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Women's World Banking

Towards a Gender-Responsive Inclusive Business Model: Lessons Learned from Subsistence Groups in Indonesia

2025

This report was prepared as part of the "Study on Business Models in Subsistence Group-Based Inclusive Economic and Financial (EKI) Development with a Gender Lens"

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Preface

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakaatuh

In an effort to create an inclusive and equitable financial system, Bank Indonesia continues to strengthen its strategic role in promoting community-based economic development, particularly through the Subsistence Group-Based Inclusive Economic and Financial (EKI) Development Program. This program serves as a key instrument in supporting the economic resilience of vulnerable groups, expanding access to formal financial services, and promoting payment digitization at the grassroots level.

This study is prepared as a part of the commitment of Bank Indonesia to ensure that EKI development is not only economically effective but also responsive to the specific needs of vulnerable groups, especially women micro-entrepreneurs. This study provides an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of women's participation in subsistence groups, and factors influencing the success and sustainability of their businesses.

Strengthening the EKI program through a gender perspective approach across all stages not only expands financial inclusion but also strengthens the role of women as the driver of the local economy. Women, representing more than a half of Indonesia's productive population, must become an integral part of an inclusive and sustainable economic ecosystem.

In conclusion, we express our appreciation and gratitude to all parties who have contributed to the preparation of this study. We hope this study serve as a valuable reference for stakeholders in designing more responsive, inclusive, and impactful policies and programs for Indonesian society.

Wassalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakaatuh

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Executive summary

This study was conducted to understand and strengthen the effectiveness of the Subsistence Group-Based Inclusive Economic and Financial (EKI) Development Program initiated by Bank Indonesia, with a focus on meeting the specific needs of women micro-entrepreneurs in vulnerable communities. Through a Women-Centered Design (WCD) approach and mixed-methods in four regions—Jakarta, Belitung, Bali, and Palu—this study explores the relationship between gender norms, group structure, leadership, and the adoption of formal financial services on the quality of participation and economic benefits received by women.

The key findings reveal that even though the majority of group members are women, their participation is often symbolic due to the dominance of central figures, unequal access to training, limitations in financial and digital literacy, and non-standardized financial record-keeping. On the other hand, groups with balanced leadership between men and women, transparent record-keeping, and connections to the financial ecosystem show a higher level of business sustainability and financial inclusion.

Based on these findings, the study recommends strengthening the subsistence group-based EKI development program through a gender perspective approach in three main stages: preparation, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation, to make the program more effective and impactful. In the **preparation** stage, it is crucial to ensure the principles of equal access, participation, control, and benefits as the foundational program narrative, integrate gender analysis in group assessment, and map household conditions, workload, and social barriers that affect participation. The engagement of Financial Service Providers (FSPs) from the beginning is also necessary to understand the different needs and preferences of men and women.

The **implementation** stage emphasizes the importance of strengthening groups and institutions by promoting women's representation and leadership, designing training that suits the needs of both men and women, and employing peer learning methods that build solidarity and confidence. The use of digital technology should be adaptive and inclusive, considering the literacy gap between men and women.

In the **monitoring and evaluation** stage, the program is expected to explicitly measure changes and impacts from a gender perspective, using indicators that capture increased agency, control over resources, and women's influence in economic decision-making.

By adopting these recommendations, Bank Indonesia will optimize the subsistence group-based EKI development program as a macroprudential instrument that not only expands financial inclusion and payment digitization but also enhances household economic resilience. A gender-responsive approach will ensure that women, representing more than half of the productive population, become an equal driver in the local economic ecosystem, thereby supporting financial system stability and accelerating inclusive economic growth.

Introduction

The Subsistence Group-Based Inclusive Economic and Financial (EKI) Development Program initiated by Bank Indonesia aims to promote the economic empowerment of low-income communities through a group-based approach. In various regions, the program has become a strategic channel for enhancing financial literacy, business capacity, and access to formal financial services. However, to make its impact more equitable and sustainable, the program's approach needs to consider the diversity of needs and the gender roles in local social and economic structures.

This research is motivated by the finding from various studies that states that women, particularly micro-entrepreneurs in subsistence groups, still face structural barriers in accessing training, financing, asset ownership, and decision making in financial and business matters. These barriers should be understood more deeply through the lens of social construction and gender relations, which influence the unequal distribution of resources between women and men, thereby limiting women's roles in groups and communities. Previous studies indicate that when women gain equal access to training, capital, and business networks, there is a significant improvement in their economic capacity and a spillover effect on family and community well-being.[1]

Through this study, Bank Indonesia and Women's World Banking (WWB) aim to examine in depth the extent to which the Subsistence Group-Based Inclusive Economic and Financial (EKI) Development Program has accommodated the specific needs of women, and to formulate evidence-based recommendations for strengthening a gender-responsive approach in replicating inclusive economic and financial development programs in subsistence groups across various Domestic Representative Offices (KPwDN). The particular focus is given to subsistence groups due to their vulnerable characteristics, yet they have transformative potential when supported by more inclusive intervention designs.

By strengthening the evidence-based framework, this report is expected to provide a strategic contribution to the formulation of policies and the design of more effective, equitable, and sustainable economic empowerment programs.

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1 Amri, K. (2023). Pendapatan perempuan dan pendidikan anak usia dini. *Jurnal Pencerahan, 17*(2), 49–76. https://garuda.kemdiktisaintek.go.id/documents/detail/4255635

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World Bank. (2020). *Adapting skills training to address constraints to women's participation* (Jobs Note No. 7). World Bank Group. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/100001588563785232/pdf/Adapting-Skills-Training-to-Address-Constraints-to-Women-s-Participation.pdf

World Bank. (n.d.). *Training, skills, and information*. Digital for Women. https://digitalforwomen.worldbank.org/training-skills-information

Literature review

This literature review is prepared to provide the conceptual and empirical foundation for strengthening a gender-responsive approach in the Subsistence Group-Based Inclusive Economic and Financial (EKI) Development Program. By examining the global, regional, and national evidence, this section illustrates how gender-responsive program and policy approaches have been widely used to advance women's economic empowerment, while identifying challenges and opportunities within the context of implementation in Indonesia.

This evidence demonstrates that strategically integrating a gender-responsive approach into the design of inclusive economic and financial development programs for subsistence groups is not only an effective instrument for reaching subsistence women, but it is also a prerequisite for expanding financial inclusion and accelerating sustainable and equitable economic development. This literature not only highlights the effectiveness of group-based approach, but it also reaffirms the necessity of program designs that are responsive to unequal social and gender conditions to ensure that women do not just become group members but they can actually gain and control economic benefits equally and with empowerment.

Women's economic empowerment through a group-based approach: Historical evidence

For a long time, a group-based approach has been used as a primary strategy to enhance women's economic empowerment, especially in low-income communities and in regions with limited access to formal financial services. Global studies show that models such as savings and loan groups, women's cooperatives, and collective business groups have been vital entry points for women to gain access to financial services, training and business networks, and to build a safe space for women to learn and collaborate. In this context, a group serves not only as an economic vehicle, but also as a social vehicle that enables active participation and builds collective confidence and solidarity, thereby strengthening their economic resilience.

In India, Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have successfully increased savings, access to credit, and women's control over household expenditures. A similar pattern is found in Bangladesh through Grameen Bank, in which microcredit groups have also enhanced women's financial decision-making. This model has also been replicated in many Southeast Asian countries, including the Philippines and Vietnam, demonstrating the effectiveness of group structures in sustainably strengthening women's economic capacity.[2]

In the Indonesian context, the effectiveness of a group-based approach shows a similar tendency. A study in Pela Mampang Sub-district, South Jakarta, showed that more than a half of the participants in the Family Income Enhancement Program (UP2K) were able to increase household income, even amidst the pandemic crisis. Women members of the groups continued to run home-based businesses independently when group activities halted, indicating adaptive capacity born from collective experience.[3]

Similarly, an evaluation of the PT Permodalan Nasional Madani (PNM) Mekaar (Membina Ekonomi Sejahtera/ Fostering the Economy for Prosperous Families) Program in eight provinces showed that underprivileged women participating in microfinance groups demonstrated increased assets and economic resilience, as well as transformations in financial behavior, such as saving habits and investing in businesses. These findings affirm that involvement in group structures can consistently strengthen women's economic capacity over time.[4]

2 Asian Development Bank. (2021). *Gender equality and social inclusion assessment*. Manila: ADB. https://www.adb.org/
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3 Khiftiyah, M., & Nilamsari, W. (2022). Proses pemberdayaan perempuan melalui program usaha peningkatan pendapatan keluarga pada masa pandemi COVID-19. *Jurnal Pembangunan Manusia*, 3(1), 1–25. https://scholarhub.ui.ac.id/jpm/vol3/iss1/25/

4 Universitas Gadjah Mada. (2022). *Studi Dampak Sosial Permodalan Usaha Mikro PNM bagi Peningkatan Kapasitas Perempuan, Laporan Akhir untuk PT Permodalan Nasional Madani*, Yogyakarta: FISIPOL UGM

Analytical framework and impact of gender-responsive programs

Transformative economic empowerment cannot be separated from an understanding of gender relation and structure that influence Access, Participation, Control, and Benefit (APCB).

This APCB framework provides a critical analytical lens to assess the extent to which a program is able to transform or, conversely, reinforce existing gender inequalities.

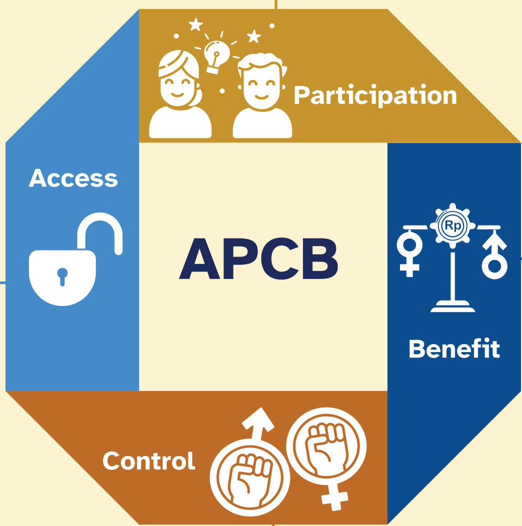
The four dimensions of the APCB framework provide a strategic lens in analyzing the program:

A Access

Referring to the extent to which women and men have equal and fair opportunities to obtain the information, resources, and services available in a development program. In the context of subsistence group programs, this includes access to training, business capital, and formal financial services that are affordable and meet their needs.

P Participation

Assessing the quality of active involvement of women and men in the program's planning, decision-making, and implementation processes. Participation is not only based on symbolic presence (tokenism), but it is also based on meaningful participation that reflects their voice and aspirations, which can influence program outcomes.



C Control/Authority

Analyzing the degree of authority women and men have to influence the direction and results of a program, including managing economic resources, leading groups, and making strategic business or institutional decisions. This dimension of control is a key indicator of genuine empowerment, distinguishing it from mere participation.

B Benefit

Ensuring that women and men truly obtain and enjoy program benefits fairly and equally, including both direct economic benefits and social benefits, such as improved bargaining position within the family and community, and recognition of their contributions.

By understanding this framework, economic interventions must be designed to ensure that women are not just technical actors in the field, but, more importantly, they have authority and control over the sustainable resources and benefits from the program.

Strengthening the gender dimension in economic empowerment programs also contributes significantly to national economic growth, increased income and poverty reduction, and enhanced autonomy and capacity of women in decision-making.

