

# POTENSI PEMBANGUNAN KEMAHIRAN KEUSAHAWANAN DALAM MENINGKATKAN PENDAPATAN WANITA ORANG ASLI

ROHAYU RODDIN\*

YUSMARWATI YUSOF\*\*

MARINA IBRAHIM MUKHTAR\*\*\*

HALIZAH AWANG\*\*\*\*

LUTFIAH NATRAH ABBAS\*\*\*\*\*

NORKHAIROLIZAH HAMZAH\*\*\*\*\*

rohayu@uthm.edu.my (*Penulis Koresponden*)\*, marwati@uthm.edu.my\*\*,  
marina@uthm.edu.my\*\*\*, halizah@uthm.edu.my\*\*\*\*, lutfiah@uthm.edu.my\*\*\*\*\*,  
lizah@uthm.edu.my\*\*\*\*\*

## Abstrak

Kemunduran dan kemiskinan dikenal pasti sebagai cabaran utama yang dihadapi kerajaan dalam usaha membangunkan masyarakat Orang Asli dengan berkesan. Tahap kemiskinan yang tinggi ini berkait rapat dengan jenis pekerjaan, masalah status pemilikan tanah, dan tahap pendidikan yang rendah dalam kalangan masyarakat Orang Asli. Kemahiran pembangunan keusahawanan merupakan satu potensi yang boleh menyumbang pendapatan kepada golongan ini. Peranan wanita dalam menjayakan proses pembangunan masyarakat dilihat sebagai penyelesaian holistik yang boleh menyumbang kepada kemajuan ekonomi negara. Wanita Mah Meri adalah sebagai contoh pembangunan usahawan yang berjaya. Wanita suku Mah Meri boleh memasarkan produk, kemahiran dan kebolehan mereka melalui penghasilan kraftangan mereka. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan kemahiran keusahawanan mampu membawa perubahan yang ketara di mana golongan wanita suku kaum asli Mah Meri dapat meningkatkan pendapatan berbanding sebelum bergelar usahawan. Melalui kajian ini, diharap dapat memberi gambaran yang jelas tentang potensi pembangunan kemahiran keusahawanan dalam meningkatkan pendapatan wanita Orang Asli.

**Kata Kunci:** Pembangunan Kemahiran, Keusahawanan, Wanita Orang Asli

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- \* Pensyarah Kanan, Fakulti Pendidikan Teknikal dan Vokasional, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn, 86400 Parit Raja, Johor, Malaysia.  
\*\* Pensyarah Kanan, Fakulti Pendidikan Teknikal dan Vokasional, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn, 86400 Parit Raja, Johor, Malaysia.  
\*\*\* Pensyarah Kanan, Fakulti Pendidikan Teknikal dan Vokasional, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn, 86400 Parit Raja, Johor, Malaysia.  
\*\*\*\* Pensyarah Kanan, Fakulti Pendidikan Teknikal dan Vokasional, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn, 86400 Parit Raja, Johor, Malaysia.  
\*\*\*\*\* Pensyarah Kanan, Fakulti Pendidikan Teknikal dan Vokasional, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn, 86400 Parit Raja, Johor, Malaysia.

# THE POTENTIAL OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP SKILL DEVELOPMENT IN INCREASING THE INCOME OF WOMEN ORANG ASLI

ROHAYU RODDIN\*

YUSMARWATI YUSOF\*\*

MARINA IBRAHIM MUKHTAR\*\*\*

HALIZAH AWANG\*\*\*\*

LUTFIAH NATRAH ABBAS\*\*\*\*\*

NORKHAIROLIZAH HAMZAH\*\*\*\*\*

rohayu@uthm.edu.my (Corresponding Author)\*, marwati@uthm.edu.my\*\*,  
marina@uthm.edu.my\*\*\*, halizah@uthm.edu.my\*\*\*\*, lutfiah@uthm.edu.my\*\*\*\*\*,  
lizah@uthm.edu.my\*\*\*\*\*

## Abstract

*Backwardness and poverty are identified as the main challenges faced by the government in efforts to effectively develop the Orang Asli community. This high level of poverty is closely related to the type of job, the problem of land ownership status, and the low level of education among the Orang Asli community. Entrepreneurship development skill is one potential that can contribute income to this group. The role of women in making the community development process a success is seen as a holistic solution that can contribute to the country's economic progress. Mah Meri woman is as example of successful entrepreneur development. Women of the Mah Meri tribe can be able to market their products, skills, and abilities through the production of their handicrafts. The findings of the study show that entrepreneurship skills can bring about significant changes where the women of the Mah Meri indigenous tribe can increase their income compared to before becoming an entrepreneur. Through this study, it is hoped to provide a clear picture of the potential of entrepreneurship skill development in increasing the income of Orang Asli women.*

