes to changes in attitudes and behavior (Bandura 1986).

Practical activities and field-based mentoring played a crucial role in encouraging behavioral change. Members began to develop routine activity agendas, maintain simple cash books, and design household-based productive activities such as processed food products and basic handicrafts. Direct mentoring assisted participants in overcoming technical obstacles and increased their confidence in carrying out organizational roles. This hands-on approach aligns with the principle of *learning by doing* in community capacity development (Chambers 2012).

From an institutional and social perspective, there was a clear strengthening of Dasawisma's function as a collective learning platform. Meetings that were previously informal gradually evolved into more structured forums, characterized by agendas, meeting minutes, and clear task allocation. This development indicates the emergence of new social institutions in the form of deliberative and organized working practices, which are hallmarks of growing social capital within a community (Putnam 1993).

Social change was also evident through the emergence of several members who assumed roles as local leaders. These individuals voluntarily assisted others in understanding administrative record-keeping and encouraged broader community participation in group activities. The presence of such local change agents enhances program sustainability, as the

learning process no longer relies solely on the facilitation team but is driven from within the community itself (Northouse 2019).

In addition, there was a growing collective awareness that Dasawisma is not merely a ceremonial activity group but can function as a strategic platform for improving family welfare. Members increasingly associated effective organizational management with the expansion of household economic activities and strengthened social solidarity among residents. This reflects an empowerment process that promotes community independence and social responsibility (Freire 2005).

Overall, the PkM outcomes reveal changes across three key dimensions: enhanced knowledge and skills among members, strengthened Dasawisma institutional capacity, and the growth of awareness and local leadership. These changes constitute an initial foundation for social transformation toward a more independent and prosperous community (Mardikanto 2014).

#### **4. DISCUSSION**

The results of the PkM activities indicate that participatory approaches are effective in fostering community awareness and capacity development. These findings are consistent with Freire's perspective, which emphasizes the importance of dialogue in empowerment processes, positioning communities as active subjects of social change (Freire 2005). The group discussions conducted during the program functioned as spaces for critical awareness of the potentials and challenges faced by Dasawisma members.

Member involvement from the planning stage onward strengthened participants' sense of ownership of the program. From a community empowerment perspective, early and active participation promotes collective responsibility and increases the likelihood of program sustainability (Mardikanto 2014). This was evident in members' initiatives to develop activity agendas and continue simple administrative practices after the training concluded.

Practice based training methods were also shown to enhance participants' self-confidence. This approach aligns with Bandura's social learning theory, which emphasizes that individuals learn through direct experience and social interaction (Bandura 1986). When members practiced financial record-keeping and activity management, learning became more meaningful and easier to apply in daily life. The strengthening of Dasawisma as a forum for discussion and collective action reflects the formation of social capital at the community level. Trust, shared norms, and emerging social networks within the group facilitated collective coordination and action. This aligns with social capital theory, which underscores the

importance of networks and trust in supporting collective success (Putnam 1993).

The emergence of local leaders from among Dasawisma members played a significant role in the social transformation process. Leadership theory suggests that change is more readily accepted when initiated by figures with strong social proximity to group members (Northouse 2019). These local leaders functioned as change agents who sustained the momentum of empowerment within the community. Theoretically, the PkM process reflects the stages of community empowerment, beginning with awareness-raising, followed by capacity building, and culminating in collective action. Outreach activities fostered awareness, training enhanced skills, and routine Dasawisma activities became tangible expressions of collective action. This sequence illustrates that social change is a gradual process requiring sustained facilitation and support (Chambers 2012).

The success of the program also highlights that strengthening women's organizations at the community level has strategic implications for family welfare. As a family-based group, Dasawisma occupies a unique position in fostering social solidarity while simultaneously supporting household economic activities (Mardikanto 2014). Nevertheless, program sustainability requires support from multiple stakeholders, including local governments and relevant institutions. Cross-sector collaboration is essential to strengthen resources, expand program reach, and integrate Dasawisma activities into broader community development initiatives (Freire 2005).

Thus, this discussion affirms that the combination of participatory approaches, practice-based training, and the strengthening of local institutions constitutes a relevant strategy for promoting social transformation toward family welfare through community-based Dasawisma initiatives.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The Community Service Program (PkM) entitled "*Empowering Dasawisma with the Spirit of Independence toward Welfare*" demonstrates that strengthening women's organizational capacity at the community level plays a strategic role in fostering family-based social change. Through participatory outreach, group discussions, and hands-on practice, Dasawisma members not only acquired additional knowledge but also experienced a process of collective awareness regarding their role as agents of family welfare and social development within their communities. Theoretically, this process reflects the stages of community empowerment, beginning with awareness enhancement, followed by capacity strengthening, and culminating in sustainable collective action.

The program outcomes indicate changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors among Dasawisma members in managing organizational activities, utilizing family potential, and increasing participation in social and community activities. Dasawisma began to function not only as a routine activity group but also as a shared learning space for exchanging experiences and building solidarity among members. The emergence of members serving as local change agents further strengthened group dynamics and accelerated the diffusion of values related to independence and mutual cooperation within the community.

Based on these findings, the PkM program recommends the continuation of sustained mentoring to ensure that the changes achieved can be maintained and further developed. Support from village governments, PKK implementation teams, and related institutions is also essential to strengthen Dasawisma institutions through advanced training, facilitation of family-based productive economic programs, and the integration of Dasawisma activities into broader community development initiatives. With synergy among stakeholders, Dasawisma is expected to evolve into an independent, participatory, and empowered community capable of promoting sustainable family welfare.

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