- **National economic growth.** Various studies show that increased participation of women in economic activities has a positive correlation with increased Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In Indonesia, a study by World Bank[5] estimated that a 25% increase in female labor force participation by 2025 could add approximately USD 62 billion to Indonesia's GDP, equivalent to about a 2.9% increase. Meanwhile, the projection from the McKinsey Global Institute[6] is even higher, up to USD 135 billion annually if the gender participation gap is eliminated and women have equal economic access and opportunities as men. This figure is not just an illustration, but a reflection of productivity that has long been overlooked.

- **Increased income and poverty reduction.** Enhancing women's economic capacity is a critical factor in strengthening household economic resilience. A study by World Bank[7] indicates that women have a greater tendency to allocate their income for basic and long-term family needs such as food, children's education, and health, which can impact the quality of future generations.

- **Increased women's autonomy and capacity in decision-making.** The most transformative impact often occurs at the household level. When women have their own income, their involvement in family decision-making increases significantly, particularly regarding strategic decisions such as education, health, and family investments. A social impact study report of PNM Mekaar shows that 86% of customers have the authority to use business proceeds, indicating they have control over the income they earn.[8] This not only strengthens women's economic position and expands their role from only a housewife to a contributor to the economy and an influential decision-maker, but it also encourages a shift in family power dynamics towards more equal relations.

5 Why women matter for Indonesia's economic recovery, diakses pada April 2025, https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/eastasiapacific/why-women-matter-indonesias-economic-recovery

6 Closing the women's health gap: A $1 trillion opportunity to improve lives and economies, 2024, https://www.mckinsey.com/mhi/our-insights/closing-the-womens-health-gap-a-1-trillion-dollar-opportunity-to-improve-lives-and-economies

7 Women Economic Empowerment Study - Open Knowledge Repository - World Bank, diakses pada April 2025, https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/entities/publication/6bafa125-c81b-5aa9-bae3-d74e0df2859f

8 Universitas Gadjah Mada, *Studi Dampak Sosial Permodalan Usaha Mikro PNM bagi Peningkatan Kapasitas Perempuan*, Laporan Akhir untuk PT Permodalan Nasional Madani, Yogyakarta: FISIPOL UGM, Desember 2022, https://prisma.simaster.ugm.ac.id/karya_files/studi-dampak-sosial-permodalan-mikro-pnm-bagi-peningkatan-kapasitas-perempuan-di-delapan-provinsi-dcfcd07e645d245babe887e5e2daa016

Relevant policies at the global and national levels

Various development documents and regulations show the formal commitment of the Indonesian Government to gender equality, which is realized through national strategies, such as the National Strategy for Financial Inclusion (SNKI) and the National Strategy for Inclusive Economy and Finance (SNEKI), the National Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming (RAN PUG) and the National Action Plan for Accelerating Development in Disadvantaged Regions (RAN PPDT), the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN). The Indonesian government also extends this commitment through the ratification of several international commitments/ instruments, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). By internalizing these policy frameworks into the considerations for designing inclusive economic and financial development programs for subsistence groups, Bank Indonesia not only contributes to achieving its national targets but also drives the structural transformation in financial inclusion, expands the user base of the formal payment systems, and strengthens the household economic resilience at the grassroots level through meaningful and sustainable women's participation.

These policy frameworks include, among other things:

- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): particularly SDG 5 (Gender Equality) with target 5.a on reforms to give women equal economic rights, and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), which emphasizes the need for women's economic empowerment and access to productive resources.
- RPJMN 2025-2029: in National Priority 4 ("strengthening human resource development ...gender equality and strengthening the role of women..."), National Priority 3 (entrepreneurship and quality employment), and National Priority 6 (development from villages and from the bottom for economic equity and poverty eradication), the RPJMN explicitly supports the agenda of financial inclusion, economic empowerment, and gender equality.
- SNKI and Women's SNKI: Providing strategic and technical direction for financial inclusion for women, especially those facing structural and social barriers, with a focus on improving financial literacy and access to suitable products.
- SNEKI: Serving as Bank Indonesia's policy framework for implementing inclusive economic and financial development efforts through collaboration with various stakeholders to expand financial access and increase productivity. One implementation of the SNEKI framework is the inclusive and community-based empowerment of subsistence groups comprising micro-subsistence businesses. SNEKI framework explicitly allows for gender integration into its policy pillars, especially the education and empowerment pillars.
- National Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming (RAN PUG) and the National Action Plan for Accelerating Development in Disadvantaged Regions (RAN PPDT): Providing an operational framework for gender mainstreaming and development of disadvantaged regions responsive to women's needs, including women's participation in the formal economy and development.

However, the existence of these comprehensive policy frameworks does not automatically guarantee inclusive and transformative results for women. To ensure these various policies and programs truly reach the most vulnerable groups of women and change their conditions, it is crucial to study the reality. Various studies and literature reviews from the Southeast Asian context reveal that behind progressive policies lie deep structural barriers and entrenched social norms that limit the effectiveness of women's economic empowerment interventions, especially when conducted through a group-based approach. Understanding the nature and dynamics of these barriers is a key to designing more relevant and impactful strategies.

Structural barriers and gender norms

Studies from Southeast Asia[9] highlight several main challenges of a systemic nature in efforts to empower women economically through a group-based approach:

Limited access to formal financial services	Many women, especially those who do not have a national ID card (KTP) or collateral, who work in the informal sector, or do not have a fixed income, face financial exclusion in the form of difficulty in opening a bank account or accessing formal credit. These barriers are further compounded by low financial and digital literacy, as well as a lack of trust in formal institutions.
Social norms that restrict women's mobility and role.	In many regions, the patriarchal norms remain strong, positioning women primarily as a housewives who is responsible for unpaid care work such as childcare and care for elderly family members. This dual role, coupled with the need to obtain permission from their husband or other family members to participate in activities such as training outside their house, limits their time and mobility. This results in low participation rates in both training and group activities.
Power dynamics within the group.	Although groups are formed as a collective forum, in practice they often depend on a central figure, such as a group leader or business owner. This dependence can lead to an unequal distribution of control over decision-making and resources. In such a situation, women's voices risk being marginalized, and the group may potentially reinforce existing power inequalities in the community.
Lack of interventions based on members' actual needs.	Many training or mentoring programs follow a one-size-fits-all approach and have not yet considered specific needs based on gender, age, type of business, or members' capacities.

These studies indicate the importance of a more flexible, adaptive, and participatory approach to ensure that women truly receive equitable benefits from group-based empowerment programs.

9 Asian Development Bank. (2021). *Gender equality and social inclusion assessment*. Manila: ADB. https://www.adb.org/,
International Fund for Agricultural Development. (2017). *Gender equality and women's empowerment: Policy*. Rome: IFAD. https://www.ifad.org/en/
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2019). *Rural women's empowerment in Southeast Asia*. Rome: FAO. http://www.fao.org
International Labour Organization. (2018). *Women and men in the informal economy: A statistical picture* (3rd ed.). Geneva: ILO. https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/Women_men_informal_economy_statistical_picture.pdf
United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. (2022). *Gender-responsive entrepreneurship development in Asia and the Pacific*. Bangkok: UNESCAP. https://www.unescap.org
UN Women. (2020). *Gender equality and women's empowerment in Asia-Pacific*. Bangkok: UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. https://asiapacific.unwomen.org

Research methodology

This study uses the Women-Centered Design (WCD) approach with mixed methods to explore women's experiences in the subsistence group-based EKI programs, employing purposive sampling in four regions, along with thematic analysis and secondary data. The following sections elaborate on the research design, respondent selection strategy, data collection tools, analytical approach, and ethical considerations applied in this study.

Women-Centered Design (WCD) approach

In designing interventions or policies aimed at improving financial literacy and inclusion, it is essential to recognize that the barriers faced by women often differ from those faced by men. These differences stem from ingrained social roles, greater responsibility for domestic care work, inequalities in access to information and resources, participation in decision-making, control over the use of business funds, and the economic benefits derived from programs.

Therefore, a Women-Centered Design (WCD) approach is used to ensure that the research process and the formulation of recommendations are fully rooted in women's daily experiences, needs, and living contexts. WCD is a holistic approach developed by Women's World Banking to create fair, inclusive, and targeted solutions for women, particularly those in vulnerable or underserved groups.[10]

Women's World Banking applies the WCD approach across various aspects, from research and designing financial service products in collaboration with Financial Service Providers (FSP) to developing programs and policies with the regulators. For example, in 2021, Women's World Banking in partnership with a digital wallet company conducted research, field trials, and develop solutions using the WCD method to promote digital remittance as a type of transaction that could be used by domestic migrant workers. By applying this female-focused approach, the research managed to understand the challenges and needs of domestic migrant workers in using digital financial services, thereby designing appropriate solutions to increase their confidence in using those services.

10 Refer to *Revolutionizing product design in financial services: A gender-inclusive approach.* https://www.womensworldbanking.org/insights/report-revolutionizing-product-design-in-financial-services/

The WCD approach becomes relevant for Bank Indonesia in strengthening the effectiveness of the Subsistence Group-Based Inclusive Economic and Financial (EKI) Development Program, particularly in addressing the question of why women are not yet fully reached or have not benefited optimal impact of the program, even though training and mentoring programs are running and the majority of participants are women.

WCD combines three main approaches:

1. **Behavioral design**

   WCD explores the psychological and social factors that influence women's financial decisions, such as confidence in managing money, risk perception, and hesitation in using financial services due to feeling of "not smart enough". Informed by this understanding, recommendations can be formulated in a way that they not only are informative but also encourage gradual and sustainable behavioral change.

2. **Design thinking**

   The formulation of recommendations begins by listening directly to the real stories and challenges faced by women. Through the empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test stage, each recommendation or program is analyzed together with women as end-users, so it can be applied practically in their lives.

3. **Gender lens**

   This approach views women not only as a target group, but also as individuals living within specific social structures. Using a gender lens, WCD identifies how norms, domestic roles, access to resources, and power relations within families and communities influence women's access to training or financial services, their participation in group decision-making, their control over the money they earn from businesses, and the extent of economic benefits they receive from the subsistence group-based EKI program.

Applying the WCD approach, which takes into account aspects of Access, Participation, Control, and Benefit, Bank Indonesia will ensure that the subsistence group-based EKI program reaches women and men more effectively, not only in terms of numbers but also the quality of impact and the sustainability of their participation in the formal financial ecosystem.

Mixed-methods design approach

Four regions, namely, Jakarta, Palu, Belitung, and Bali, were selected since they represent diverse geographical and socio-economic contexts. To support the WCD approach, this study used a mixed-methods design, combining qualitative techniques through in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with the results of monitoring data analysis from the Inclusive Economic and Financial (EKI) Development Program. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of women's experiences while providing context and validation for findings from quantitative and programmatic perspectives. (Detailed methodology is provided in Appendix 1).

Sampling strategy and respondent profiles

Selection of respondents was conducted purposively across the four (4) regions, targeting nine (9) mentored groups, while considering variations in group characteristics such as female and male leadership, the type of group business (food, crafts, agriculture), the group's business legality status, and the sales channels of each group (offline, online). The total number of respondents was 26 members and group administrators (treasurers and group leaders), nine (9) facilitators/mentors, and 44 stakeholders from 19 program supporting partners, to obtain multi-stakeholder perspectives.

4 REGIONS

9 MENTORED GROUPS

26 MEMBERS AND GROUPS ADMINISTRATORS

9 FACILITATORS/ MENTORS

44 STAKEHOLDERS FROM 19 PROGRAM SUPPORTING PARTNERS

Data collection tools and analytical approach

The tools used included a semi-structured interview guide and FGD guide designed with Women-Centered Design (WCD) principles. The analysis was thematically conducted to identify patterns in women's experiences and constraints. Secondary data was analyzed to identify gender-based participation and achievement gaps.

