



COLLABORATION ON ROSE PLANTING AT THE PHASE 5 COMMUNITY GARDEN, TAMAN MAWAR PASIR GUDANG, JOHOR, MALAYSIA

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Abstract: The rapid development of modern urban areas often leads to the reduction of productive green spaces, thereby necessitating collaborative efforts to manage limited land sustainably. This international community service initiative represents a synergy between Universitas Riau Kepulauan, UiTM MARA Johor, and the Phase 5 Pasir Gudang Community in promoting ecological awareness through rose planting in a community garden. The main objective of this activity is to enhance the capacity of both community members and academics in managing productive green spaces through cross-national knowledge sharing. The implementation methodology includes workshops, technical field training, collective planting, and joint reflection sessions conducted over two days. The results indicate improved community skills in rose cultivation, the establishment of collaborative networks among universities and communities, and the growth of collective awareness of the importance of sustainable urban environmental management.

Keywords; international collaboration, community service, community garden, green space, rose cultivation, environmental sustainability

INTRODUCTION

Community service represents one of the three core pillars of higher education (*Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi*), alongside education and research (Kemenristekdikti, 2017). Through community engagement, universities can foster stronger relationships with society while providing tangible solutions to social, cultural, and environmental challenges (Suharto, 2020). In the era of globalization, community service initiatives have evolved beyond local partnerships to include international collaborations that broaden academic horizons and strengthen transnational networks (Altbach & Knight, 2007). The program titled “International Collaboration on Rose Planting at the Community Garden of Fasa 5, Pasir Gudang, Johor, Malaysia” exemplifies such an initiative. This program involved three main parties: Universitas Riau Kepulauan (Indonesia), UiTM MARA Johor (Malaysia), and the Community of Fasa 5 Pasir Gudang (Johor, Malaysia). The collaboration went beyond symbolic flower planting; it embodied a synergy between academic institutions and



the local community in fostering ecological awareness, strengthening cross-border social ties, and generating direct environmental benefits (Tilbury & Wortman, 2004).

International Collaboration: Universities and the Community

Universitas Riau Kepulauan, as a higher education institution in Indonesia, envisions expanding its role at both regional and international levels. Through cross-border community service, the university not only extends its academic reach but also reaffirms its commitment to supporting sustainable development (UNESCO, 2020). Similarly, UiTM MARA Johor, renowned for its strong academic networks in Malaysia, consistently emphasizes the importance of student and faculty engagement in community-based activities (Idris et al., 2018). The joint participation of both universities highlights the essential role of international collaboration as a platform for mutual learning, knowledge exchange, and regional solidarity (Knight, 2015).

The Significance of Rose Cultivation

The selection of roses as the focal point of the program was intentional. Roses are known for their aesthetic appeal, symbolism of affection, and economic value (Rahman & Hassan, 2019). Within a community context, rose cultivation enhances the beauty of communal spaces while offering new economic opportunities (Nurhayati & Azmi, 2022). For universities, it serves as a multidisciplinary learning medium encompassing biology, environmental studies, and creative economy perspectives. For the community, rose planting symbolizes active participation in environmental stewardship and strengthens social cohesion (Yuliani, 2021). This international collaboration demonstrates how universities and communities can mutually support each other within the framework of sustainable development (Sachs, 2015).

Regional Relevance: Indonesia–Malaysia Relations

Geographically and culturally, Indonesia and Malaysia share deep historical, linguistic, and cultural connections (Abdullah, 2017). The cross-border community service project in Pasir Gudang, Johor, represents a strategic effort to reinforce these regional ties. Universitas Riau Kepulauan, located in the Riau Archipelago—historically and geographically close to Malaysia—plays a key bridging role in this partnership. UiTM MARA Johor, with its strong academic foundation, serves as an equal collaborator in fostering academic and community synergy.

Contribution to the Tri Dharma and the SDGs



This initiative aligns with the global mission of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), Goal 13 (Climate Action), and Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) (United Nations, 2015). Planting roses in a public community garden represents a concrete step toward creating sustainable green spaces, enhancing environmental quality, and strengthening international collaboration. The program also offers valuable international exposure for academics and students while affirming the university's position as a globally oriented center of knowledge (Marginson, 2011).

Reaffirming the Meaning of Collaboration

In essence, the background of this community service initiative extends beyond the need for green spaces or the symbolic beauty of roses. It emphasizes the significance of international collaboration as an academic and social endeavor. The partnership among Universitas Riau Kepulauan, UiTM MARA Johor, and the Community of Fasa 5 Pasir Gudang exemplifies how knowledge, social practice, and environmental awareness can intertwine to generate sustainable impact (Holliday, 2019). This initiative stands as a replicable model of cross-border community engagement, particularly within the Southeast Asian regional context.

