

HEALTH NUTRITION EDUCATION AND STRENGTHENING INDONESIAN CULTURE AMONG INDONESIAN MIGRANT WORKERS CHILDREN IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRAK

This service aims to improve children's understanding of balanced nutrition and promote their cultural awareness. The methods used in this program include integrated learning activities that focus on health education and cultural awareness. The materials used are from the "Isi Piringku" nutrition guide, which teaches children about the importance of a healthy diet. In addition, the program also organizes interactive sessions on local foods and iconic Indonesian landmarks to foster cultural pride. A total of 41 children participated in this activity, which included puzzles, flashcards, and a nutritional assessment to evaluate their dietary habits. In addition, traditional dances were also taught to introduce Indonesian culture and strengthen the cultural identity of migrant children. The results of the activities showed an increase in children's understanding of balanced nutrition and Indonesian culture, as well as the importance of pride in their heritage. The program also succeeded in introducing a more collaborative learning approach, involving parents in the child's education process. However, further research is needed on the role of parental involvement in supporting the success of this program. Overall, the "Anak CERIA" program is in line with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, especially in improving the education and health of Indonesian migrant children, as well as strengthening their cultural awareness. This initiative is expected to inspire similar programs in the future.

Keywords: SDGs, PMI Children, Health Education, Cultural Awareness, Community Empowerment

BACKGROUND

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015, which consists of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 associated targets. Developed through a participatory and multi-stakeholder process, these goals aim to address poverty and inequality, building upon the previous 8 Millennium Development Goals established in 2000. The SDGs encompass various critical issues, including poverty, health, education, gender equality,

and climate change, with objectives centered around enhancing human well-being, eradicating poverty and hunger, protecting the environment, and fostering peaceful and inclusive societies.(Amoroso, 2018; Bappenas, 2017; United Nations, 2020)

A significant aspect of the 2030 Agenda is its emphasis on universality, inclusiveness, and partnerships, making it applicable to all countries regardless of their development status. This underscores the shared responsibility for sustainable development and recognizes the interconnectedness of global challenges. The agenda advocates for a holistic approach to address these issues effectively and calls for renewed global partnerships to achieve sustainable development.(United Nations, 2020). Importantly, the 2030 Agenda acknowledges migration as a critical development consideration, integrating it explicitly into the global development framework for the first time. It applies to all mobile populations, regardless of their status—whether displaced, internal, or cross-border migrants. The agenda highlights the vulnerability of migrant women, men, and children while recognizing them as agents of development.(Holliday et al., 2019; Piper, 2017)

Target 10.7 specifically addresses migration within the goal of reducing inequality, advocating for the facilitation of orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration through well-managed policies. Many other targets reference migration, emphasizing its importance as a cross-cutting issue. The implementation of the SDGs presents an opportunity to protect and empower mobile populations, enabling them to realize their development potential and benefit individuals, communities, and countries globally (Amoroso, 2018). In 2015, approximately 244 million people were international migrants, including 31 million children under 18, which means roughly one in 70 children globally lives in a different country from where they were born. Asia and Africa host the highest numbers of migrant children. Addressing barriers to education for migrants is essential for achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on education, as well as other related goals. Evidence shows that education enhances livelihoods, drives economic growth, improves health outcomes, reduces gender inequities, supports democracy, fosters tolerance, and promotes political engagement and environmental awareness (Garin et al., 2016; Unesco, 2014).

Therefore, providing education to migrant children is increasingly critical, especially with anticipated future increases in migration. This briefing emphasizes the importance of education for migrants and their host countries, discusses trends in primary education for migrant groups, and explores how this education impacts SDG achievement, particularly regarding vulnerable children. It also addresses significant challenges, particularly concerning integration into education systems and the quality of education provided (Nicolai et al., 2017). One of the most vulnerable groups affected by this issue is children, who are at a critical stage of growth and development that necessitates proper attention to education as long as nutrition. Inadequate nutritional intake during this period can result in health problems later in life. Unfortunately, many parents lack the knowledge and awareness necessary for understanding nutrition, often due to various socio-economic factors, which hinders their ability to educate their children about appropriate dietary practices.(Sassi & Thakare, 2022) Additionally, school-aged children require formal education and cultural awareness to foster their sense of nationalism, helping them understand their identity and navigate different societal situations according to their capabilities (Afriliani et al., 2023; Saputro et al., 2020). Malaysia is a significant destination for Indonesian migrant workers, primarily employed as manual laborers. Many Indonesians migrate for over a decade to secure

their livelihoods. This influx has led to various issues, particularly concerning the education of migrant workers' children. A notable concern is the limited access to education for children of Indonesian migrant workers (PMI) in Malaysia, highlighting ongoing gaps in enforcing their right to education.(Udhwalalita & Hakim, 2023) Consequently, they often enroll in alternative educational institutions, such as Sanggar Bimbingan, a learning center program established by the Education Attaché of the Indonesian Embassy in Malaysia since 2019 (Nur Azizah et al., 2023).