Methodological limitations and ethical considerations

This research recognizes its limitations in geographical scope and the potential for social bias, particularly related to gender norms that could influence respondents' openness. Furthermore, the mixed-methods approach used in this study has certain limitations, including the limited generalizability of qualitative findings due to the restricted sample size and purposively selected research locations.

To mitigate these limitations, the qualitative findings were supported with a secondary data analysis and multi-stakeholder discussions through FGDs to obtain broader cross-validation of the data. During data collection, the research team also prioritized ethical considerations by using the principle of informed consent and ensuring the protection of respondents' personal data. The research team was also trained to use a gender-sensitive approach so that respondents felt safe and comfortable sharing their experiences.

Key findings

This research reveals that differences in terms of regional context, group structure, and gender norms significantly influence women's participation and roles in mentored business groups. Additionally, gaps in leadership, digital financial literacy, and access to training are key challenges that need to be addressed more contextually by the Subsistence Group-Based Inclusive Economic and Financial (EKI) Development Program. The following four (4) sections of findings elaborate on these issues in greater depth.

Finding 1

Gender norms shape perceptions and pattern of participation in business groups, often causing women’s involvement to be perceived as less active or less contributive compared to men’s

Understanding how gender norms influence participation and leadership patterns in business groups is a crucial element to ensure that economic empowerment programs not only reach women quantitatively, but also create meaningful and transformative space for participation. Without an awareness of social barriers and dynamics of power relations, women's participation risks being merely symbolic and not impactful in increasing their control over the economic benefits of their involvement as members of subsistence group-based EKI programs.

The findings below demonstrate that women's involvement in groups is restricted not only by capacity or economic access, but also by domestic expectation and social permission from their spouse or family. The impacts of these norms are: the sectoral segregation of businesses they can engage in (a gender-based sectoral bias); the availability of time affecting their ability to attend routine activities; and the presence of a glass ceiling (an invisible barrier limiting women from attaining leadership positions or roles in group decision-making).

Gender-based sectoral bias

Traditional norms create a division of business sectors based on the perception of gender roles. Women tend to be directed towards sectors considered 'natural' or 'light,' such as handicrafts, or those that are extensions of domestic duties, like culinary work. Meanwhile, men are more commonly found in sectors perceived to require greater physical strength and public leadership, such as agriculture or logistics distribution.

This division not only reflects gender stereotypes but it also affects long-term business development opportunities. Sectors dominated by men tend to have broader access to markets, capital, and business networks, while sectors dominated by women often face limitations in scale and competitiveness due to marginalization within the business value chain.

Table 1.
Comparison of business sectors of women and men

Aspect	Women's business groups	Men's business groups
Dominant business sectors	Handicrafts, culinary	Agriculture, fishery, logistics distribution
Reason/ social norm	Women are viewed as more capable in sectors considered light or extensions of domestic roles	Men are perceived to work in sectors related to physical labor and strategic decision-making
Business scale	Smaller	Larger
Impact on market access	Limited, often only local or community scope, heavily reliant on informal networks	Broader, covering regional/ national markets, supported by formal networks and better logistics access
Impact on access to capital & networks	Often limited, low competitiveness, difficulty expanding business scale	Easier access to capital and business networks, greater potential for growth

Gender norms and social permission

Women often need to negotiate with social structures that place them in primary domestic roles. In some regions, a woman's decision to be active in a business group must go through approval from her husband or family. On the other hand, a husband's notification to his wife/family is generally more informative than permissive, reflecting an asymmetry of power in decision-making on mobility. As reported by female respondents, the following quotes illustrate how patriarchal norms still limit women's time and space for movement.

> *If I go to a group activity, nobody is home to watch the kids.* ***My husband also doesn't like it when I go out a lot.***

> *...so when it comes down to it* ***a housewife's duty is to be a housewife****... Even if you want a career, you shouldn't neglect your household duties, especially the children.*

> *After that, I really intended to go back to work, but my husband did not allow it. At that time, he had been laid off, and when I said I wanted to work, he said,* ***"How can it be that the wife works while the husband stays at home?"***

> ***I'd rather lose time and earn less money*** *than leaving my family behind.*

Conversely, in a more open context, such as in urban environment or community with more egalitarian norms, women have broader space and opportunity to participate in group activities. However, this availability of space and opportunity is not always accompanied by equal access to strategic positions within the group. A non-inclusive group structure can still limit women to technical rather than strategic roles.

For example, women are often only given technical responsibilities that are extensions of their domestic roles, such as taking meeting minutes or managing financial records, while strategic positions like being a group leader or primary decision-maker are more often held by men. This situation creates a glass ceiling in group leadership, an invisible barrier preventing women from rising to a decision-making position. Consequently, although they can be active administratively and operationally, women's involvement in a decision-making process becomes limited, thereby perpetuating power imbalance at the micro-institutional level.

Dynamics of participation and economic contribution

Women's primary motivation for joining business groups is to supplement their household income, which is often positioned as 'additional' to the husband's primary livelihood. However, in line with gender norms that place women as a housewife, they tend to choose flexible work which can be done from home with adaptable working hours, so they can maintain a balance between their domestic roles and economic contribution. Beyond income, women's involvement in business groups is also driven by the need to socialize, learn, and share knowledge with fellow group members. This reflects a need for social space and recognition outside the domestic domain, which is an important part of the women's empowerment process.

On the other hand, men's motivation for joining business groups is to earn income as the primary breadwinner. Unlike women, men do not seek flexible work because social and gender norms encourage them to focus on productive roles without the demand to balance domestic responsibilities or childcare. This gives men greater mobility and time flexibility to choose and perform their work.

Although they play a crucial role in supporting household economy, women's contribution is often not equally recognized, either by their environment or by themselves, a phenomenon known as invisible labour or unseen work. Recognition of women's economic contributions is an important prerequisite for enhancing women's agency. When women receive social support, especially from their spouse, they demonstrate increased self-confidence, financial autonomy, and the ability to make decisions at both household and group levels. This support serves as a social enabler that can break the cycle of dependency, increase self-confidence, and open up more meaningful and transformative space for participation, not merely instrumental.

Voices of gender representation in group leadership structure

A study of business groups across the four (4) regions shows that the gender composition in business groups also influences women's level of participation:

- **Groups with female leadership and a majority of female members** generally demonstrate more equal discussion practices and are more adaptive to women's needs for time and safe space. This pattern supports the formation of collective agency among female members. However, these groups often face technical and market access challenges, reflecting women's limited access to broader market networks and capital.
- **Groups with male leadership and a majority of male members** tend to have a stronger structure and operation, but often reinforce female subordination pattern and limit their space for actualization in decision-making.
- **Groups with a male leader and a majority of female members** often show high dependence on a central figure. In this case, women's participation is more focused on activity implementation rather than determining strategic direction. This pattern shows a form of gender injustice that perpetuates subordination and extends women's domestic roles into the group.

Table 2.
The influence of leadership structure on group dynamics

	Leadership composition		
	Female leader, majority of female members	**Male leader, majority of male members**	**Male leader, majority of female members**
Decision-making pattern	More **responsive to women's needs**; the leader rarely experiences pushback.	Generally **represents men's needs, under the assumption that gender needs are universal**; the leader rarely experiences pushback.	**Decisions** tend to **reflect a male perspective**, leading to **passive resistance** and pushback **from female members**.
Member involvement	**Unequal**; responsibilities tend to pile up on administrators because female members have domestic responsibilities.	**More equal** compared to a group with a majority of female members because men have the privilege of time due to minimal domestic responsibilities.	**Low**; involvement of female members is **limited** due to domestic responsibilities (dual roles).
Gender-based roles	Women are dominant in the administrative roles.	Administrative tasks are rarely a burden on men as they tend to be delegated to female members (if any).	Women are dominant in the administrative roles due to gender stereotypes.
Main challenges	Weak in marketing & sales human resources; **collective spirit declines** if economic benefits are unclear.	Weak in marketing & sales human resources; **collective spirit is relatively stable** as the business is the primary livelihood, aligning with gender norms.	Weak in marketing & sales human resources; **collective spirit declines** if economic benefits are unclear.

Finding 2

Characteristics of members and business models determine the direction of group sustainability and benefits for members

This finding highlights how geographical and socio-economic variations in each region directly influence the structure, dynamics, and functionality of mentored business groups, providing a unique context where gender norms operate in different ways. Furthermore, the group formation types and business management models also reflect different patterns of adaptation in responding to local challenges and creating space for participation and decision-making for members, particularly women. Then the persona[11] identification provides an in-depth picture of variations in terms of motivations, challenges for each individual representation, and potentials that need to be considered in designing future policies and interventions for empowering mentored groups. This approach allows for more a personal and targeted intervention, acknowledging that women and men are not homogeneous groups.

Understanding the origin of the group and its internal dynamics, such as social relations, role distribution, and the position of women within the group, is crucial for understanding how a group can grow and function sustainably. These factors determine whether a group can become a space for shared learning and progress, or conversely become constrained by imbalanced relations among its members.

11 A persona, in the context of research, product design, or program planning, is a representation of a user or target group based on data. One persona represents many individuals with similar characteristics. A persona is commonly used to help understand the characteristics, needs, behaviors, and main challenges experienced by the target group.

Group characteristics

The research was conducted across the four (4) different regions—Jakarta, Belitung, Bali, and Palu—each with unique geographical, social, gender context, and economic characteristics.

Figure 1.
Research locations

Jakarta

Groups in Jakarta reflect business groups operating in the processed food sector. Although they have wide and dynamic market access, the groups face challenges in maintaining production continuity due to competition and time constraints of members who generally have primary jobs.

Belitung

Dominated by groups engaged in fisheries, processed marine products, and handicrafts utilizing local natural resources. Limited infrastructure and geographical locations are the main obstacles to accessing markets and distributing products.

Bali

Business groups focus on the handicrafts with a base in traditional communities or tourism villages. Groups in Bali tend to be culturally strong, with economic activities dependent on local tourism.

Palu

This region has agriculture and fisheries as the main focus of the groups. Business groups organically formed and they have similar social backgrounds, with the main problems being limited business capital and supporting infrastructure.

The business groups engaged in the research operate in four main sectors:

- Processed food: such as local snacks and traditional food.
- Handicrafts: including weaving, basketry, typical souvenirs, and other local creative products.
- Agriculture: including food crops, horticulture, and organic farming.
- Fisheries: including processed fish products, and fresh or dried marine products.

This research also identified **two important dimensions** in the dynamics of the mentored group formation: the type of **group formation** and its **business management model**. These two dimensions influence each other in shaping participation pattern, solidarity, and the group's effectiveness in achieving its economic goals.

The **type of group formation** shows how a group is formed, whether it grows organically from the social relations of its members or it is formed programmatically through external intervention such as a government programs or partner institution.

Figure 2.
Types of group formation based on its origin

Organic group

An organic group grows naturally from social relations and closeness among members, such as shared house, business experience, or community ties. This type tends to have a high level of solidarity and mutual trust. However, an organic group generally lacks strong organizational structure and systematic strategic planning. The management of its group activities tends to be informal and highly dependent on interpersonal relationships among its members.

Programmatic group

A programmatic group, conversely, is formed through external interventions such as government programs or initiatives from previously implemented partner institutions (e.g., mentoring programs from other ministries, local government programs like One *Kecamatan*/ District, One Center of Entrepreneurship, and Integrated Service Centers (PLUT) for Cooperatives and Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises). These groups have better administrative structure and clear reporting systems and role divisions. However, social bonds among members are generally weak.

