



Effectiveness of the Youth Entrepreneurship and Employment Services (YESS) Program in Enhancing Entrepreneurship Among Millennial Farmers in Maros Regency

Nurjannah Fachruddin¹, Sangkala¹

¹Master's Program in Public Administration, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Hasanuddin University, Indonesia

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of the Youth Entrepreneurship and Employment Services (YESS) Program in enhancing entrepreneurship among millennial farmers in Maros Regency, using the indicators proposed by Steers regarding program effectiveness, which include goal achievement and adaptation. The problem of low farmer regeneration amid the vast agricultural land available to young farmers is an issue that needs to be addressed in Maros Regency through the development of farming interest within the YESS Program, which encompasses several planned activities. This study employs a qualitative method by examining in depth the implementation of the YESS Program, involving multiple stakeholders such as the DIT Maros Team from the Agriculture and Food Security Office, the PPIU Polbangtan Gowa, Mobilizers, Millennial Farmers, and several external companies and institutions collaborating in the program's implementation. The findings reveal that the YESS Program is sufficiently effective in addressing labor force issues and capable of promoting the formation of new entrepreneurs as well as enhancing entrepreneurship among millennial farmers. However, in practice, notable shortcomings were identified concerning human resources (beneficiaries/millennial farmers) who are inconsistent in managing grant funds, and the unstable motivation of young farmers to continue farming. Therefore, business continuity integration and proper supervision of grant fund management are still required. The high participation of young farmers needs to be followed up by the regional government in formulating policies that can enhance farmer entrepreneurship, thereby absorbing labor and increasing farmers' income.

Keywords: Program Effectiveness, YESS, Entrepreneurship, Millennial Farmers

Introduction

The Youth Entrepreneurship and Employment Services (YESS) Program aims to produce young rural entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector and to develop a competent agricultural workforce. As such, the primary target participants or beneficiaries of this program are millennial farmers aged between 19 and 39 years, in accordance with the criteria established by the program. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) facilitates the funding of the YESS Program's implementation at the Ministry of Agriculture through the Agency for Agricultural Extension and Human Resources Development (BPPSDMP).

Indonesia's economic and social development has created new economic opportunities for rural youth: (a) increased demand for food diversity and changes in food systems; (b) improved technological connectivity to remote areas across the archipelago; (c) greater private sector engagement in agriculture; and (d) increasing migrant remittances, providing untapped investment potential in rural areas (Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

The demographic dividend, which has long been highlighted in relation to the large number of Indonesian youth, can serve as a positive driver of development when accompanied by adequate labor absorption. Labor plays two interrelated roles in the development process. First, labor serves as a factor of production, meaning it constitutes a valuable capital resource for driving the wheels of development, particularly in realizing a prosperous society free from poverty. The second role is that labor represents the culmination of all productive activities, namely as consumers whose income derives from those productive activities. Labor is not merely an individual matter but rather a collective social phenomenon in which overall welfare is influenced by the state of the labor sector in a given region.

The YESS Program serves as a vehicle for youth labor absorption by encouraging youth interest in agricultural development through training and entrepreneurship. The YESS Program has been in operation from 2019 to 2025. Despite challenges posed by the unfavorable image of the agricultural sector among young people, the regional government of Maros Regency, as one of the implementing regions of the YESS Program, continues to address this by providing support and creating attractive business opportunities for youth. Through these various efforts, Maros Regency hopes to cultivate a generation of innovative and productive millennial farmers capable of advancing the agricultural sector in the regency.

As a relatively new program, it is necessary to evaluate the level of success or the quality of achievement of the program's objectives. This can be analyzed through program effectiveness. In public policy, effectiveness is an important parameter for assessing the success of government program implementation. A program is considered effective when the results achieved are aligned with the targets that have been formulated, and when it delivers positive impacts for the community as the beneficiaries.

Program effectiveness serves as a benchmark for the success of program implementation. Program effectiveness can be defined as the degree to which program objectives have been realized, reflecting the extent to which the

established program targets have been met (Julia, 2010: 26). It can be understood that effectiveness is a standard for comparing the process undertaken against the goals and targets achieved. A program is said to be effective when the actions or efforts carried out correspond to the expected results. Effectiveness is used as a yardstick to compare the plan and process conducted against the results achieved. The attainment of effectiveness signals that appropriate activities have been carried out.

The effectiveness of the YESS Program can be measured through several indicators proposed by Richard M. Steers, namely: Goal Achievement, Program Integration, and Adaptation of the Program to Its Environment. Given that the YESS Program has involved numerous stakeholders and actors, has undergone a lengthy implementation process, and has involved substantial funding, it is important to analyze the program's effectiveness. Through the aforementioned indicators, it is expected that the quality and success of the program can be explained.

Several prior studies related to the YESS Program have focused solely on the activities carried out during the program's implementation. Some previous studies focused only on the activities performed by farmers without substantially examining the role of the implementing parties, namely the government—in this case, the Agriculture and Food Security Office—and the PPIU (Provincial Project Implementation Unit) as the provincial project manager. The involvement of multiple actors makes it necessary to examine in greater depth the effectiveness of program goal achievement.