METHODOLOGY

This international community engagement project emphasized a knowledge-sharing-based collaboration among Universitas Riau Kepulauan (Indonesia), UiTM MARA Johor (Malaysia), and the Community of Fasa 5 Pasir Gudang. The primary focus extended beyond the practical act of rose planting to the process of cross-national knowledge, experience, and skill exchange—ensuring that all parties gained academic, social, and practical benefits. The program was designed through a participatory approach, in which all partners were actively involved in every stage—from planning and implementation to joint evaluation. The program began with a workshop and interactive discussion session featuring speakers from both universities and representatives of the local community. Participants were introduced to the fundamentals of rose cultivation in limited urban spaces, including the selection of high-quality seeds, preparation of growing media, and maintenance techniques suited to urban environments. The session also explored social challenges in managing green spaces in urban areas. Through open dialogue, community members shared real-life experiences in managing community gardens, creating a two-way knowledge exchange between academics and local residents. The next stage consisted of hands-on technical training



conducted directly at the Community Garden of Fasa 5, Pasir Gudang. During this phase, lecturers and students from Universitas Riau Kepulauan and UiTM MARA guided the community in soil preparation, group planting techniques for roses, and basic practices in fertilization, watering, and pest control. This field activity ensured collaborative engagement from all participants while cultivating a sense of ownership and responsibility for the project outcomes.

Beyond the transfer of academic knowledge, the program emphasized the sharing of local wisdom from the Fasa 5 community. The residents shared insights on social dynamics, task distribution strategies, and effective methods of fostering community participation in garden maintenance. This local knowledge provided valuable learning for university participants, helping them understand the social and cultural contexts of the community, thus enabling a more adaptive and sustainable approach to community engagement. The culmination of the program was a collective rose-planting ceremony involving representatives from the universities and the community. This symbolic act represented a shared commitment to transforming limited urban spaces into productive and sustainable green areas, while reaffirming the significance of international collaboration across institutions. The event concluded with a reflection and evaluation session in which participants expressed their impressions, challenges, and follow-up plans. This session reinforced the understanding that collaboration through knowledge sharing is fundamental to sustaining community gardens and enhancing ecological awareness among urban populations.

Technically, the implementation was organized into three main stages: preparation, execution, and evaluation. The preparation stage involved cross-institutional coordination between Universitas Riau Kepulauan, UiTM MARA Johor, and the Community of Fasa 5 through both online and face-to-face meetings to develop the program concept, assign roles, and schedule activities. The joint team conducted a site survey to identify suitable planting areas and prepare necessary materials and equipment, including rose seedlings, soil media, organic fertilizers, and gardening tools.

The implementation stage encompassed the opening ceremony, workshop and group discussion, field training, and collective rose planting. The program was conducted over two days Thursday and Friday, 28–29 August 2025—at the Community Garden of Fasa 5, Pasir Gudang, Johor, Malaysia. The two-day duration was considered ideal to integrate theory, practice, and reflection in a comprehensive manner. Active participation and partner support were key factors



in the success of this initiative. The implementation team—composed of lecturers and students from both universities—facilitated the program, handled documentation, and prepared an evaluative report to support future program development. Meanwhile, the Community of Fasa 5, as the main partner, provided the garden site, actively participated in all activities, and served as the driving force in maintaining the garden’s sustainability. Additional support from UiTM MARA Cawangan Pasir Gudang and local community members further strengthened the collaborative dimension of the project, ensuring that this initiative was not only academic in nature but also deeply embedded within the social fabric of the community.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the international community engagement program at the Community Garden of Fasa 5, Pasir Gudang jointly organized by Universitas Riau Kepulauan (Indonesia), UiTM MARA Johor (Malaysia), and the local community—demonstrated the success of a knowledge-sharing-based collaborative model. The initiative was designed to emphasize inter-institutional collaboration and cross-cultural knowledge exchange, focusing not only on the practical aspect of rose planting but also on shared learning, field experience, and sociocultural understanding. This approach ensured that all participants—academics, students, and community members—gained simultaneous academic, practical, and social benefits, creating a holistic learning experience that bridged diverse backgrounds.

The initial stage of the program consisted of workshops and joint discussions that provided both theoretical and practical foundations for the participants. Speakers from both universities delivered material on the fundamentals of rose cultivation in limited spaces, the selection of high-quality seedlings, soil media preparation, and optimal maintenance techniques. The discussion sessions also addressed social challenges in managing urban gardens, including group organization, citizen participation, and strategies for ensuring long-term sustainability. Conducted in an interactive format, these sessions allowed community members to share real-life experiences in managing communal gardens. The two-way exchange of knowledge illustrated that collaboration was reciprocal: the universities gained contextual insights from the community, while the residents acquired applicable scientific knowledge to enhance their local practices.