Meanwhile, the **business management model** shows how the group conducts its economic activities, whether managed through a partnership model with a hierarchical structure, or a collective model under the principle of equality.

Figure 3.
Group business models based on how the business is run

Partnership model

Has a vertical structure with centralized decision-making (top-down), is often dominated by a business owner who purchases the group's products, or by a group leader who acts like a collector. In this model, members typically receive compensation based on their work contribution in the form of wage or fee. The strength of this model lies in the stability of production management as it usually already has established business partners or fixed distribution channels. However, member participation in decision-making and business innovation processes tends to be limited, so the potential for collective development is not fully realized. This model also carries a high risk of reproducing gender inequality, especially for women who have limitations in accessing resources and making strategic decisions.

Collective model

In contrast, has a horizontal structure with the principle of equality in decision-making. All members have a voice in determining the direction of the business, while the profit is fairly shared based upon mutual agreement. This model has a great potential to drive transformative empowerment, as it strengthens a sense of ownership and solidarity among members. However, the main challenges lie in operational efficiency, marketing, and the availability of specialized professional roles, such as finance or logistics, which often are not yet systematically available.

Variations in the combination of formation pattern and business model, and the implications

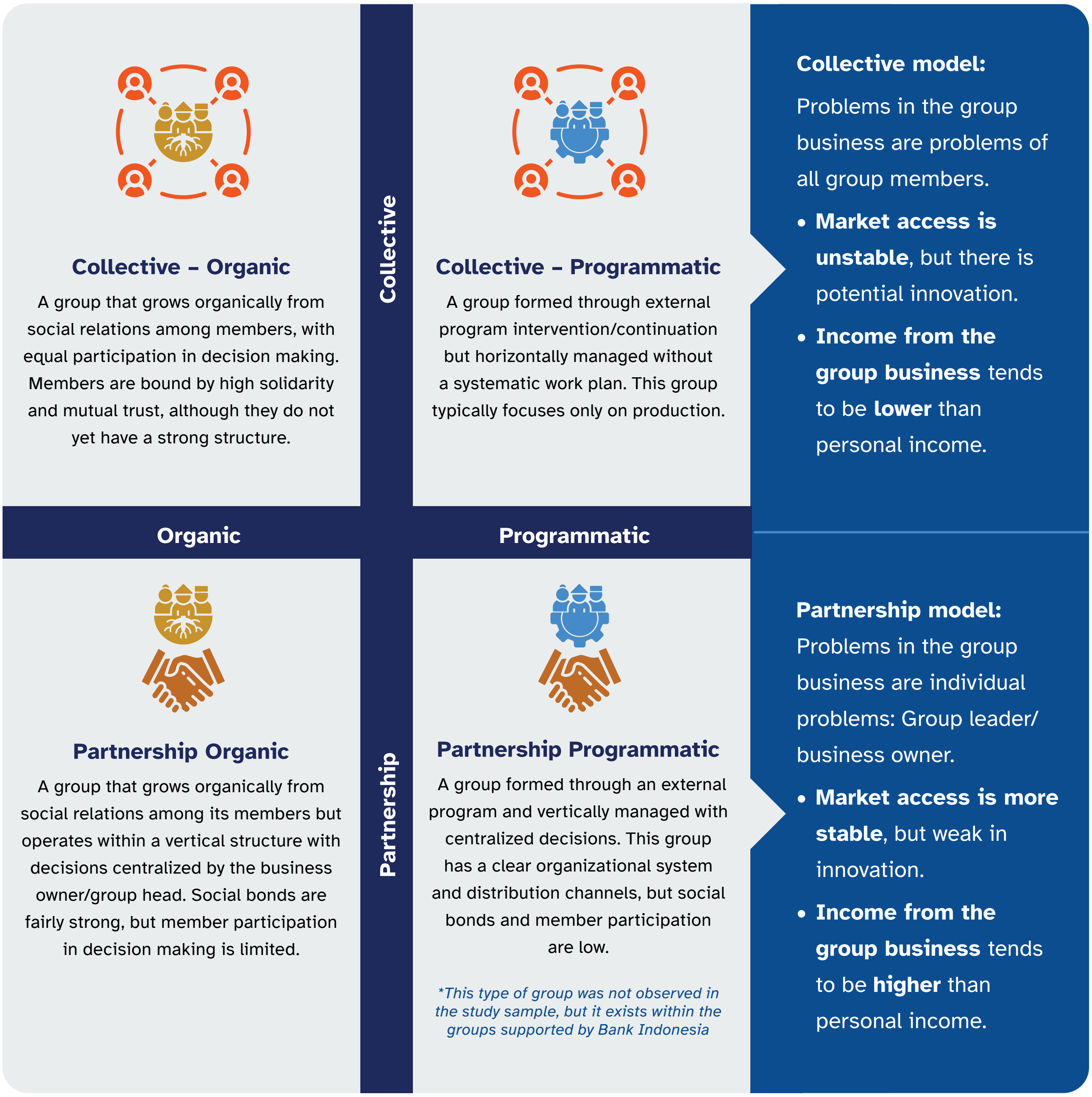
Research findings show that in practice, not all groups can be rigidly categorized. Some groups show a combination of collective approach and partnership structure, or evolve from a programmatic pattern to a more organic one. However, the most frequently observed patterns in this study are organic-collective, programmatic-collective, and organic-partnership groups.

Each combination creates a different group ecosystem that directly impacts the space for participation and the agency of women. All three have their own strengths and challenges related to market stability, internal innovation, and most crucially the distribution of control over economic benefits. These differences are clearly visible in how members respond to decisions, carry out roles, and build long-term commitment within the group, and for women, this is heavily influenced by the extent to which the group structure can accommodate time constraint and limited mobility.

For Bank Indonesia, understanding these variations is important in order to ensure that the program emphasizes not only quantitative achievements (such as the number of groups or female participants), but also quality of women's participation and control over business outcomes. Without an approach which is contextual and sensitive to group dynamics, the risk of symbolic involvement will continue.

To clarify the different characteristics and impacts, especially for women, the variations in the combination of formation patterns and business models are mapped in the following diagram.

Figure 4.
Variations in group formation patterns and business models and their characteristics



In this study, the four variations of business models are found across several different sectors. The organic-collective model is commonly found in the agriculture businesses, while the programmatic-collective model appears in the processed food and handicraft businesses. The organic-partnership model is found in agriculture and handicraft (specifically weaving) businesses. Meanwhile, the programmatic-partnership model is not found in the sample of this study but is recorded as existing in Bank Indonesia's mentored groups in the agriculture businesses.

Each has its own strengths and challenges, from market stability and innovation potential to control over group income (Figure 5).

Figure 5.

Variations in group formation patterns and business models along with challenges and impacts

Formation pattern – business model	Collective – Organic	Collective – Programmatic	Partnership – Organic
Strengths	High solidarity and participation as it is formed based on natural social relations (village, community, etc.). Decision-making based on deliberation and is equal. High potential of innovation as there is no single dominant actor.	Has a basic administrative structure as it originates from previous training/program. Applies deliberation as a decision-making mechanism.	Neat and efficient operational structure. Stable market access as it is led by a dominant actor with connections. Production and marketing run in an organized manner.
Challenges	No established marketing system; fluctuating market access. Minimal strategic planning and professional business structure. High dependence on collective spirit; vulnerable when motivation declines.	Social relations among members are weak; they have not grown organically. Focus on short-term training/ production; no strategic direction. Market access is not yet stable and ownership systems are not yet solid.	Top-down decision-making; dominance by the business owner or chairperson. Member participation is only in technical execution. Innovation is limited because it is not facilitated except by the leader.
Impact on group members	Women have significant space to participate actively and voice their opinions. Profit-sharing schemes are discussed together, so members have the opportunity to help control income distribution. However, when economic benefits are not immediately felt, participation may decline as domestic burdens become a priority.	Women can participate in activities but do not yet have a strong position in business direction. Control over group income is limited because profit sharing is not clear yet. A weak sense of ownership affects the sustaiånability of participation.	Women generally only serve as implementers; not involved in planning. Wage scheme limits members' control over business results. Women's roles are supplementary, not part of ownership or management.

Member persona

Although formation patterns and business models provide a framework for understanding group dynamics, a more personal lens is still needed to understand how individuals, especially women, participate and assume roles. The persona approach helps to delve deeper into the complex realities of each member, beyond the visible group structure on the surface. This study identifies five main personas that reflect variations in participation, motivation, as well as financial literacy and access among members of the mentored groups.

Figure 6.
Main personas

				
The social go-getter	***The flexible hustler/Steady mom-preneur***	***Visioner mom-preneur/ Consistent grower***	***The steady entrepreneur***	***The dynamic agripreneur***
Ms. Erna 52 years old	**Ms. Rini** 43 years old	**Ms. Rosi** 35 years old	**Mr. Isnan** 37 years old	**Mr. Edi** 53 years old
Is an active figure in the community, serving as a member of PKK, KWT, and a Posyandu administrator. Amidst her busy life as a housewife, she is active in community forums and group activities.	Goes through her daily life focusing on family but still strives to contribute economically through a business that can be run from home. Although supplementary, it helps to meet her daily needs.	Is a woman with a strong entrepreneurial spirit. She sees the group as a place to expand her network and business capacity. She seriously considers her future business development.	Runs a small business based on technical skills he learned self-taught. His business is managed independently and has sufficed for his daily needs. He is consistent in pursuing this field because he wants to achieve financial autonomy.	Committed to developing his farming business starting from scratch. Without an agricultural background, he pursued the business by seeing its great economic potential. For him, the farming business is the main source of livelihood.

Figure 7.

Characteristics of personas

Factor	 **Erna** *The social go-getter*	 **Rini** *The flexible hustler /Steady mom-preneur*	 **Rosi** *Visioner mom-preneur/ Consistent grower*	 **Isnan** *The steady entrepreneur*	 **Edi** *The dynamic agripreneur*
Business profile	Has no business of her own, relies on husband's income.	Has a business but it is home-based and flexible.	Small-to-medium scale home business, makes a real contribution to family economy.	Skill-based economic activity, home-based business.	Committed long-term, focused on personal and group farm productivity.
Motivation for joining a group	Wants to learn and be active in the community.	Seeks steady income without having to often leave home.	Wants to learn, socialize, and increase income.	Interested in training & personal invitation; strong personal motivation to develop.	Interested due to economic potential and invitation from a local figure.
Financial literacy	Understands the use of savings, no record-keeping or separation of finances.	Manages income jointly with husband; no record-keeping or separation of finances.	Separates business & personal finances; records finances manually.	Manages finances independently; starting to keep manual records but not consistently.	Starts to keep manual records. Separates business and personal finances.
Access to financial services	May or may not have an account, predominantly making cash transactions.	Has an account, not actively makes transactions; more passive, only for receiving money.	Has an account & digital wallet; actively makes transactions.	Has a personal account, used it for saving/receiving income.	Has an account at a conventional bank, in own name or wife's name.
Digital financial literacy	Low, never uses digital financial products.	Low; rarely uses digital financial products.	Medium; somewhat understands how to use a digital wallet.	Medium; somewhat understands how to use a digital wallet.	Starts to be open to some digital financial products, such as digital wallets and QRIS.
Domestic and social roles	Active housewife; husband is supportive.	Prioritizes domestic role; spare time is used flexibly for the group.	Prioritizes domestic role, but can allocate time for the group if needed; strong family support.	Lives alone/works away from home/ head of household; relatively independent.	Domestic role managed jointly with wife.
Decision making	Discusses major decisions with husband.	Discusses with husband; she makes day-to-day decisions.	Independently makes day-to-day decisions, discusses major decisions.	Makes decisions independently.	Discusses major decisions with wife. Make technical business decisions independently.

