
Economic Empowerment Assistance for Mosque-Based Communities in Mandailing Natal Regency

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Abstract

The mosque holds a strategic role in the life of Muslims, not only as a place of worship but also as a center for social activities and economic empowerment. This community service program aims to assist mosque administrators in developing their economic potential through entrepreneurship training and the establishment of micro-enterprise units within mosque communities. The activity was conducted in Mandailing Natal Regency using a participatory approach based on the real needs of congregants. The results show that the program succeeded in establishing a special division within the Mosque Prosperity Council (BKM) responsible for managing community economic empowerment initiatives. There was a noticeable improvement in the understanding and skills of mosque administrators regarding Islamic economic concepts, micro-enterprise management, and digital marketing. The program also encouraged greater initiative among mosque congregants to optimize local economic resources, as seen through the emergence of mosque-based economic activities such as entrepreneurship training, local product bazaars, and the development of congregation-based business groups. These findings demonstrate that mosques can function effectively as economic centers capable of improving community welfare when supported by professional management and active participation from congregants.

Keywords: Mosque, Economic Empowerment, Entrepreneurship, Community, Cooperative

INTRODUCTION

Mandailing Natal Regency is one of the regions in North Sumatra Province that possesses considerable economic potential in sectors such as agriculture, plantation, fisheries, and trade. Most of its population works as farmers, small traders, and micro-entrepreneurs. However, the economic condition of the community in several areas remains relatively low. This situation is caused by limited access to business capital, managerial skills, and effective marketing networks. As a result, the abundant local economic potential has not yet had a significant impact on improving community welfare.

In the socio-religious context, the people of Mandailing Natal exhibit a high level of religiosity. The mosque serves not only as a place of worship but also functions as a center for social, educational, and community development activities. However, the potential of mosques as centers for community economic empowerment has not yet been fully utilized. Many mosques are still limited to ritual activities (Rasyid A et al., 2023), while the socio-economic aspects of the congregation have not become a primary focus of attention for mosque administrators and the surrounding community.

The concept of mosque-based community economic empowerment has emerged as a strategic alternative to address the economic challenges faced by Muslims (Ruslan, 2012). The mosque holds a strong and trusted position within the community (Nadzir, 2015), making it highly potential to serve as a platform for economic development grounded in

Islamic values. Through mentoring activities, mosques can become centers for entrepreneurship training, forums for forming congregation-based business groups, as well as channels for the distribution and promotion of local community products. This approach emphasizes collaboration among spiritual, social, and economic aspects in fostering community self-reliance (Rasyid A et al., 2023).

In Mandailing Natal Regency, community economic activities are still dominated by small-scale traditional businesses that lack modern management systems. Many entrepreneurs have not yet understood the importance of financial management, business record-keeping, and digital marketing strategies. In addition, the low level of Islamic financial literacy has become an obstacle to managing businesses in accordance with Islamic principles. Therefore, structured mentoring efforts are needed to enhance human resource capacity (HR) so that they can effectively and sustainably manage local economic potential.

Mosque-based community economic empowerment assistance serves as a solution to address these challenges (Sarasanty et al., 2023). Through this program, the community is not only provided with entrepreneurship and financial literacy training but also guided in establishing independent economic institutions such as Islamic cooperatives, congregation-based business groups, or *Baitul Maal wat Tamwil* (BMT). In this way, the mosque functions as a driving force of the Muslim economy, capable of creating productive activities and strengthening community-based economic networks (Muhammad Al Atsqolani et al., 2023).

This activity is also expected to strengthen the social function of the mosque as a place for character building and fostering community solidarity. By positioning the mosque as a center of economic activity, the community will be encouraged to work together in the spirit of unity and mutual cooperation. In addition to increasing income, this program also cultivates the awareness that economic activities can be regarded as acts of worship when carried out with good intentions and guided by the principles of honesty, justice, and benefit to others.

Based on these conditions, the *Mosque-Based Community Economic Empowerment Assistance* program in Mandailing Natal Regency was implemented as a concrete effort to optimize the role of mosques as centers of community empowerment. This program is expected to have a positive impact on improving community welfare, strengthening local economic capacity, and creating a mosque-based empowerment model that can be replicated in other regions. With the support of various stakeholders, it is hoped that mosques can become engines of social and economic transformation that bring prosperity and benefit to both the community and the region as a whole.