This study seeks to conduct an in-depth analysis of program goal achievement in addressing the issue of millennial farmer regeneration and in enhancing millennial farmer entrepreneurship. Specifically, this study examines the interactions that emerged during program implementation among various program actors, thereby enabling an assessment of program effectiveness indicators. In addition, this study examines the effectiveness of the YESS Program in Maros Regency based on program activity data.

Materials And Methods

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design using a case study approach to understand the complex dynamics and roles of the actors involved in the YESS Program in Maros Regency. The case study approach was selected because this study aims to understand the effectiveness of the YESS Program's implementation in enhancing millennial farmer entrepreneurship. The study was conducted in Maros Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. This location was selected due to the large number of young people in Maros Regency and the potential for agricultural development, both in terms of land utilization and agricultural technology.

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis. Interviews involved various informants who directly participated in the YESS Program, including the Agricultural Development Polytechnic (Polbangtan) Gowa as the Provincial Project Implementation Unit (PPIU) of the YESS Program for South Sulawesi Province, the YESS DIT Team, the Agriculture and Food Security Office of Maros Regency, Program Mobilizers, and Millennial Farmers/Beneficiaries.

The interviews explored several themes related to the YESS Program, including the roles of actors, goal achievement, integration, and adaptation. The semi-structured interview technique allowed informants to elaborate on their experiences and perceptions in detail, while simultaneously enabling the researcher to explore governance dynamics more deeply.

Field observations were conducted to observe ongoing program activities, farmer meetings, and administrative procedures within the YESS Program. Document studies encompassed the analysis of policy regulations, final activity documents, and organizational documents related to the program. Data analysis employed case study reduction, thematic coding, categorization, and interpretive synthesis. The analytical process focused on identifying programs that had been implemented and the implementation dynamics that emerged within them. Findings were interpreted through data presentation in the form of narratives and tables to facilitate the presentation of results.

To ensure credibility and validity, this study applied triangulation through cross-checking of interview data, observation, and documentary findings. Member checking was conducted with selected participants to confirm interpretive consistency and research accuracy. Ethical principles encompassing confidentiality, informed consent, and voluntariness of participation were upheld throughout the research process.

3. Results and Discussion

Goal Achievement

The research findings indicate that the goals of the YESS Program were achieved. The objective of producing young rural entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector was attained with the presence of 7,802 activity beneficiary participants from 14 sub-districts in Maros Regency. The ultimate target of producing a competent agricultural workforce was also realized.

The physical implementation of the YESS (Youth Entrepreneurship and Employment Support Services) Program activities in Maros Regency encompasses a range of activities aimed at fostering young entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector and preparing a skilled workforce. The program focuses on four main components: rural youth transition to employment, rural youth entrepreneurship, investment for rural youth, and a supportive environment for rural youth.

Training and internships: Provision of production, financial, and marketing training to youth, as well as internship opportunities in various agriculture-related fields. With regard to training activities, Business Motivation Pathway (BMP) workshops were facilitated for 3,810 participants. Start-Up Training was provided to 1,750 participants, Financial Literacy Training to 1,500 participants, and Business Proposal Training to 1,950 participants. The total number of beneficiary participants facilitated by the YESS Program in Maros Regency reached 7,802 individuals.

(male: 42%; female: 58%). With regard to the internship program, 76 beneficiaries were facilitated to participate in internships at various locations, both within and outside the province and abroad, including: Balitsereal Maros Regency (Corn Cultivation), D'Reppa Gowa Regency (Cattle Farming), P4S Asamayama Camba Maros Regency (Horticultural Crops), P4S Matahari Jeneponto Regency (Organic Crop Cultivation), P4S Lampoko Bone Regency (Vegetable Crops), PT. Bintang Sejahtera Bersama Barru Regency (Broiler Chicken Farming), PT. Sanggar Bintang Farm Maros Regency (Layer Chicken Farming), UPT Coffee Banyorang Bantaeng Regency, PT NAI Bone Regency (Agricultural Machinery), Merauke Regency—Papua Province (Food Brigade), and Yuzhiguo Farm, South Korea.

The availability of training and internship programs tailored to farmers' needs serves as an indicator of the seriousness of the Maros DIT Team in implementing the YESS Program. Based on the study, farmers expressed satisfaction with the training programs provided, as they were aligned with their specific needs; for example, livestock farmers were grouped together and received specialized training in animal husbandry.

The enhancement of entrepreneurship, which is the primary objective of the YESS Program, has been demonstrated to have increased among millennial farmers, particularly among program beneficiaries. Data show an increase in the income of millennial farmers participating in YESS. Specifically, 78% of participants, or 2,794 YESS beneficiaries, reported an increase in income. Income stagnation was recorded at 12%, while those experiencing a decline in income accounted for 14%. These data are consistent with the statements of millennial farmer beneficiaries who reported significant income increases following the YESS Program.

The developmental objective of the program—namely, income improvement through entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector—has been achieved through the series of program activities and the outputs generated both during and after the program's conclusion.