Each member brings their own motivations, capacities, and limitations, which influence **access** to resources, **participation** in group activities, **control** over decision-making within the business group, or the **benefits** derived from business outcomes. This variation determines the extent to which empowerment programs are able to address the root causes of inequality and meaningfully.

The persona approach in this study aims to capture this diversity while revealing gender gaps across each dimension of APCB (Access, Participation, Control, and Benefit). Through this approach, it is visible that some members display natural leadership from their business experience and social networks, while others face participation constraints due to dual roles, financial dependence, or low financial literacy—which results in minimal control over group business decisions and limited perceived economic benefits.

Tabel 3.
APCB (Access, Participation, Control, and Benefit) analysis in personas

Persona		Access	Participation	Control	Benefit
	***Social go-getter***	●●○○	●●○○	●○○○	●●○○
	***Flexible hustler/steady mom-preneur***	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○	●●○○
	***Visioner mom-preneur/ consistent grower***	●●○○	●●○○	●●●○	●●○○
	***The steady entrepreneur***	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●
	***Dynamic agripreneur***	●●●●	●●●●	●●●○	●●●●

Notes:

●○○○	Access, participation, control, and benefits are **very minimal**. Almost no involvement in decision-making, limited access to services, and minimal economic benefit.
●●○○	Access, participation, control, and benefits are **low**, but there are opportunities to participate, though still limited and inconsistent.
●●●○	Access, participation, control, and benefits are **fairly substantial**, but some structural barriers and gender norms persist.
●●●●	**High** access, participation, control, and benefits; they play an active role in decision-making, access formal services, and enjoy significant economic benefits.

For Bank Indonesia, identifying these personas is important for recognizing local champions who are members with leadership potential and social influence who can drive the sustainability of group participation. This approach also helps subsistence-based group economic programs design more gender-responsive interventions by tailoring program design to the actual needs and constraints of members, rather than treating groups as homogeneous entities.

Finding 3

Despite digitalization efforts and the use of formal financial services at the group level, weak digital ecosystems and limited capabilities result in suboptimal access to and use of financial services by members, especially women

This finding highlights the limited adoption of formal and digital financial services in the management of supported business groups. Although most groups have a bank account in the group's name or under the group leader's name, its use remains limited to administrative needs, such as disbursing program funds or purchasing raw materials. Financial record-keeping is still done manually and lacks proper system, relying on the capacity of group administrators, most of whom lack basic accounting training.

This finding confirms that strengthening financial and digital literacy at the business group level is not supplementary as it is an essential prerequisite for achieving productive and sustainable financial inclusion. Without gender-responsive interventions addressing literacy gaps and record-keeping capacity, empowerment programs risk widening gaps in access. This is especially relevant in groups led or dominated by members with low literacy, both in manual bookkeeping and, in the future, if transitioning to digital systems.

Adoption of digital financial services at group level has not encouraged individual practice: Challenges and opportunities for a more personal approach

Digital adoption at the group level does not automatically increase digital financial literacy or habits at the individual level, indicating a gap between institutional adoption, and individual empowerment. Although some groups have become familiar with using Quick Response Code Indonesian Standard (QRIS) for business transactions, this has not translated into individual group members' access to QRIS.

Data from this study shows that although 88% of members have a formal savings account in their own name, most usage is passive—limited to receiving transfers—without transactions of routine personal expenses. This indicates that account ownership does not yet strongly correlate with confidence and ability to actively manage finances. The remaining 12% still use accounts under their husband's name, reflecting limited direct control over personal finances.

Meanwhile, the use of e-wallets (35%) and mobile banking (23%) across the entire sample[12] remains relatively low, indicating that digital financial services have not yet become an integral part of members'

12 Data is drawn from a total sample of members and administrators, N=26.*

daily lives, particularly for managing business or household expenses. Access to credit services is also still limited, with only 27% of members having consumer credit, which is generally not linked to productive business development.

It is important to note that this situation reflects not only a lack of technical knowledge but also influence of social norms that restrict women's roles in financial decision-making, both within the household and the group. In this context, efforts to expand digital financial access must be accompanied by approaches that are more adaptive to social realities and individual capacities. Building digital financial habits more than just about opening accounts and introducing features; it is about growing behavioral change that enables mentored group members—particularly women—to feel safe, capable, and in control when using digital payment services independently and sustainably.

Challenges in financial record-keeping and transparency

Group financial record-keeping is predominantly manual, often managed by a single administrator (chairperson or treasurer), without a standardized system. This creates centralized workload, increases the risk of errors or miscommunication, and weakens transparency within the group. Without clear guidelines for profit distribution and simple record-keeping mechanisms, group members tend to be passive and lack a comprehensive understanding of the group's financial position.

Reliance on cash transactions and manual bookkeeping also makes it difficult for groups to build a credible financial track record, thereby narrowing opportunities to access formal financing.

Figure 8.
Illustration of the story of the group treasurer

Ani, young treasurer carrying the burden alone

Amid the busy operations of a small business group, Ani, a young woman with an Accounting degree, holds the significant responsibility of a treasurer. She records every flow of income and expenditure meticulously. She prepares the group's financial reports, documenting every purchase of materials, sales revenue, and operational expenses.

She manages the bookkeeping and prepares reports alone, with no other member fully understanding or actively involved in the process. Whenever reports are presented, group members frequently request verbal explanation, as if the written reports are unclear or difficult to comprehend.

Even daily sales records are kept on whatever sheets of paper are available. Notes are often misplaced or not neatly documented immediately. Ani must set aside time every weekend to transfer all this manual sales data into the SIAPIK application. She often performs this task outside of group working hours, during her personal time, frequently late at night.

This situation makes Ani worry. She realizes that most members are not accustomed to financial reports. It is not that they are indifferent, but they are constrained by varying levels of financial literacy and record-keeping skills. This results in total dependence on her as the treasurer, without an adequate system of cross-verification, or distribution of responsibility.

If one day she is unable to perform her duties, almost no other member would be ready to take over. She hopes for training that does not only focus on technical business aspects but also strengthens basic financial understanding and simple record-keeping methods that can be understood and utilized by all group members.

Gaps in digital literacy among members

Digital literacy is heavily dependent on individual administrators, creating reliance and a concentration of knowledge that carries the potential for misuse. In many cases, only the chairperson or treasurer is able to use a transaction or financial record-keeping application. Meanwhile, the majority of members, especially middle-aged women, are not yet comfortable using basic digital financial technology due to a lack of exposure and learning opportunities in a supportive environment.

Although all members and administrators are connected in terms of device ownership by having a mobile phone/smartphone[13], only 19% have access to a laptop or computer.

Furthermore, device ownership has not translated into active use for digital record-keeping or financial services. The barrier is not only technical but it also involves social norms and power dynamics within the group, which result in the majority of members being less involved in data-based financial decision-making.

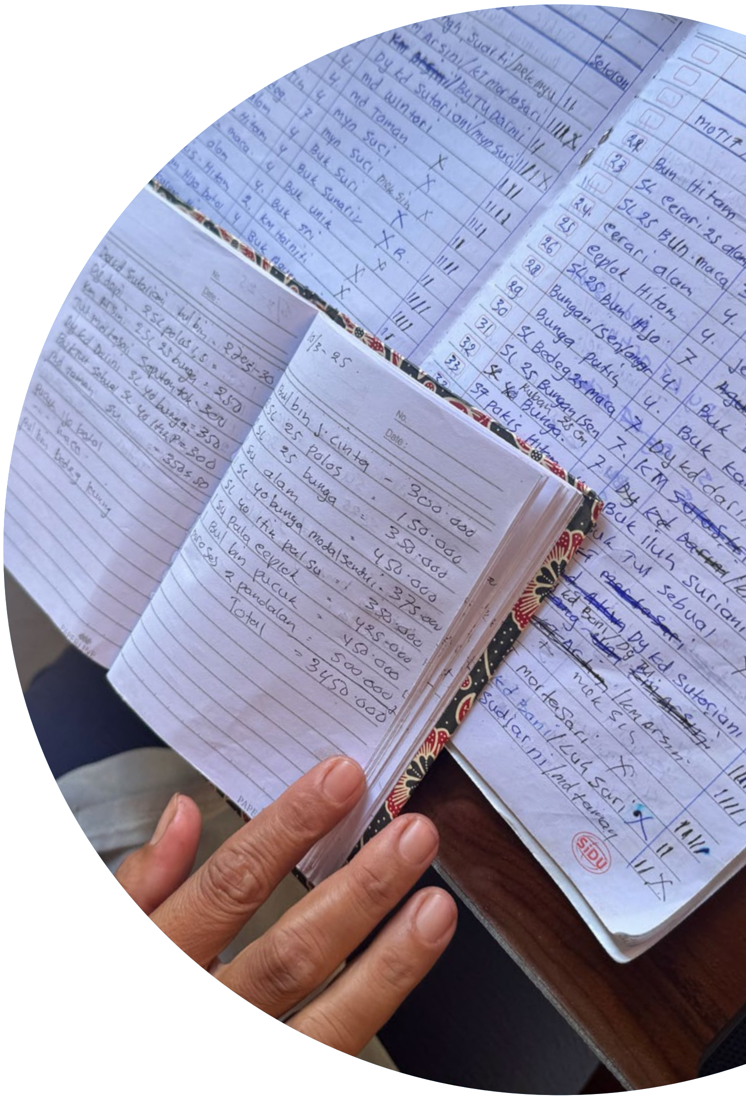
Without a strategy of participatory, sustainable training which is capable of reaching all members, this digital gap will continue to narrow the space for participation and widen the information gap among group members, potentially reinforcing an unequal hierarchy of knowledge.

Short financial cycles and minimal planning

The groups in this study tend to have a short cash-flow cycle, operate on a small scale, and employ varied financial record-keeping practices. These differences in recording patterns are closely linked to the group's business income stability and production pace:

13 Data is drawn from a total sample of members and administrators, N=26.*

- **Groups with minimal or no record-keeping** typically have unstable cash flows. This instability may be due to irregular raw material supply, fluctuating production volumes, or underdeveloped marketing channels. Financial records are only kept when there is an administrative need, for instance, for program reporting. This pattern is insufficient to build business discipline or a credible financial track record. The absence of records and planning causes groups to rely more on personal capital or informal loans from members and limits opportunities to access formal financing, which requires historical proof of economic activity.
- Conversely, **groups that maintain regular records** tend to have more consistent income cycles. For example, groups with sustainable production processes or those actively building relationships with regular buyers and distribution partners. The continuity of this economic activity enables more structured record-keeping and serves as a crucial foundation for evaluation of creditworthiness, making a way toward access to formal financing.



This finding confirms that financial record-keeping is not only an administrative obligation but it is also a key indicator of business stability and a group's readiness to access formal financing on a sustainable basis.

Finding 4

Women's dual roles in the household influence the low participation, engagement, and benefits felt by female members from training

The majority of group members expressed their interest in training as a means to develop business capacity and increase income. However, the benefits of training are not felt equally, especially by women, due to various barriers affecting their access and participation.