RESEARCH METHODS

1. Location and Time

This activity was carried out in Mandailing Natal Regency. The initial observation served as the starting point of the community service (PKM) program. The observation took place when students from the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Sciences were undertaking their internship at the Mandailing Natal

Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag). Subsequently, a coordination meeting was held to align perceptions between the Mandailing Natal Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Sciences, coinciding with the official visit of the Mandailing Natal Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs to UIN Syekh

Ali Hasan Ahmad Addary Padangsidimpuan. The counseling session was conducted on September 20, 2025, at the Auditorium of the Mandailing Natal Ministry of Religious Affairs Office, while the mentoring session took place at the same office on September 28, 2025. The entire program lasted for 18 days, starting from September 10 to September 28, 2025.

2. Stages of Activity

a. Observation and Discussion

An initial observation was conducted prior to the implementation of this activity. The observation and problem mapping were carried out by students from the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Sciences who participated in the *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) internship program for four months at the Mandailing Natal Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag). These students served as the front line in conducting the preliminary observations in the Mandailing Natal area.

After the observation results were obtained, a coordination meeting was held between the Mandailing Natal Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Sciences to align perceptions and ensure the success of the community service (PKM) program. During this meeting, discussions were also held regarding the planning of the mosque-based PKM activities in Mandailing Natal. The planning process included the scheduling of activities, determining the locations, and identifying the resources required for each activity.

The planning discussion involved the Mandailing Natal local government, representatives of religious instructors (*penyuluh*), community leaders, and representatives from the Mosque Prosperity Councils (BKM) of Mandailing Natal. Planning was considered crucial since managerial actions are based on and adjusted to derivative plans that support the achievement of organizational goals (Husaini Usman, 2022).

Planning was also carried out to identify the main problems faced by the community (Sarasanty et al., 2023). The planning session, held on September 10, 2025, determined the implementation date for September 20, 2025, at the Auditorium of the Mandailing Natal Ministry of Religious Affairs Office, with participants consisting of all mosque administrators (BKM) in Mandailing Natal Regency. From this process, key issues related to mosque-based economic empowerment were identified, emphasizing that the mosque should function not only as a center of worship but also as a catalyst for improving the economic well-being of the Muslim community (Di & Tasikmalaya, 2016).



Figure 1. Discussion and Alignment of Perceptions between the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Mandailing Natal and the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Sciences, UIN Syekh Ali Hasan Ahmad Addary Padangsidimpuan

b. Counseling

The *Mosque-Based Community Economic Empowerment Counseling* program served as an opportunity for the community to learn and gain new insights (Hikmah et al., 2023). This activity was warmly welcomed by the Mosque Prosperity Councils (BKM) of Mandailing Natal. Participants came from various villages across Mandailing Natal Regency, with a total of 20 attendees.

The counseling session on mosque-based community empowerment utilized local potential (Aldiansyah Akbar et al., 2023) to foster an entrepreneurial spirit among mosque administrators and community members through the implementation of entrepreneurship education based on *The Timmons Model*. This model consists of three main components: the identification and assessment of opportunities (*opportunity*), the formation of entrepreneurial teams (*the entrepreneurial team*), and the management of financial resources (*resources*) (Siahaan, 2022).



Figure 2. Smart Mosque Outreach: Mosque-Based Economic Empowerment

The *Mosque Empowerment Counseling* session featured two speakers. The first speaker was Dr. Datuk Imam Marzuki, M.A., a lecturer from STAIN Mandailing Natal, who discussed *the function of the mosque during the time of the Prophet Muhammad*. The second speaker, Dr. Anas Habibi Ritonga, M.A., presented on *utilizing local potential to develop the mosque's economic capacity*. The counseling aimed to educate the people of Mandailing Natal particularly the mosque administrators (BKM) to transform mosques into centers of economic activity that can ensure community welfare. Furthermore, mosque administrators are encouraged to take on the responsibility of becoming drivers or facilitators of community empowerment (Ramli & Hasbullah, 2021).

