

The Potential of Teh Gurah SMEs in Bantul: A Community-Based Exploration

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Abstract.

This study explores the potential of Teh Gurah, a local herbal product innovated by an SME in Kampung Gurah, Bantul, Yogyakarta. Traditionally, gurah is a nasal detoxification method using herbal liquid, often avoided due to its invasive nature. In response, the local SME developed Teh Gurah, an herbal drink made from daun srigunggu, which enables detoxification through natural processes such as sweating and bowel movement. The aim of this activity was to assess the business potential and innovation trajectory of Teh Gurah, as part of the ICS 2025 community engagement program.

Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through observation, interviews with the business owner and local authorities, and documentation analysis. Prior to intervention, the SME operated manually in a non-standard home-based setting, producing only 50–100 boxes per month with limited branding and no digital marketing. After gaining BPOM and halal certifications and adopting machine automation, the SME increased its production capacity to 40,000 boxes per month and began limited online sales.

The findings highlight the SME's potential in scaling traditional herbal practices into commercially viable health products. However, challenges remain in the areas of energy reliability, digital marketing, product diversification, and community involvement. The innovation has brought economic benefits and opened pathways for further empowerment, though strategic efforts are still needed to enhance sustainability and digital adoption. This case illustrates how traditional knowledge, when supported by minimal but targeted interventions, can evolve into a scalable rural enterprise..

Keywords: *Community empowerment; digital transformation; herbal innovation; rural SME; traditional medicine.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) serve as the backbone of Indonesia's economy, contributing over 60% to the national GDP and absorbing 97% of the national workforce (BPS, 2023). In rural areas like Bantul, Yogyakarta, MSMEs play a crucial role in promoting local innovation and empowering communities through traditional knowledge. One such innovation is Teh Gurah, a herbal detox drink that originated from the traditional gurah therapy. Unlike the

conventional method, which involves flushing out mucus through the nasal cavity, Teh Gurah enables detoxification through natural metabolic processes such as sweating and defecation.

Previous studies (e.g., Rahman & Sulistyowati, 2021; Wijayanti et al., 2022) emphasize the growing demand for herbal and functional drinks, especially during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, due to increased public awareness of health and immunity. However, research has largely focused on product development or clinical effects, with little attention given to the business potential and scalability of community-based herbal innovations.

This study presents a unique case of an SME that emerged post-Yogyakarta earthquake in 2006. Starting as a home-based business, the producer of Teh Gurah faced challenges including limited equipment, low production capacity, and lack of official certification. Through collaboration with local health departments, BPOM, and halal certification bodies, the enterprise successfully met regulatory standards. Community engagement was evident not only in labor contributions—up to 13 local workers involved during manual production—but also in the sourcing of local raw materials such as daun srigunggu.

Despite receiving machinery assistance from the Ministry, which increased production from 100 to 40,000 boxes per month, the SME still faces obstacles such as low digital presence, unstable electricity, underdeveloped product lines, and marketing limitations. This article aims to explore the potential and sustainability of the Teh Gurah SME as a model of rural innovation, assess its challenges, and provide recommendations for community-based economic empowerment.

II. METHODS

The community-based research activity was conducted in Kampung Gurah, located in Giriloyo Village, Wukirsari, Imogiri District, Bantul Regency, Yogyakarta Special Region, Indonesia. This activity was carried out on May 20, 2025, as part of the International Community Service (ICS) 2025 program held in Yogyakarta. The purpose of this study was to identify and assess the economic and innovation potential of the Teh Gurah SME and to explore the various challenges that hinder its development within the local context. A qualitative descriptive approach was used to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the enterprise, focusing on its growth, community engagement, and production dynamics.

Data were collected through a triangulated method involving direct observation of the production process, semi-structured interviews with the business owner, workers, and relevant authorities such as the local health office and BPOM, and documentation review including business permits, brand registrations, and certification records. Key informants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that the data collected reflected firsthand experiences and insights. The validity of the findings was maintained through data triangulation and verification with institutional records.

Prior to the implementation, the SME operated manually from a basic home-based setup, producing only 50 to 100 boxes per month with minimal marketing and no structured digital presence. Certification processes, including BPOM and halal registration, were initiated independently by the SME without government funding. With gradual improvements and limited external support, the enterprise now runs with BPOM-standardized production rooms, employs automation that boosts capacity to 40,000 boxes monthly, and has begun online distribution, although its digital marketing remains underdeveloped. The study expects to produce practical insights into the sustainability of health-oriented rural enterprises and highlight potential strategies for digital and operational development.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Before the implementation of the ICS 2025 community engagement activity, the Teh Gurah SME operated in a highly traditional and manual setting. Production took place in a modest residential home with no standardized production flow. The average monthly output ranged from only 50 to 100 boxes, with each box containing 15 herbal sachets made from daun srigunggu. The business struggled with issues related to licensing, product packaging, limited human resources, and lack of access to digital markets. Most operational decisions were made based on intuition, without structured documentation or digital systems.