**Keywords:** Skill Development, Entrepreneurship, Orang Asli Women

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- \* Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Technical and Vocational Education, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn, 86400 Parit Raja, Johor, Malaysia.  
\*\* Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Technical and Vocational Education, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn, 86400 Parit Raja, Johor, Malaysia.  
\*\*\* Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Technical and Vocational Education, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn, 86400 Parit Raja, Johor, Malaysia.  
\*\*\*\* Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Technical and Vocational Education, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn, 86400 Parit Raja, Johor, Malaysia.  
\*\*\*\*\* Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Technical and Vocational Education, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn, 86400 Parit Raja, Johor, Malaysia.  
\*\*\*\*\* Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Technical and Vocational Education, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn, 86400 Parit Raja, Johor, Malaysia.

## **1.0 Introduction**

The development of entrepreneurial skills is important in increasing achievements that are appropriate to current needs. Thus, each individual needs to be given training to deal with change and cultivate innovation, creativity, and continuous learning [1]. Therefore, the development of entrepreneurial skills has the potential to increase a person's ability and indirectly contribute to an increase in individual income.

Although the Orang Asli community is still under the shackles of backwardness, they are indeed rich in various cultures and arts and of course also skills in entrepreneurship [2]. Like the women of the Mah Meri tribe, they have advantages in terms of culture and handicrafts. They are heavily involved in tourism activities involving cultural performances and the sale of handicrafts. Mah Meri women are among the entrepreneurs who run businesses related to products based on handicrafts, culture, and their ability to increase household income. The Mah Meri Orang Asli community is an Orang Asli ethnic group from the Senoi group. They come from Carey Island, Kuala Langat, Selangor. There are five villages of the Mah Meri tribe namely Sungai Bumbun, Sungai Judah, Sungai Kurau, Sungai Rambai and Kerpau Laut with a population of 1,149 people. Mah Meri means "Forest People" while in terms of terminology Mah Meri is called "scaly (Bersisik)". This tribe is also known as Orang Laut because they live close to the sea and work as fishermen [3]. They respect the freedom of the individual which has been brought from time immemorial with the combination of beliefs of Animism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam [4]. In this study, the Mah Meri tribe from Kampung Sungai Bumbun was chosen as a study participant due to the concentration of tourism-based entrepreneurial activities in this village.

Therefore, this article discusses the potential of developing entrepreneurial skills in increasing the income of indigenous women, especially from the Mah Meri tribe. Entrepreneurship it shows that women have advantages that can be highlighted in this society.

## **2.0 Entrepreneurial Skills Development**

The Orang Asli community which is in the interior and far from the area of economic activity is seen to have less attractive job opportunities in terms of income and career development opportunities. This challenge will continue to be an obstacle for them to venture into productive economic activities, otherwise, they will be tied to traditional economic practices. Therefore, it has become the agenda of the Orang Asli Development Department (JAKOA) to ensure that every Orang Asli community knows and has knowledge in the field of entrepreneurship as a catalyst for their socioeconomic improvement. JAKOA has put together a variety of training and careers as entrepreneurs that suit the abilities and interests of the Orang Asli. This effort continues until now through the JAKOA Strategic Plan 2016-2020 [5]. There are many Orang Asli communities starting to venture into entrepreneurship such as retail, livestock, farming, transport, handicrafts, tourism and so on [6].

However, nowadays it has become a hotly debated issue about the field that is more suitable for the Orang Asli community, which is the field of tourism, either eco-tourism or agro-tourism [7]. This is because the majority of the Orang Asli community is very

comfortable with the environment even though the tide of modernization is increasing. Indirectly, it can attract tourists to explore natural places including the settlement of the Orang Asli community which can introduce the culture and heritage of the community to tourists [8]. Therefore, tourism-based entrepreneurship is seen to be able to help the indigenous community, including women, in contributing to the family's income.

Women of the Mah Meri tribe become an example as one of the successful races through tourism-based entrepreneurship. Women in this tribe are very active in cultural activities such as dance performances and handicraft production. Referring to the contribution of these women, they can generate their own income from cultural activities and the sale of handicrafts that have successfully attracted tourists to their settlements [3]. As a result of this tourism-based entrepreneurial activity, it has given them space to generate a source of income and further increase their family's income.

The development of entrepreneurial skills is necessary either through training, exposure and involvement in various programs to increase knowledge, develop ideas and expand the network of cooperation according to current changes. Skill development based on the experience of Mah Meri tribe women in the field of entrepreneurship is clearly obtained from participation in various types of programs and activities organized by domestic and foreign parties. They also broadened their association with other participants in the organization which made them gain new knowledge and ideas about the production of handicrafts. The acceptance and exposure gained by the women of the Mah Meri tribe have greatly benefited them to succeed. This clearly shows that the relationship that exists between the abilities and skills of the Mah Meri tribe women has given positive returns from the economic aspect which makes them work harder in helping the family economy [9].