However, literacy issues remain a significant concern for this migrant population, particularly regarding health and cultural literacy. Access to healthcare for these individuals has consistently been challenging due to factors such as language barriers, financial limitations, and mobility restrictions, which are often cited as major obstacles. These families frequently encounter cultural, economic, and environmental challenges that can affect their dietary habits and overall health (Ng, 2022; Trisofirin et al., 2023). One of the initiatives undertaken by the Indonesian community in Malaysia is the establishment of a Sanggar Bimbingan, which serves as a non-formal school affiliated with the Indonesian School Kuala Lumpur (SIKL).(Darmono et al., 2023; Nur Azizah et al., 2023) Graduates receive diplomas recognized by the Indonesian government. This is crucial because when the children of migrant workers lack educational opportunities, it leads to an increasing number of Indonesians in Malaysia taking on manual labor jobs, with many reluctant to return home due to the perception that salaries in Malaysia are more favorable. In response, the embassy has collaborated with Indonesian communities to establish several guidance centers throughout Peninsular Malaysia (Hidayat et al., 2023; Notoprayitno, 2015). Health disparities among migrant workers are influenced by environmental and occupational factors, as well as barriers related to language, culture, documentation status, access to healthcare, and the political climate of the host country. Both local and international recommendations have been proposed to address the health status of migrant workers (Mucci et al., 2020).

Internationally, child growth is recognized as a key indicator of nutritional status and public health. Meanwhile, the nutritional status of toddlers serves as an important indicator reflecting both the economic conditions and health of a nation. Malnutrition significantly contributes to child morbidity and mortality.(UNICEF/WHO/WORLD BANK, 2021) Undernutrition remains a prevalent issue in developing countries, particularly in Indonesia, and this is also a challenge faced by Indonesian migrant children in Malaysia. Consequently, our team has identified this as a critical issue for intervention through the "Isi Piringku" program, recently promoted by the Indonesian government (Kemenkes, 2022; Kusuma et al., 2022). Furthermore, cultural issues are vital to the identity of children from Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia. Education and culture are interconnected and mutually reinforce each other in fostering cultural identity among students. According to data from the Indonesian Migrant Worker Protection Agency (BP2MI) in 2022, there are approximately 200,761 Indonesian migrant workers deployed across various continents, with Malaysia being the most common destination.(Badan Perlindungan Pekerja Migran Indonesia, 2023) Migrant workers in developing countries often take on dangerous, labor-intensive, and low-status jobs that local workers are reluctant to do. One of the government's roles is to ensure the health, safety, and protection of these workers, including their families (Arisman & Jaya, 2021).

To support the implementation of various policies, especially in education-related ones, our international volunteer team aims to conduct health and cultural

interventions for Indonesian migrant children in Malaysia, enhancing their literacy and education on these two essential aspects for their well-being through an integrated approach. We target the Sanggar Bimbingan Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur (SIKL), which are non-formal schools established by the Indonesian Embassy in Malaysia, to provide adequate education for children born to Indonesian migrant workers. We have initiated an intervention titled "Anak CERIA" consists of cultural education and health literacy for them.

ACTIVITY METHOD

This event is part of the International Volunteer Chapter's October activities, organized by Semangat Muda Indonesia Foundation (SMI). It took place from October 1 to 4, 2024, at the Sanggar Bimbingan Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur (SIKL) located in Ampang Jaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Various activities were conducted as a form of dedication from the volunteer team to Indonesian children abroad. The target group for this service activity included the children of Indonesian migrant workers attending SIKL Malaysia. Many of them come from families facing social and residency issues, highlighting the need for intervention. A total of 13 volunteers, from diverse backgrounds and professions, carried out the intervention. Preparations began a month before the event, covering idea conceptualization, pre-departure planning, intervention, and post-activity follow-up. The timeline of activities is presented in the following image.



Figure 1. Timeline project

The activities were conducted using an integrated learning approach, focusing on health education and cultural introduction. Education was delivered using instructional materials based on the nutritional intervention guide "Isi Piringku" from the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia. The team combined this with an introduction to local foods and iconic Indonesian culture, utilizing flashcards we created. These flashcards served as educational tools divided into three sections based on Indonesian time zones: Western Indonesia Time, Central Indonesia Time, and Eastern Indonesia Time, making it easier for the children to manage and absorb the information presented. At the end of the session, an evaluation was conducted using the "wall of emotions" to express the feelings of Indonesian migrant children after participating in the activities. The sessions were facilitated by the volunteer team, who acted as mentors for each group during the small working group discussions.