On May 20, 2025, the ICS program facilitated a focused visit and assessment of the SME's progress and potential. Through direct dialogue with the business owner and on-site observation, it was evident that significant improvements had taken place. The production process had already transitioned into a semi-industrial system, with the inclusion of robotic machinery that boosted monthly output up to 40,000 boxes. This automation reduced the number of production workers from 13 to a much leaner team, optimizing efficiency while maintaining hygiene standards required by BPOM.

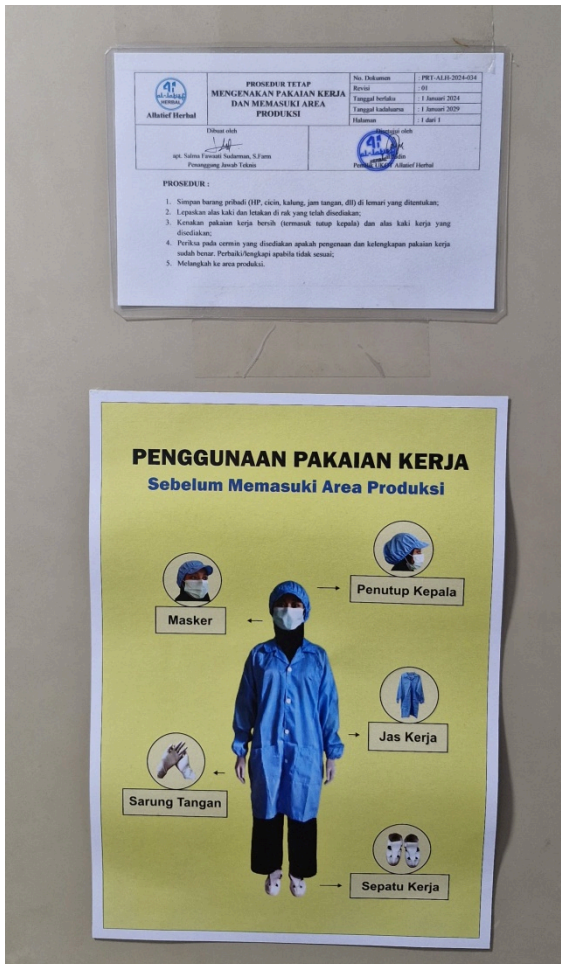
The SME also succeeded in establishing a structured production layout that follows BPOM protocols—separating raw material intake, processing, and packaging in clearly defined areas. Workers were equipped with anti-dust uniforms and followed standard hygiene protocols. The owner had independently secured the necessary distribution permit from BPOM, a halal certification, and brand registration through the local Office for Cooperatives and SMEs, with minimal financial support from external institutions.

Community impact was evident in several ways. First, local employment was stimulated during the initial manual production phase, involving up to 13 community members. Second, the innovation of turning traditional gurah therapy into an ingestible herbal product expanded public acceptance. Third, the SME's limited online presence (e.g., listing on marketplaces) reflected early-stage digital adoption, yet signaled an openness to further development.

Although the business has shown remarkable growth, challenges persist. The SME faces electricity instability, hindering machine operation during outages, and it lacks strategic digital marketing tools to boost visibility. Furthermore, while product adoption has reached broader markets—especially during the COVID-19 pandemic when production peaked at 40,000 boxes per month—post-pandemic demand has declined, suggesting the need for diversified product innovation and better market positioning.

The community's involvement in innovation was not only seen in labor contribution but also in resource provision, particularly in sourcing daun srigunggu from local farmers. However, community training and structured knowledge transfer are still minimal. This reveals an opportunity for future empowerment efforts focused on developing business literacy, digital skills, and collective marketing strategies to support long-term sustainability.





IV. CONCLUSION

The Teh Gurah SME in Kampung Gurah, Bantul, represents a successful example of community-driven innovation that bridges traditional herbal practices with modern business approaches. Through a single-day assessment and engagement during the ICS 2025 program, it was evident that the enterprise had evolved significantly from its modest, manual roots into a semi-industrial operation supported by BPOM-compliant facilities and certified products.

The primary impact of the community empowerment activity lies in the validation and mapping of the SME's potential, which includes high-volume production capability, marketable health benefits, and cultural heritage value. The innovation of transforming traditional nasal gurah therapy into an ingestible herbal drink has increased consumer acceptance and opened opportunities for commercialization. The community has benefited through employment opportunities, local ingredient sourcing, and participation in early production processes.

However, the findings also revealed key areas requiring further development, including digital marketing literacy, energy infrastructure, and product diversification. The study recommends the following: (1) the introduction of structured business training programs focused on digital branding and e-commerce, (2) support for energy resilience, such as access to backup power sources, and (3) facilitation of community-based cooperatives to enable collective marketing and innovation development.

The community adoption of Teh Gurah as both a wellness product and an economic model demonstrates its potential to serve as a prototype for other rural herbal-based SMEs. This case

contributes a practical model for localized health product innovation supported by traditional knowledge, minimal resources, and adaptive business strategies—highlighting the relevance of culturally rooted entrepreneurship in rural development frameworks.

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