### **3.0 Abilities of Mah Meri Women in Entrepreneurship**

A women's group called Tompoq Tompoh has been established since 2005, which is a title used as a joint venture project for the production of Mah Meri handicrafts. This group consists of 20 members from the women of the Mah Meri tribe who are all housewives. These people do not get a perfect education, in fact they prefer to stay at home and take care of their families. However, they try to supplement the family's side income by doing part-time work after completing household chores. Among the side, activities are weaving such as weaving betel bags, mats, and baskets [10].

This skill has been rooted in them for a long time and is passed down from one generation to another. The production of their handicrafts has attracted the interest of tourists not only in the country but also abroad who come to see and buy the handicrafts. In addition, the women of the Mah Meri tribe are also involved in the *Satu Daerah Satu Industri* (SDSI) program which also promotes their products, skills, and abilities to tourists. This program has opened opportunities for them to participate in demonstrations and exhibitions at the local and international levels [3]. Thus, indirectly it has promoted the strength of the women of the Mah Meri tribe which made them more famous.

### **4.0 Research Methodology**

The study was conducted using a qualitative approach where the interview method is the

main method used in this study supported by observation and documentation. Each selected participant is an officer of the Malaysian Orang Asli Development Department (JAKOA), Rural and Regional Development Officer (KKLW) including Mah Meri Orang Asli women who have weaving and dancing skills. This skill has been passed down from generation to generation from their ancestors. Participants were selected because of their background factors who are participants who have been involved in entrepreneurship through handicraft and cultural activities. Table 1 shows the background of the study participants.

**Table 1:** Background of Research Participants

No.	Research Participant	Level of Education	Entrepreneurship Skill
1	PK1	Standard 6	Weaving / Dance / Singer / Musical Instrument Player
2	PK2	Standard 6	Weaving / Dance
3	PK3	Form 2	Weaving / Dance / Singer

\* Note: PK = Research Participant

PK1 is the leader of the weaving and culture group. She acts as the head of the household. Likewise, PK3 plays the role of the head of the family in supporting the household. While PK2 plays a role in contributing to increase family income. All the selected study participants live in Kampung Sungai Bumbun because the development, provision of facilities and centralization of many activities are carried out in Kampung Sungai Bumbun. The selection of Kampung Sungai Bumbun is a symbol of Mah Meri community tourism on Carey Island. Nevertheless, the selection of study participants cannot represent the entire Mah Meri tribal women in other areas, but the findings of this case study can be adapted to represent the common characteristics of other Mah Meri women's communities.

Other study participants as support participants coded with PS1 is an assistant secretary who has served in the Economic Empowerment Division, KKLW and Support Participant 2 (PS2) is an officer who has served in the Socio-Economic Development Division, JAKOA Malaysia. They have a lot of experience with the Mah Meri and Orang Asli communities.

## 5.0 Research Findings

The results of the study show that the potential of developing entrepreneurial skills is important involving training and exposure provided by the ministry and JAKAO. This

situation is acknowledged by PS1.

*...after there was an SDSI project, for example, the natives were given exposure, training, it seems that they are more confident. When we want to ask him to explain the product, he talks at length. He has started to be smart. Can speak Malay fluently. Can speak English. He saw an improvement after this experience. Taken out. He feels like he is appreciated. Yes, Orang Asli may never have a chance to go out. He must mix with people from other countries. When he has seen other people, he tries to bring himself into that situation, he succeeds in performing. He must present his product. He is the one who must be promoted. So anyway, he had to talk. So, from there he establishes his self-esteem. (PS1)*

Through exposure in exhibition participation also develop their skills in entrepreneurship involving knowledge and idea generation through experience gained through other participants. This is supported by a statement by PK1.

*...I've been to the Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand. The Department of Rural Development brought me. I learned a lot near there. (PK1)*

The findings of the study are also supported by PS1 where the government provides and gives many opportunities to the community to get involved with the various related courses provided.

*...we will indeed send him people to go to the course, whether we cooperate with JAKOA, the Orang Asli Department, or under the ministry, and Handicraft is also there. (PS1)*

*...the allocations given include building a workshop, buying the raw materials used to make their handicrafts as well as for the allocation of training sessions to the participants. (PS1)*

*...they also get training from JAKOA on how to communicate better, how to welcome guests well and so on. Some are not good at communicating with people. After this program was implemented, we saw a lot of changes in him. (PS1)*

The ministry also likes KKLW through JAKOA, Malaysian Crafts, KPK also gives exposure and opportunities to this community to be involved in various programs and activities such as exhibitions, visits, performances, competitions, and others to improve their capabilities.