The main focus of this community service project is the children of Indonesian migrant workers (PMI) in Malaysia, as part of the InVol Youth.id program conducted from October 1-4, 2024. The initiative aims to enhance their nutritional health by

introducing the "Isi Piringku" concept, led by the International Volunteer Chapter of Semangat Muda Indonesia (SMI) in October. The volunteer team also hosted interactive sessions where the children learned about balanced nutrition, explored Indonesian culture through nutritious local foods, and had their nutritional status evaluated for further analysis. After the program, a meeting with the school will be arranged to ensure the ongoing implementation of the educational content provided during the community service activities. The community service activities are outlined in the following stages:

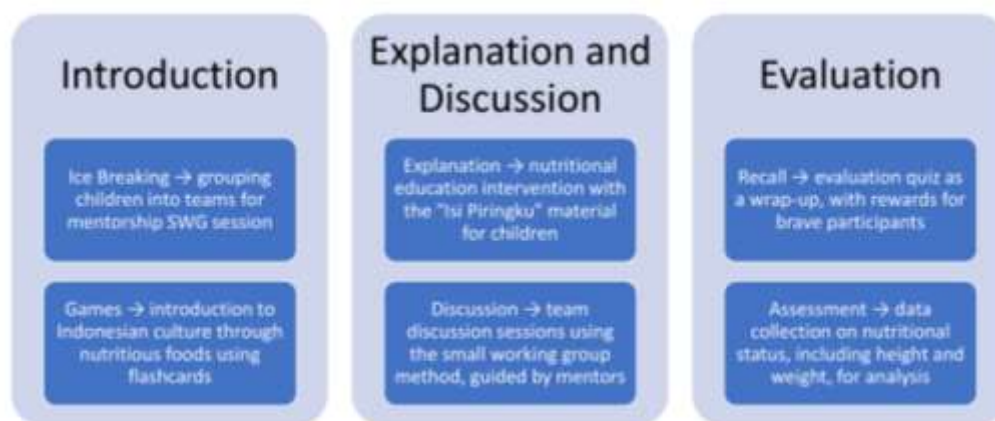


Figure 2. Project design.

The outcome of this community service activity is for the children of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia to understand the importance of balanced nutrition that has been conveyed (short-term). It is also expected that, in the long run, the children's nutritional status will improve, leading to the creation of an exceptional generation for the Indonesian nation. The children were also able to learn about Indonesia's national culture, particularly iconic landmarks from various regions, time zones, local specialties, and Indonesia's flora and fauna. This knowledge aimed to enhance their sense of nationalism and belonging as Indonesians, even while living abroad in Malaysia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The initial activity of this community service program involved introducing the volunteer team to the children at the Sanggar Bimbingan in SIKL. This event was also attended by the teachers who facilitated the classes. The data collected revealed a total of 41 children from grades 1 to 3, with a balanced distribution between boys and girls. The data regarding the number of students and their gender is presented in the table below:

Table 1.
Respondent data of students in grades 1-3 at the
SIKL Learning Center in Malaysia

No	Gender	Frequency	Percentages (%)
1	Male	21	51,22
2	Female	20	48,78
	Total	41	100

Based on the data collected, a total of 41 children participated in the community service program, comprising 21 boys and 20 girls. All these children are from grades 1

to 3 at the Sanggar Bimbingan SIKL Malaysia, who attended the International Volunteer community service activities organized by SMI. Legally, these young individuals lack citizenship and do not have official residency status. Even though their parents are legally married, these children are often regarded as illegitimate. The regularization process assists many of them in obtaining citizenship. However, what about the education of children of Indonesian migrant workers (TKI)? The Malaysian education system essentially provides opportunities for these children to receive an education. However, many of them are unable to afford the fees imposed by local educational institutions (Yulianto et al., 2023).

The activities continued with group formation using the "time zone" method in Indonesia, which includes WIB, WITA, and WIT, resulting in three groups of PMI children. In these groups, the children were accompanied by mentors from the volunteer team, who served as extensions of education and facilitators for the small working group sessions. Small-group discussions are a teaching approach where three to five students collaborate in interactive, learning-focused activities. Unlike traditional passive instruction, these discussions promote active participation, characterized by open dialogue, critical thinking, problem-solving, and real-world application of knowledge. This adaptable method is suitable for various educational contexts (Alaagib et al., 2019; Parsons & Branagan, 2021). In this session, the children were taught about Indonesia through island map puzzles and flashcards featuring historical landmarks and traditional foods from each time zone. As Azizah et al did before, this activity employs the foster sister method, which focuses on enhancing reading, writing, and arithmetic skills to improve the quality of human resources, particularly in education and culture.