The main barriers they face in accessing training and capacity development are:

- **Training information is top-down and centralized around a central figure.** Information delivered top-down or communicated only to the chairperson/administrator often does not reach all members, causing a widening gap in understanding and access to crucial information, particularly among female members who have limited mobility. Furthermore, groups that are highly dependent on the group leader or business owner tend not to allow space for other members to attend training, especially if that central figure, whether male or female, views the training irrelevant, as they may have different priorities and needs from other group members.
- **Training schedules are incompatible with women's time constraints and dual roles.** Many female members assume dual responsibilities of managing the household while running a micro-business. Inflexible training schedules that do not consider their available time make it difficult for them to fully participate. Rather than supporting empowerment, training with this approach risks widening the skills literacy gap among group members.
- **Lack of post-training follow-up to reinforce learning.** Post-training forums, such as discussion groups, mentoring sessions, or experience-sharing space, remain limited and are not conducted consistently. As a result, participants have few opportunities to deepen their understanding and exchange best practices. Knowledge that is not continuously activated risks fading over time, and old practices may resume.

> *After the initial training, there were no follow-up sessions or forums for sharing experiences, so members would return to their old practices.*

- **Training incentives have not yet led into tangible results in participants' personal livelihoods.** Some members feel that training does not have a direct impact on their income or business continuity. When training benefits are not linked to concrete opportunities, such as market access, ease of digital payments, or other monetary/non-monetary incentives, the motivation to participate remains low. This highlights the need for strengthening performance-based learning incentives to encourage sustained and broader participation.

For training to be effective and inclusive, its approach needs to be adapted to the social context, business needs, and existing gender dynamics within the group. This finding reveals that effective training for mentored business groups is the one which does not only enhance technical capacity but it is also tailored to business needs, gender dynamics, and the daily realities of group members. This finding reaffirms the importance of training that is:

- **Practice-based and contextual,** i.e., focusing on skills that directly support improvement in production or marketing capacity.
- **Flexible to the time constraints and gender dynamics of group members,** women generally prefer training on weekdays, especially during school hours, and do not mind if sessions are split over several days. Conversely, men are more comfortable with training on weekends or holidays. This difference in preference underscores the importance of training schedules that are adaptive to cross-gender needs and acknowledge the unequal burden of care giving.
- **Integration of hands-on learning,** such as field visits to other business groups/mentored groups or business matching activities, to enable members to learn from real practices while expanding access to markets and business networks.

Table 4.
Barriers and aspirations members regarding training

Aspect	Barrier	Member aspiration
Access to training information	Training information is top-down and centralized around a central figure (the administrator), and often does not reach all members	**Information that is open** and directly **reaches all members**
Time and schedule of training	Training schedules are often predetermined and do not consider members' routines (e.g., women with domestic responsibilities)	Training that **considers the daily routines across genders**
Training follow up	Lack of sustainable forums/ communication after training, resulting in rapid knowledge loss	Need for training **follow-up forums**: discussion, mentoring, field practice
Training incentive (impact)	Training is perceived as not providing a direct impact on members' income or business continuity	**Practice-based training that has a direct impact,** such as marketing, combined with direct exposure to market access

In addition, there are specific training need differences between women and men across genders:

- **Women** tend to require training in comfortable small-group formats, facilitated by familiar local business actors. Logistical support such as transportation is considered important, while the provision of childcare facilities does not fully meet their needs, as they mostly still carry the burden of caregiving duties during the training.
- **Men** are relatively more flexible in terms of training format and timing, but are more motivated if training is facilitated by large, successful business figures who are considered reputable in their field.

Table 5.

Differences in training needs between women and men

Training needs	Women	Men
Topic	**Production skills** training that are aligned with the business, business development, and marketing	Topics that are **aligned with skills** and that provide **direct results to the business**
Time	Prefer the training to be conducted **on weekdays,** specifically **during children's school hours**	More comfortable attending **training on weekends or holidays,** but tend to be more flexible
Format	**Small group** with comfortable atmosphere	**Flexible,** as long as the forum provides sufficient room for questions
Method	**Practice-based training** along with field visits	**Practice-based and interactive** (followed by open Q&A)
Facilitator	**Fellow small business actors** or a known facilitator	Large, **successful business figures**
Support	**Transportation** is considered important; while childcare facilities are less effective because care giving burdens remain during training	**Transportation** support is considered important; does not require childcare as there is family assistance

Recommendations

The recommendations in this report are formulated through a structured analysis, which maps the key research findings, namely aspects related to gender norms, program initiation, training/mentoring, and finance, and aligns them with the most relevant and impactful stages of implementation (Preparation, Implementation, or Monitoring & Evaluation) (see Appendix 2).

This approach gives a clear roadmap for Bank Indonesia to design evidence-based interventions, prioritize steps with the greatest impact, and optimize the use of resources. Consequently, the chosen strategy not only addresses gaps in financial inclusion but it also directly advances women's economic empowerment through a measurable, sustainable, and locally-responsive program.

Preparation stage

The primary focus of recommendations at this stage is to establish a strong and sustainable program foundation. This includes strengthening the program narrative, integrating gender equality materials into training, establishing selection mechanisms based on appropriate criteria, engaging stakeholders from the program's inception, and developing operational guidelines that are simple yet effective.

Developing an inclusive program brand that positions women and men as equal economic actors, emphasizing the principle of "equality in access, participation, control, and benefits" as the cornerstone of the program's narrative. Subsistence group-based inclusive economic and financial development programs should build an image that women and men have equal roles and capabilities in driving the local economy. This branding can be implemented across various communication channels, such as guidebooks, posters, training modules, social media, and public events like product exhibitions.

For example, training or empowerment programs can feature inspiring stories from both female and male group members, showing how equal collaboration within the group can increase income, expand businesses, or strengthen their position within the household and community.

For an example, a story of a housewife who initially had no income and then she joined a subsistence group. With her husband's support, she became more empowered, capable of making independent financial decisions, and her contributions gained increasing recognition from her family and the surrounding community. This inspirational narrative should use positive language (e.g., "empowered women, growing economy") to highlight the important role of women without diminishing the contribution of men, and to foster a spirit of togetherness in building the household economy. Therefore, it is crucial to avoid gender stereotypes when presenting success stories. In this way, the new narrative actually positions women not only as a domestic supporter but also as a strategic decision-maker who makes contribution to economic growth.

- **Integration of gender equality materials in training.** Bank Indonesia can integrate gender equality materials into training for its Regional Offices, which can then be passed on by the Regional Offices in training for field facilitators. The materials aim to raise awareness about the importance of understanding the different needs of men and women, including the ability to identify gaps in access, participation, control, and benefits and to recognize gender discrimination (stereotypes, subordination, marginalization, dual roles, and violence) that may arise during program implementation.

Examples of gender equality materials that can be adopted

- Basic concepts of gender equality and gender mainstreaming in economic development and inclusive finance.
- A simple gender analysis (e.g., the APCB framework) to identify gaps within subsistence groups.
- Techniques for collecting data disaggregated by gender and disability.
- Strategies for creating gender-inclusive training environments (e.g., women-friendly scheduling, engagement and support from husband/family, sharing of domestic work).
- Case studies or inspirational stories of successful gender-responsive programs as examples of good practice.
- Methods for designing and monitoring interventions to enhance women's participation and benefits.

- **Selection of groups through targeted assessment.** In the guidelines for subsistence group-based inclusive economic and financial development, the initial assessment of target groups is conducted through a survey or interview, focusing on aspects of inclusive financial conditions, business development, and institutional capacity. Field findings recommend expanding this to a more comprehensive assessment so that group formation can be more precisely targeted. Additionally, this initial assessment will serve as baseline data, which can later be compared against the end evaluation to measure program success. This includes:

  - **Business and potential mapping** to identify the group's business profile, including business model, alignment with local wisdom, and future development opportunities.

    The pattern of group formation and business model influences how members respond to decisions, carry out roles, and build a long-term commitment. Furthermore, sectoral bias can exclude individuals of a particular gender from joining a high-value business group, potentially widening the gender gap. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure every community member has an equal opportunity to participate in a business group targeted by the program.

    This study recommends that initiators, from the preparation stage, should identify the business model of the mentored subsistence groups, whether they are collective-organic, collective-programmatic, partnership-organic, or partnership-programmatic [Figure 4]. The initiators can also add to or modify the existing groupings based on formation patterns or business models found in the field. However, the four existing categories can serve as an initial reference for mapping groups, so the support provided can be appropriately tailored to the characteristics of each model. The identification of business model should also pay attention to potential glass ceilings that may limit women despite their capacity and motivation.

  - **Readiness and support analysis** by assessing the group's commitment, motivation, and readiness; ensuring a gender-balanced management structure; and evaluating the readiness of members and their families to be actively involved in the group. Household condition analysis to understand the extent to which women can participate and receive support from their environment can help determine appropriate intervention strategies, including strategies to involve husbands from the program's beginning to strengthen support for women's roles. This approach can mitigate the risks associated with dual roles and strengthen more equitable power relations within the household.

Samples of household conditions and program design interventions:

Persona:
Erna
Social go-getter

Sample household condition:
The woman does not earn any income, has no personal bank account, and all decisions must be approved by her husband.

Potential interventions:
Involving the husband from the beginning in information dissemination session, so he understands the economic benefits if his wife participates in the program, and encouraging mutual agreement on the division of roles within the household. Additionally, facilitating the opening of a personal account in her name through partnership with financial sector actors.

Persona:
Rini
Flexible-hustler/ steady mom-preneur

Sample household condition:
The woman has her own business managed jointly with her husband, but her primary priority is the household needs. Business and household finances are managed together with her husband, and daily decisions are mostly made by the woman.

Potential interventions:
Involving the husband in training and mentoring sessions so both have the same understanding about the importance of separating personal and business finances. Encouraging simple financial record-keeping so that the woman can manage her personal income independently.

Persona:
Rosi
Visioner mom-preneur, consistent grower

Sample household condition:
The woman receives full support from her husband and family in running her business.

Potential interventions:
Making their husbands as a role model to share positive experiences in forums or public events, thereby inspiring other households to better support women.

- **Socio-economic condition analysis** considers economic background of the household to understand the economic contribution of its members, particularly women, within the household. This includes sources and amounts of income generated, the extent to which this income influences family financial decisions, and women's role in supporting household needs. This information forms the basis for designing interventions and empowerment strategies appropriate to initial economic capacity and the potential to strengthen women's economic roles. Additionally, this indicator can also serve as a tool for detecting economic marginalization experienced by women.

Recommendations for changes to several initial survey questions can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6.
Recommendation for changes to the initial survey instrument

Aspect	Finding	Recommendation for changes
Individual profile (economic condition, income)	**Income data is still recorded in aggregate** (family/group), not separated per individual. It is important to know individual income data to see the changes experienced by each member.	**Add a question:** • “What is your average individual income per month (IDR)?”
Individual profile (economic condition, contribution to family income)	**Data does not yet record individual contributions to household income.** This information is important to assess the economic role of each member.	**Add a few questions:** • “What is the husband's income?" • "What is the wife's income?” By asking these two questions, Bank Indonesia can analyze the percentage contribution of husband's and wife's income to the household.
Economic activities (family/spousal support)	Many **women face challenges in attending training or managing a business due to** social norms related to **domestic responsibilities**. Information about spousal/family support is important to design appropriate interventions.	**Add a few questions:** • “Do you receive support from your spouse or family in running your business?" • “What challenges do you face in running your business?”
Mapping of financial conditions (knowledge of financial products and institutions, formal account in personal name)	Many group members claim to have **savings**, but they use accounts **under someone else's name** (e.g., their spouse), resulting in limited financial control.	After the question 'Do you currently have an account at a financial institution?', **Add a follow-up question:** • “If yes, is this financial product under your personal name or someone else's?”
Mapping of institutional conditions (business model)	Some business models are **not transparent in communicating group financial information or training opportunities**.	**Add a few questions:** • “What is the income distribution mechanism within the group?" • “What is the decision-making process in the group?”