c. Mentoring

Mentoring serves as the most crucial stage in this activity. It is conducted directly with all Mosque Management Boards (BKM) in Mandailing Natal (Saputri et al., 2024). Regular mentoring by the team—consisting of academics, lecturers, and government representatives—aims to assist mosque administrators and the community in implementing the program (Al Makmur et al., 2019). During this phase, the committee and the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Mandailing Natal provide direct guidance to all BKM administrators. The first step in the mentoring process is to appoint specific personnel responsible for economic development (Mirna Herawati, 2022). After the establishment of the committee, an initial discussion is held to identify the

village's potential resources that can be managed, utilized, and developed by the community to enhance self-reliance (Muhammad Muhib Alwi, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Establishment of the Mosque Prosperity Council (BKM) Management in the Field of Community Economic Empowerment

As a result of the mentoring activities conducted, a management structure for the *Badan Kemakmuran Masjid* (BKM, or Mosque Prosperity Council) was established with a special focus on community economic empowerment (Afif Mufti, 2022). The formation of this management aims to strengthen the role of the mosque not only as a place of worship but also as a center of social and economic activities for the Muslim community (Winanti Winanti, 2023).

The BKM economic division is responsible for designing and managing productive programs that can improve the welfare of congregants, such as mosque-based micro-enterprise development, Islamic entrepreneurship training, and the management of cooperatives or *Baitul Maal wat Tamwil* (BMT). According to Alwi in "Masjid-Based Community Economic Empowerment During the Covid-19 Pandemic," the existence of this specialized structure is expected to create a sustainable institutional system, ensuring that community economic activities are well-coordinated and have a tangible impact on income improvement and economic self-reliance among the communities surrounding the mosque (Daraba, 2015).

2. Human Resource Capacity Building

This community service activity also focuses on enhancing human resource (HR) capacity as an effort to build independence and professionalism within the community in managing mosque-based economic activities (Oki & Iqbal, 2022). Through a series of training sessions and mentoring programs, participants were equipped with both theoretical and practical knowledge and skills such as micro-enterprise management, Islamic financial literacy, digital marketing, and community-based economic organization management.

The training not only improved participants' conceptual understanding but also built their confidence to start and develop businesses independently. The results of these activities indicate a significant change in the way people think and act, as mosque congregants began to demonstrate greater initiative and innovation in managing local economic potential more strategically and sustainably.

3. The Mosque as an Economic Center

Through the implementation of the mentoring program, mosques have begun to transform into centers of community economic activity that play a vital role in improving social welfare (Hamdan Hamdan et al., 2024). The mosque is no longer limited to being a place of worship and religious activities but has evolved into a hub for congregation-based economic empowerment.

The newly established BKM management has designed a variety of productive activities within the mosque environment, such as entrepreneurship training, local product bazaars, formation of congregation business groups, and management of Islamic cooperatives (Siahaan, 2022). These activities position the mosque as a platform capable of driving the community's

economic engine collectively and based on Islamic values.

With this new function, the mosque has succeeded in creating a collaborative space among administrators, congregants, and small business owners, thereby establishing an inclusive, equitable, and sustainable economic ecosystem within the community (Muhammad Al Atsqolani et al., 2023)

In Mandailing Natal Regency, some mosques have already implemented this model, transforming themselves into business centers. *Nur Ala Nur Mosque*, located on Aek Godang Street, Parbangunan, Mandailing Natal District, North Sumatra, has developed an enterprise center that serves as one of the local culinary hubs in Mandailing Natal Regency.

CONCLUSION

The mosque-based community economic empowerment program in Mandailing Natal Regency has received a positive response, as reflected in the enthusiasm of the local community. The mosque administrators in Mandailing Natal demonstrated strong motivation and commitment toward the activities conducted. Reviving the function of the mosque as practiced during the Prophet Muhammad's era became the main focus of this community service program. The broader aim is to reestablish the mosque as a center of civilization and community self-reliance, given its potential to serve as an effective center for empowerment. Implementing this concept is considered part of *sunnatullah* (a divine social law) for Muslim communities.

The community service activities began with observation and problem identification, followed by education and socialization sessions, and then mentoring and accompaniment. Subsequent stages included the formation of business units and monitoring and evaluation. Through training and the development of mosque-based economic enhancement programs, participants gained valuable knowledge, motivation, and a platform to develop collective economic initiatives centered around mosques in Mandailing Natal Regency.

For the sustainability of this program, collaboration and support are essential from multiple stakeholders, including local government, Islamic financial institutions, and universities.

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