This literacy training aims to elevate living standards by providing children with access to knowledge in education, technology, and information. As a result of this initiative, there was a notable improvement in the reading, writing, and arithmetic abilities of children from WMI descent living in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (Azizah et al., 2024). At the beginning of the session, the mentors explained the puzzles and flashcards before introducing them to the children. At the end of the small working group session, the children were evaluated by being asked to guess the images on the flashcards and assemble the puzzles.

This group discussion method was well-received by the students, as evidenced by their enthusiasm throughout the activities. Similar to a study by Rusjdi et al., which used games as an intervention and showed an increase in knowledge levels before and after the intervention among elementary students in Pariaman, Fadhila et al. also reported that educational interventions using puzzles enhanced students' understanding of the material being taught (Fadhillah et al., 2024; Rusjdi et al., 2024). Documentation of the group learning activities is presented in the following images, showcasing the vibrant engagement and collaborative spirit of the participants (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Cultural education sessions through small group discussions

In addition to these activities, participants received valuable interventions focused on establishing healthy and nutritious eating patterns following the “Isi Piringku” guidelines set forth by the Indonesian Ministry of Health.(Kemenkes, 2022) This intervention serves as an integral component of a broader initiative aimed at promoting healthy lifestyles among Indonesian migrant children who are currently studying at SIKL Malaysia. As part of this program, nutritional status assessments were conducted for the children, providing important insights into their dietary habits and overall health. The educational sessions were designed using a two-way interactive approach, allowing for dynamic discussions and a question-and-answer segment at the end of each session, which encouraged deeper understanding and engagement.

The children demonstrated remarkable enthusiasm and participation throughout the activities, actively contributing to discussions and eagerly absorbing the information presented. To further motivate the participants, the team prepared some rewards for those who displayed the courage to present their thoughts and experiences, effectively boosting their confidence and encouraging peer interaction. The rewards were chosen as non-food items to ensure they would be accepted and used effectively by the children. This decision took into account the possibility of allergies or dietary restrictions that the children might have, as well as the concerns about excessive sugar or calories often found in snacks and food items. Given these considerations, the team agreed to prepare gifts in the form of non-edible items, which not only mitigates health risks but also provides meaningful rewards that the children can enjoy and utilize in their daily lives (Shwed et al., 2023). Moreover, previous studies, such as those conducted by Rahmaddiansyah et al. in elementary schools, lend strong support to the positive outcomes observed in this initiative. These studies highlighted the effectiveness of educational interventions aimed at enhancing students' understanding of healthy snacks and balanced nutrition, with participants responding very positively to the content. This action influencing the childrens (Rahmaddiansyah, Nurmiati, Rusti, et al., 2023). This acquired knowledge equips children with the tools they need to incorporate healthy nutrition into their daily lives, as well as to understand appropriate portion sizes based on their age, in alignment with the recommendations provided by the Ministry of Health.(Rahmaddiansyah, Nurmiati, & Rusti, 2023; Rahmaddiansyah, Nurmiati, Rusti, et al., 2023; Syarifuddin et al., 2022) This activity is essential because nutritional status is a key determinant of quality of life, especially for children. According to Kumar et al. (2017), malnutrition poses the greatest threat to the global disease burden. The nutrition of elementary school children is vital for their physical and mental development, as highlighted by Yankanchi et al (Kumar et al., 2017; Yankanchi et al., 2018). Documentation of the educational activities using interactive plates is presented in the following images.



Figure 4. Nutritional education through Isi Piringku method.

Furthermore, future research needs to consider incorporating interventions aimed at parents, empowering them to actively support their children's nutritional needs. By providing educational resources and guidance through similar activities, parents can play a crucial role in fostering healthy eating habits and ensuring that their children receive the necessary nutrients for their growth and development (Rahmaddiansyah, Nurmiati, Rita, et al., 2023).

At the end of the activities, the children were guided to learn traditional dances from various regions of Indonesia, corresponding to the time zones: WIB featured the Tor-Tor dance from Medan, WITA included the Lulo dance from Kendari, and the WIT group performed the Apuse dance from Papua. As study from Daryanti et al demonstrates that teaching traditional dance through peer tutoring models can effectively foster character development in children. By collaborating with their peers, children not only learn dance skills but also cultivate values such as teamwork, respect, and discipline. This approach helps enhance their social interactions and boosts their confidence, contributing to their overall personal growth.(Daryanti & Jazuli, 2019) The Indonesian migrant children showcased their dances after the session, as illustrated in the following images.



Figure 5. Cultural performance session featuring traditional dances by Indonesian migrant children

At the end of the session, we also gathered the children's feelings through a wall of emotions, serving as feedback on their experiences during the activities. Below is the documentation of the wall of emotions.



CONCLUSION

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