- **Identification of local leader** should be conducted as early as possible to encourage their role as the primary drivers of mentoring. One method that can be used is mapping through a persona approach, which involves mapping the characteristics, motivations, and behaviors of group members to identify those with the potential to lead or mentor other members. The five personas featured in this study serves as an initial reference for mapping the characteristic tendencies of group members and identifying who is most likely to become a local leader.

  Although business owners often have substantial capacity to assume the role of local leader, it is still advisable to separate the roles of local leader, mentor, and business owner/group chairperson. This aims to minimize potential bias and ensure the sustainability of more objective and inclusive mentoring. At this stage, it is important to avoid reproducing gender stereotypes, such as the assumption that men are more suitable to lead.

- **Program design based on mapping by member assessment results using a persona approach.** After group member data is collected, Regional Offices and mentors can tailor the design of the subsistence group economic program based on the persona mapping. Personas are not limited to the five examples created in this research. Facilitators can develop new personas or modify existing ones according to the context and dynamics of the groups they mentor. However, the five existing personas can serve as an initial reference for mapping the characteristic tendencies of group members, so that interventions provided can be more targeted, whether in terms of training design, training materials/ curriculum, financial management, mentoring, or business support. Furthermore, research from other institutions, such as Amartha[14], can also be used as a reference to understand the characteristics of subsistence communities, their challenges, and their needs regarding financial access and services, such as financing.

Table 7.
Sample program designs by persona

Sample persona	Training method/ design	Sample training materials	Business financial mentoring
 Erna ***Social go-getter***	Training which is integrated with other social activities (PKK, KWT, Posyandu)	Basic financial record-keeping using simple methods	Direct account opening facilitated by Financial Services Providers
 Rini ***Flexible hustler/ steady mom-preneur***	Flexible, modular training (short-term) based on field practice	Basic marketing	Mentoring on a phased business development plan
 Rosi ***Visioner mom-preneur, consistent growers***	Mentoring for a phased business development plan	Use of digital marketing for sales	Access to credit, business development mentoring

14 Research by Amartha Grassroot Entepreneurs' categorizes ultra-micro entrepreneurs into four personas: advanced pioneers, emerging innovators, emerging challengers, and novice risky borrowers to map their levels of innovation and business financing access. This persona segmentation is based on three main criteria: capital, income, and the desire to learn.

- **Measured, active engagement of Financial Service Providers (FSPs) from the beginning of group formation.** Bank Indonesia has already included stakeholder mapping in the preparation stage. To ensure more impactful commitment from each stakeholder, Bank Indonesia encourages the engagement of FSPs, both banks and non-banks, from the onset of the program to promote access to and use of financial services by business groups and their members. If possible, FSPs can be given concrete, gender-based targets, such as the number of new accounts opened, creation or application of QRIS, or credit/financing disbursement, so structuring the role of financial services institutions more clearly and generating tangible impact. In addition to quantitative targets, FSPs can also be encouraged to design gender-sensitive products and services.

> During the preparation stage, the guidelines can set minimum targets that also include specific goals for women (for example: 80% of group members open a formal account during the initial training, and at least 50% of them make one digital transaction within the same month). Training genuinely serves as a bridge to enhance both access to and active use of financial services, especially for female members.

- **Simplification of guidelines** focused on points with direct impact and addition of operational guidance regarding:
  - Implementation of regular group meetings accompanied by a structured, documented schedule and the use of a standard record-keeping format from the beginning.
  - Strategies or guidelines to ensure all members are active in training, including the use of interactive methods relevant to group needs.

Implementation stage

The recommendations of the report emphasize that during the implementation stage, capacity building for groups must go hand-in-hand with strengthening individuals, institutions, and the unique dynamics of each group. The focus should not be solely on formalizing the groups but it must also include enhancing business skills, financial literacy, and social support for members, especially women, alongside the mechanisms for collaboration with external parties. Through this approach, mentoring outcomes are expected to be more sustainable, as they are founded on groups that are participatory, transparent, and gender-responsive.

Institutional strengthening

The research findings highlight the importance of more gender-responsive group governance to ensure every member has an equal opportunity in business and in the decision-making process.

- **Balanced representation of women and men in the decision-making process.** While current guidelines offer direction on division of roles and responsibilities, the reality shows that women are often underrepresented in the decision-making process. Therefore, a group needs to agree on the procedure that ensures female representation in strategic meetings. To ensure meaningful representation, which is more than just a quota, there should be a rotation of roles in the forum (e.g., moderator, note-taker) and within the institutional structure. Gender-responsive leadership training is also important for administrators and aspiring leaders, so they understand how to build inclusive leadership and institutions.

- **Flexible group work pace and rules.** To enable women to remain productive without being overburdened by domestic work, groups need to have flexible rules and work pace. For example, scheduling meetings that consider domestic responsibilities, rotating assignment of tasks, or establishing mutual support mechanism among members. Operational guidelines can be developed to formalize this flexibility, to ensure women's needs are accommodated without compromising the group's effectiveness.

- **Engaging family or relatives to support women's participation.** Social support is critical for women's participation. Hence, spouses or relatives living in the same household should be engaged from the activity planning stage, creating a shared understanding of the importance of women's participation in the group and what kind of support is expected from the family. Internalization activities with families can be made a routine agenda so that support is not temporary.

- **Simple monitoring to encourage active participation from all members.** Member attendance and engagement should not only be viewed as a formal obligation but as part of the group culture. Simple mechanisms such as an attendance logbook, reminder messages, or incentives for consistently active members can grow a stronger sense of ownership and more meaningful engagement.

Capacity strengthening for business development

- **Peer learning as reinforcement of technical training.** Regular group-facilitated training should be complemented by a peer learning mechanism. This process can occur among members in one group or between groups through joint forums. This allows members to take turns sharing experiences and skills, which can be supported by simple guidelines to build everyone's confidence. Incentives, such as opportunities for advanced training, access to credit, or the chance to be a facilitator in another group, can enhance member motivation. To be effective, the format, topics, and schedule for sharing sessions should be agreed upon collectively according to everyone's needs. It is also important to integrate gender equality topics into peer learning to encourage discussion and equal relation between women and men.

- **Training design which engages members.** Training materials should not be solely decided by the administrators but developed through deliberation between members and administrators to better align with members' business profile and skills they need. With this approach, women and men can each voice their priorities, making training content more relevant and inclusive. Each training module should also incorporate real case studies from group members to strengthen the training's relevance.
- **Gradual and adaptive digital learning support.** Groups can establish simple digital communication channels, such as WhatsApp group, to maintain their learning, share materials, and discuss business challenges. This channel can be used by members in one group or across groups to broaden experience exchange and expand market access. In addition to strengthening solidarity other than through face-to-face meetings, groups can also hold periodic digital skills updates, focusing on technologies relevant to members' businesses, so that their capacity keeps pace with market development. If possible, digital literacy training can also be extended to family members (children/teenagers) to build a stronger support ecosystem.
- **Strategic partnership with vocational schools and other stakeholders.** Collaboration with vocational schools opens access to capacity development through engagement of interns who bring fresh perspectives on the use of digital technology, marketing strategies, and product development. The presence of interns not only assists day-to-day operations but also encourages business innovation, making groups more adaptive to market dynamics. For vocational schools, this partnership provides hands-on fieldwork for students and helps align the curriculum with the actual needs of local businesses. Collaboration design also needs to be adaptive for cross-program integration. Subsistence group programs as one of many strategic initiatives under KPwDN should be linked with other relevant initiatives, such as business digitalization, food security, or entrepreneurship development. Established subsistence groups can serve as a mentor or, conversely, receive mentoring from other groups under the umbrella of KPwDN's programs. This approach allows each group to gain layered benefits, mutually strengthen each other, and contribute to the program's objectives in a more comprehensive manner.

Strengthening financial literacy and facilitating financial access

- **Integrating training with tangible access to financial services.** The findings of this study show that subsistence groups generally still have a low level of digital literacy, so it limits their ability to leverage technology for financial management and use of digital channels. To address this challenge, a hybrid approach combining physical/manual and digital methods can be implemented as a more gradual and inclusive transition strategy. For example, regarding digital-based financial record-keeping, infrastructure limitations, such as ownership of smartphone and internet access in remote areas can be overcome by first implementing manual record-keeping, which is then periodically digitized by mentors or members with better digital capacity.

  Furthermore, the findings in the field show that digital adoption at the group level does not automatically increase individual digital financial literacy, and most members are still uncomfortable using digital financial technology. Therefore, training should directly involve Financial Service Providers (FSPs), by combining business skill materials with direct access to financial products. This enables group members to immediately apply the skills they learn to manage and develop their businesses. To strengthen sustainability, FSPs can be encouraged to conduct regular visits or offer dedicated services for subsistence groups.

- **The use of a simple application for financial record-keeping which are accessible to all members.** The findings show that most members are not yet used to maintaining financial records for their personal businesses, while group business records remain centralized with the chairperson/treasurer and lack transparency. Therefore, the guidelines need to require that every group maintains financial records, including expenses, by encouraging the use of a simple record-keeping application or feature accessible to all members. Local leaders can play an active role in motivating members to adopt digital record-keeping. Additionally, the guidelines should to be supplemented with instructions for transparent distribution of group revenue to all members, to ensure accountability within the group. This transparency can be strengthened by encouraging the publication of regular financial reports, both printed and digital, to all members.

Practical examples of integrating training with financial services

Account opening and transaction simulation

After a literacy session on the benefits of saving and the importance of keeping business records, the facilitator brings in a bank agent to assist the members step by step in opening a basic personal savings account. The presence of a bank agent is crucial, especially in rural areas, as it facilitates group members' access to basic services, like account opening, cash deposits and withdrawals, fund transfers, bill payments, and even simple microfinance products.

Members gain access to accounts in their own names during the training. In the next stage, participants are guided to immediately use the account, for example, by making an initial deposit of business proceeds into their personal account or performing a simple QRIS transaction. In other words, members not only have an account but also begin to use it actively to manage their business and personal finances.

Financial record-keeping with a simple application

Members are introduced to a simple record-keeping application to record business revenue, expenses, and cash flow. Mentors or local leaders can provide practical guidance and motivate members to make record-keeping a daily habit.

Digital payments for group needs and revenue distribution

Participants are encouraged to try digital payment channels, either through e-wallets or QRIS, for various group needs. An applicable example is paying group contributions non-cash Furthermore, group revenue/profits should be distributed only through each member's account, not in cash, to encourage transparency, security, and to familiarize members with the use of formal financial services in their business management.

Monitoring and evaluation stage

To ensure more accurate and comprehensive measurement of program outcomes which is useful for policy improvement, the current guidelines for the subsistence-based group in EKI development program emphasizes the importance of measuring program success across three main dimensions: financial management (personal and business), business development, and institutional strengthening. The program monitoring is conducted regularly through routine reporting and site visits, while the final assessment is carried out by a survey of the target groups.

This study recommends strengthening the monitoring system with a more gender-responsive approach, including by integrating gender indicators and analysis into routine reports. This will allow for more accurate tracking of the progress and challenges faced by female and male group members, which can then be used for policy improvement and future program design. Furthermore, it is recommended that the survey questionnaire use the same set of questions at both the start and end of the program to facilitate more measurable monitoring of changes in members' behavior, capacity, and outcomes.