The achievement of program goals must be accompanied by business sustainability on the part of the beneficiaries. Training is not merely about enhancing business skills—it is about building a culture of sustainability. By equipping rural entrepreneurs with the right knowledge, we can ensure business growth that benefits both people and the environment. Investment in education and sustainable practices is a step toward a strong and self-reliant village economy (Avenue Foundation, 2026). Program participants are known to have continued operating their businesses after the program ended and to have applied much of the knowledge gained from the training they received.

Integration

The integration indicator in the YESS Program is used to assess the level of coordination and synergy among the involved stakeholders. According to Steers (1985) in Saputra and Widiyarta (2021), effective integration among work units and external parties is an important element of program effectiveness. In this context, integration is analyzed through internal, external, and vertical integration.

The research findings indicate that internal integration at the Agriculture and Food Security Office and the District Implementation Team (DIT) produced favorable results. This is evidenced by the issuance of a Maros Regent's Decree as a form of program legitimacy, as well as inter-agency cooperation involving the Cooperative and Trade Office, which enabled the formation of networks and the expansion of market access for beneficiaries. The cooperation among regional government units in Maros Regency has become increasingly synergized in supporting the success and sustainability of the program.

Inter-unit integration was also evident from interviews and field observations; the Provincial Implementation Team, in this case Polbangtan Gowa, actively and directly participated in the regular mentoring and supervision of program activities. Mobilizers and facilitators assigned as companions to millennial farmers provided active cooperation throughout the program's duration. This was also confirmed by several millennial farmer beneficiaries.

External integration was also reported to be sufficiently good, as evidenced by cooperation with several companies and institutions for internship activities. The external companies and institutions involved include: Balitsereal Maros Regency (Corn Cultivation), D'Reppa Gowa Regency (Cattle Farming), P4S Asamayama Camba Maros Regency (Horticultural Crops), P4S Matahari Jeneponto Regency (Organic Crop Cultivation), P4S Lampoko Bone Regency (Vegetable Crops), PT. Bintang Sejahtera Bersama Barru Regency (Broiler Chicken Farming), PT. Sanggar Bintang Farm Maros Regency (Layer Chicken Farming), UPT Coffee Banyorang Bantaeng Regency, PT NAI Bone Regency (Agricultural Machinery), Merauke Regency—Papua Province (Food Brigade), and Yuzhiguo Farm, South Korea. The cooperation with external parties demonstrates the YESS Program's commitment to enhancing the capacity of beneficiaries in improving individual knowledge and capabilities.

Overall, based on this study, the integration carried out under the YESS Program is classified as good and supports program effectiveness. The synergy among stakeholders further strengthens program legitimacy, expands cooperation networks and market access for beneficiaries, and simultaneously promotes the sustainability of the implemented program.

Adaptation

Adaptation refers to the process of self-adjustment undertaken by individuals to align themselves with changes in their environment. It encompasses several factors, including development as well as facilities and infrastructure. The adaptation indicator in the YESS Program demonstrates the program's capacity to facilitate program participants—namely, millennial farmers—in enhancing their capacity, cultivating an entrepreneurial spirit, and fostering interest in entrepreneurship within the agricultural sector.

Based on interview and observational findings, the YESS Program was able to provide training and internship opportunities tailored to the needs of each participant in accordance with their preferred agricultural field. Various training venues were made available and utilized, with intensive training in financial literacy also provided.

The YESS Program also administered competitive grants as a space for millennial farmer entrepreneurs seeking to develop their businesses. Through this funding mechanism, several millennial farmers were able to develop and expand their businesses. A total of 126 millennial farmers received competitive grants ranging from IDR 9,700,000 to IDR 190,000,000. In addition, the program was able to provide assistance to beneficiaries in successfully accessing business capital funding from several banking institutions without the need for collateral. The researcher's findings in this area of adaptation reveal a positive trend during program implementation, which declined toward the end of the program activities. Several findings indicated that some competitive grant recipients were oriented toward obtaining the funding without subsequently continuing or developing their businesses in accordance with the initial procurement proposal. This reflects inconsistency among millennial farmers in continuing the program.

4. Conclusion

Based on the research findings, the YESS Program in Maros Regency demonstrates an improvement in millennial farmer entrepreneurship, and thus the program is assessed as effective. This conclusion is grounded in the review of the indicators proposed by Steers, which reveal the program's capacity for goal achievement—namely, producing young rural entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector and a competent agricultural workforce—as well as the developmental objective of the program, which is income improvement through entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector, both of which showed positive results. The integration indicator also demonstrated a robust integration network, encompassing inter-stakeholder integration, millennial farmers, and integration with external companies and institutions. The adaptation implemented by the program was also able to meet the needs of beneficiaries in enhancing their entrepreneurship and business income. As a relatively new program, it is not without several challenges concerning business sustainability and the consistency of beneficiaries in utilizing the funds received.

The role of the regional government in reviewing and reintroducing this program as a renewed initiative capable of addressing various socioeconomic problems faced by the community of Maros Regency is of paramount importance. This is supported by significant data indicating an increase in the number of farming enterprises, labor absorption, and income growth. Future research is expected to provide an explanation of the program's long-term impacts through a more comprehensive approach, given the forthcoming implementation of YESS Phase Two by the Ministry of Agriculture

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