*...we sometimes send him to seminars, which is like business matching, right? Although he cannot communicate in English. So, business-minded is still there. (PS1)*

Promotions are also implemented by the government in helping this community, including the role played by Selangor Tourism.

*...and one more thing, with the help of promotion from the government, it doesn't matter which agency. So, you can see his improvement in terms of*

*communication, his outlook has also moved forward. (PS2)*

NGOs also play an important role in helping the Orang Asli community. The NGO group is active in this village helping the Mah Meri community in terms of new product production ideas, promotion and sales. Woven products are also promoted online known as Gerai OA (Orang Asal). Indirectly, the efforts implemented by NGOs have helped to introduce their communities and products to the world.

*...it's actually an NGO that helps. All I know is what they do. Before this, I didn't know how to use a computer (internet) but now I know. I just look. No pictures yet. As far as looking at it, I already know. Can read the story. (PK1)*

*...NGOs make voluntary internet promotions. He did it voluntarily, but in the sale, we will pay as well. In our sales, we also pay online. Overseas demand is also there. If it's on the internet, it's foreign. There are also people who come here if they know. (PK1)*

*...Bookmarking NGO ideas. Make an example for NGOs to sell. Sold quickly. Quick to make and quick to receive a response. (PK1)*

*...if you go to Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines, NGOs will bring you. Nearby we go to visit while studying. (PK1)*

It is also recognized by PK2 where their products are always bought by NGOs. The NGOs referred to by the study participants are OA Booths, the Center for Orang Asli Concerns (COAC), and the Regional Network for Indigenous Peoples in Southeast Asia (RNIP). However, until now the OA Shop has played a role in helping this community.

The results of the interview show that the level of income has changed where Table 2 shows the income before and after being involved in entrepreneurial activities. However, this income is only a rough estimate and the amount of income obtained is according to current demand. Therefore, the development of entrepreneurial skills is an initiative that can help improve the capabilities and abilities of Mah Meri Women through opportunities and exposure in every event that follows.

**Table 2:** Income of Research Participants Before and After Being Involved in Entrepreneurship

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Previous income</b>	<b>After income</b>
PK1	RM50	RM1000
PK2	RM30	RM600
PK3	RM400	RM500

\* Note: PK = Research Participant

Many of them have focused entirely on activities related to entrepreneurship. Therefore, it clearly shows that tourism-based entrepreneurial activities have played a role in bringing about positive changes in terms of increasing the income of study participants. In addition, the standard of living of this community is increasing by seeing the change in their social conditions. The involvement of women of the Mah Meri tribe in earning income through involvement in entrepreneurship is due to seeing the changes in other women.

The monetary reward earned also causes them to think that through their investment in entrepreneurship, they are able to give them income. Encourage this to form a diligent attitude among them to meet the demand of tourists. Income is one of the motivations for this group to continue to succeed. The income earned makes them more diligent in producing their products, as PK1 said that their income is approximately RM600 up to RM1000 per month including small items such as bookmarks. Returning to PK1, she also played the role of acting as a cooperative by collecting and buying weaving products from other women weavers. Through the efforts of forming a cooperative in the community, it is able to help the surrounding community obtain a source of income quickly. According to the participants of this study, they stated before their activities were more spent with relaxing activities such as just chatting, now they are focused on tourism activities and contribute to increasing family income after knowing the satisfactory returns.

It shows that through investing in entrepreneurial activities can change the lives of the women of the Mah Meri tribe to successfully produce a decent return. The income earned can contribute to the family's income which is indirectly able to remove them from the rigid poor status and acquire better interpersonal skills. According to [11], it is clear in his study, although this entrepreneurship is seen not to further develop the level of business but sufficient in giving them the opportunity to have income continuously. This can reduce the burden of poverty they experience. If seen in the study conducted by [12], they believe that poverty can be overcome with one of the methods is to make individuals who are plagued by poverty with more skills. One of them is through entrepreneurship which can create space and opportunities for this group in generating family income.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

The results of the study show that the development of entrepreneurial skills through exposure and experience can improve the knowledge and abilities of the Mah Meri community from the aspects of knowledge, idea development, promotion, and management. It can indirectly increase the income of this group from their involvement in tourism-based entrepreneurial activities. The need for skill development is necessary so that the community can adapt to change and increase achievement in entrepreneurship in line with current changes and needs. From the results of the research, the following elements are necessary for the development of entrepreneurial skills of indigenous people in general and women in particular. It covers exposure, training, promotion, support, and involvement in exhibitions, performances, and competitions. Therefore, it is appropriate for the government and NGOs involved to give exposure about the empowerment of individuals to develop the family economy while giving them a path to be active in the field of entrepreneurship because as we know, referring to the statement from [11] entrepreneurship can remove the situation from poverty.

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