Strengthening routine mentoring reports to be more gender-responsive

Based on the existing guidelines, mentors have regularly prepared and submitted program implementation reports as part of the monitoring and evaluation process. These reports were prepared based on regular meetings between mentors and target groups to identify achievements and challenges faced by individual members and the group, covering training, business development, financial management, and institutional strengthening.

To encourage a subsistence-based group EKI program to be more gender-responsive, this study recommends that the existing routine reports be strengthened with a dedicated section that assesses achievements, challenges, and follow-up actions related to the effort to make the program more gender-responsive.

An example of composition of the gender analysis section in a regular report:

- The gender-disaggregated profile of members of the subsistence group (number, age, sex, marital status).
- An analysis of Access, Participation, Control, and Benefits (APCB) **before** and **after** mentoring, on:
  - Member support: division of domestic responsibilities, spousal/family support for member involvement, spousal/family involvement in business development/ mentoring programs.
  - Group dynamics: composition of the management team (women and men), involvement of women and men in decision-making, and identification of a potential glass ceiling which limits women in strategic positions.
  - Management of members' business and household finances, including: ownership of accounts in one's own name, control over the use of business revenue/income, members' involvement in family financial management and decisions, recognition of members' economic contributions.
- Gender-responsive strategies and approaches employed by the mentor, including:
  - Methods used by the mentor to encourage equal participation (e.g., women-friendly activity scheduling, spousal engagement in the program).
  - Efforts to identify and address gender-specific barriers faced by female and male members.
  - Collaboration with other parties to create a more supportive environment for gender equality.
- Reflection on the strategies implemented and plans for future improvement, ensuring women's voices are heard equally in participatory evaluation forums.

Final assessment

The findings of this research recommend strengthening several existing survey indicators to ensure they are more inclusive and reflect benefits for all target groups. This strengthening includes the following points:

Financial management dimension (personal and business)

- **Addition of information "in one's own name" to record of ownership of formal financial products by group members.** Research findings show that even when there is personal account ownership, most members use their account passively, and some still rely on their spouse's or group account. Separating personal ownership will help measure the actual level of financial independence, identify members who do not yet have full control over access to formal finance, and reveal women's financial subordination within the household.
- **Measurement of individual member income per measurement period.** Measuring personal income helps differentiate the economic achievement of each member from the group's achievement, while also providing a clearer picture of the extent to which members can actively participate in business activities. If individual income remains limited, it means that members tend to prioritize meeting basic needs over full involvement in group activities. This data is also crucial for observing the relationship between increased individual income and broader use of financial services, for example, whether additional income encourages members to open accounts in their own name, use productive credit services, or start using digital payments to support their business.

- **Measurement of the percentage of member's contribution to household income.** Understanding a member's income contribution to their household economy helps assess whether the program actually improves their financial bargaining power, especially for women. This is important because some members still use accounts in their spouse's name, indicating limited financial control. The data also helps to identify different member profile and which member is constrained by domestic responsibilities and financial burden. With this information, the program can target specific training and mentoring for members with low contributions to enhance their role in the household economy.
- **Group financial transparency.** A key finding in the research identified group business models that lack transparency in communicating financial information and income distribution to their members. During the preparation stage, it is recommended to map how the income will be distributed, who will be involved in record-keeping, and to what extent members will have access to financial reports. During the monitoring stage, this information needs to be tracked to observe the consistency of transparency practices.

Table 8.
Summary of financial management dimension strengthening

Indicator Scope	Proposed baseline assessment	Proposed monitoring & evaluation (M&E)	Data collection method	Integration into survey tables
Ownership of formal/ personal financial products	After the question 'Do you currently have an account at a financial institution?', **add a follow-up question:** • "If yes, is this financial product under your personal name or someone else's?"	Number of members with personal accounts compared to baseline	Quantitative survey	**Additional column:** Account/savings/ loans in own name (Yes/No)
Individual income	• "What is your average individual income per month (IDR)?"	Change in individual income compared to baseline	Quantitative survey	Column for individual income (IDR/month) per member
Percentage contribution to family income	**Add a few questions:** • "What is the husband's income?" • "What is the wife's income?"	Change in member's income contribution compared to baseline	Quantitative survey	Column for % contribution to household income
Group financial transparency	• "What is the income distribution mechanism within the group?" • "What is the decision-making process in the group?"	**Monitor transparency consistency:** Ensure financial reports are shared regularly and are accessible to all members.	Quantitative survey/site visit	Are financial reports shared routinely? (Yes/No)

Dimensions of business development

- **Implementation of pulse surveys post-training/mentoring.** To ensure training materials are properly understood and applied by members, the program should introduce a rapid evaluation mechanism 1–2 weeks after training. This brief survey aims to capture initial feedback, implementation challenges, and further support needs before the learning momentum diminishes.

Practical examples of pulse surveys post-training/mentoring

- A simple form containing 3–5 core questions can be used, administered online (e.g., WhatsApp, Google Form) or offline through field facilitators.
- Survey questions should focus on: (1) which training content has been applied, (2) perceived outcomes (e.g., increased revenue or improved efficiency), (3) challenges encountered, and (4) need for further support.
- Response should be analyzed promptly (within one week) to guide follow-up actions such as mentoring, discussion groups, or facilitating market access.

- **Mapping of product/service innovations.** Innovation mapping aims to identify new ideas, products, or services emerging from members or groups after training. This helps the program recognize viable potential and identify innovations that can inclusively engage and benefit both women and men. Furthermore, the mapping can assess the extent to which such innovations help reduce gender stereotypes and discrimination in the types of businesses operated.

Practical examples of Mapping of Innovation/Product Service

- Use a quick pulse survey to ask 2–3 brief questions in the KPwDN monitoring report: presence of a new innovation (Yes/No), development status (idea/prototype/sales), and initial impact (% revenue/efficiency).
- Conduct quarterly mapping to chart the idea name, added value, target market, % of involved members, women's roles, and support needs.
- Add an "Innovation Mapping" column to the KPwDN monitoring report to summarize ideas and follow-up actions (pilot, scale, or postpone).

Institutional strengthening dimension

- **Groups should establish procedures ensuring balanced representation of women and men in management and strategic decision-making forum.** If necessary, the program can agree on quota mechanisms or affirmative measures if disparities are significant, to address structural bias. During implementation, the study recommends encouraging meetings that accommodate women's circumstances, such as family-friendly schedules, rotating responsibilities, or mutual support mechanisms among members and families. To measure success in institutional strengthening, this study recommends adding specific questions during monitoring and evaluation.

Table 9.
Recommended institutional strengthening instruments

Aspect	Questions to group members	Questions to administrators
Member Activity	In the last 3 months, **how often have you attended meetings or regular activities with the group members?** **Did you take on a role in that activity?** If yes, please specify.	What is **the average attendance rate of members at meetings or regular group activities?** What support **does the group provide to** encourage **a more balanced division of tasks among group members?**
Management and decision-making	In **the last 3 months, how many times have you been involved in decision-making** within the group?	What is the current **number of male and female administrators in the management structure?**
Engagement of family/spouse in the support ecosystem	Does your **spouse/family support you in joining and being active in the group?** What **forms of support do you receive?** What is your **partner's view on your participation in the business group?**	**How does the group involve partners/ family** in its activities?

* * *

Appendix

Appendix 1
Mixed-methods design

Data collection methods	Purpose	Sampling
In-depth interviews	To explore women's experiences in accessing financial services, developing businesses, and the socio-cultural dynamics within supported groups.	Members of mentored EKI program groups (various profiles: active member, group administrator, passive member). Mentors/Facilitators of mentored EKI program groups.
Focus Group Discussion	To validate the initial findings and gather policy input from local stakeholders.	Regional Office of Bank Indonesia (KPwDN), relevant regional government agencies, group mentors/facilitators from NGOs or implementing partners of the mentored EKI program.
Secondary data analysis	To analyze participant profiles, literacy levels, business performance, and program achievements based on BI data and monitoring & evaluation results.	BI monitoring data related to the EKI program: profile data on the mentored groups.

Sampling strategy

This study uses purposive sampling to select locations and respondents based on variation in region, group business model (collective and partnership), and women's involvement. Four locations were selected—Jakarta, Palu, Belitung, and Bali—as they represent diverse geographical and socio-economic contexts and are actively running businesses in the processed food, handicrafts, agriculture, and fisheries sectors. This approach helps explore the varied practices and challenges faced by women's groups in the EKI program.

Key respondents consist of:

- Female members of business groups, including administrator and leader
- Field mentors/facilitators
- Representatives of Bank Indonesia (KPwDN), and program support partners such as relevant agencies (MSMEs, cooperatives, NGOs)

The profile of female respondents reflects diversity in financial literacy, business experience, role in the group and household, and access to training. The sample was designed to represent variation in group involvement and functionality, so the resulting analysis is contextual and relevant to the objectives of the EKI program.

Respondents type	Numbers	Location details	Remarks
Members and administrators of mentored subsistence groups	26 respondents	Two groups from Jakarta, Belitung, and Bali, and three groups from Palu	Including chairperson, treasurer, active and passive members
Facilitators/ mentors	9 respondents	Representing Palu, Belitung, and Bali regions	Directly involved in group training and mentoring
Program supporting partners	44 respondents	Representatives from a total of 19 institutions in four regions	Offices, BI KPwDN, NGOs, technical agencies, and other implementing stakeholders
Total	79 respondents	Including in-depth interviews and multi-stakeholder FGDs	

Respondent demographic profile

Of the 35 respondents (members, administrators, and facilitators/mentors) the majority were women, reflecting the program's focus on empowering women in mentored business groups. The following is a summary of demographic characteristics:

1 **Sex** Female: **28** | Male: **7**

2 **Age**

- Respondents' ages ranged from 18 to over 51 years.
- The middle-aged, productive age group (35-50 years) dominated, reflecting the involvement of adult women who have balanced domestic roles with business activities.
- Several respondents aged 55 and over remained active as group administrators or members.

3 **Educational and socioeconomic background**

- The majority of respondents were graduates of senior high school or its equivalent, with a small number completing junior high school. Respondents who were mentors generally had higher education (at least senior high school or a diploma) and came from local communities or partner institutions.
- Most women were home-based or micro-business owners, with businesses including processed foods, handicrafts, selling daily necessities, or small-scale agriculture and livestock-based activities.
- In urban areas, some respondents had previous experience as informal laborers or domestic workers, and joined business groups as part of a transition to strengthening their family's economy.

4 **Dual role status and daily life**

Almost all female respondents play dual roles as a housewife and supplementary income earner. Their time is divided between domestic responsibilities, childcare, and business group activities.

Appendix 2

Analysis method for recommendations development

Analysis approach

The analysis method used in developing this recommendation matrix combined Thematic Categorization and Priority Mapping techniques.

- **Thematic Categorization** is used to group findings into main categories (theme-based grouping) based on solution ideas and problem characteristics.
- **Priority Mapping** used to map solution ideas based on their level of urgency (priority scale) and implementation stage (implementation stage mapping).

This method is commonly used in policy study, program evaluation, and implementation stage and it refers to a modified Logical Framework Analysis (logframe) approach to connect findings, thematic categories, priorities, and implementation stage.

Analysis stage

The recommendation matrix was developed through three main steps:

- Thematic Categorization – Grouping solution ideas according to the themes found (Gender Norms, Initiation, Training/Mentoring, Finance) and priority level (High or Medium).
- Segregation by Stage – Placing each solution idea into the appropriate stage: Preparation, Implementation, and Monitoring and Evaluation.
- Priority Mapping – Identifying solution ideas with strategic and critical impacts, while incorporating input from Bank Indonesia.

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