Figure 1. Joint Discussion Session

After the workshop, the program continued with a hands-on technical training session. Faculty members and students from both universities assisted community members in soil preparation and media mixing, group-based rose planting, and the application of basic fertilization, watering, and pest control techniques. The field training was designed to ensure active participation from all participants—academics and community members alike. Observations indicated that this interaction enhanced participants' technical skills, strengthened teamwork abilities, and fostered a shared sense of responsibility. Through direct practice, participants were also able to understand the connection between theoretical knowledge of cultivation and its real-world application, making the learning experience more meaningful. Another important aspect of the activity was the exchange of local, experience-based knowledge, where members of the Fasa 5 Community shared their best practices in maintaining the community garden. They discussed strategies for work scheduling, community participation, and resolving internal conflicts that may arise. This locally grounded knowledge proved highly valuable for academics, as it offered insights into the social context and lived practices that are often absent from formal literature. Thus, the activity functioned not merely as a one-way transfer of knowledge but as a mutually beneficial process of collaborative learning.



Figure 2. Follow-up Discussion at the Community Garden

The highlight of the international community service activity was the collective planting of roses, symbolizing a shared commitment between the universities and the local community. All participants—including academics, students, and residents—took turns actively engaging in the planting process, demonstrating equality of roles and collective responsibility in managing the communal green space. This activity went beyond a symbolic gesture; it served as a platform to strengthen social values such as cooperation, solidarity, and intercultural unity. Through this shared endeavor, a sense of ownership toward the community garden was cultivated among all participants. The motivational impact of the activity was evident: community members became more encouraged to maintain the garden's sustainability, while academics and students gained valuable experiential learning through community-based contextual practice. Overall, the activity demonstrated that international collaboration can foster both ecological and social awareness, producing tangible benefits for all stakeholders involved.



Figure 3. Symbolic Rose Planting



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The final stage of the international community service project was dedicated to evaluation and joint reflection, providing an open space for all participants to express their impressions, challenges, and aspirations for future activities. Participants shared their experiences, difficulties encountered during the implementation, and ideas for improving subsequent programs. This reflective phase emphasized the principle of continuous learning, where practical experiences served as material for evaluating and enhancing the program's effectiveness in the future. The reflection process also reaffirmed that the success of such initiatives depends heavily on inter-institutional synergy, transparent communication, and the ability to adapt academic practices to local social contexts. From a technical perspective, the project began with systematic preparation, including inter-institutional coordination, site surveys, and the provision of necessary facilities and materials. Coordination meetings were conducted both online and offline to develop the program concept, assign responsibilities, and determine the implementation schedule. Site surveys helped the team identify suitable land for the activity, while the provision of essential facilities—such as high-quality rose seedlings, soil media, organic fertilizers, gardening tools, and workshop tents—was carried out collaboratively between the universities and the local community. These preparatory measures ensured the smooth execution of the activity while fostering a shared sense of responsibility among participants.

The project also highlighted effective management of cross-institutional collaboration. Universitas Riau Kepulauan contributed academic and methodological perspectives; UiTM MARA Johor provided local support, institutional legitimacy, and field facilitation; while the Fasa 5 Community brought practical experience and contextual knowledge. This collaboration produced a unique synergy in which academic theory and community practice complemented one another. Such a collaborative model demonstrates that international community service becomes more effective when grounded in equitable interaction and mutual respect for each stakeholder's contribution. Beyond its technical achievements, the activity also fostered social and cultural awareness. Participants learned to value local experience, understand community dynamics, and recognize the importance of collective participation. The symbolic rose planting reinforced the values of cooperation (*gotong royong*), solidarity, and shared responsibility. Moreover, it served as an informal educational activity for residents, introducing them to urban agriculture practices, the productive use of limited land, and sustainable garden management strategies. The social



impact of this initiative extended beyond individual benefits, strengthening social networks and cultivating environmental consciousness within the urban community.

The reflection process further revealed that a collaborative, knowledge-sharing approach effectively enhanced participants' capacities. Academics gained insights into the application of theoretical frameworks in real-world contexts; students developed practical skills and field management experience; and community members acquired techniques for rose cultivation, maintenance strategies, and cross-group teamwork experience. These outcomes align with Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory, in which concrete experience, observation, reflection, and knowledge application form a holistic and continuous learning process. Additionally, the program supported the development of socio-emotional competencies, including communication, teamwork, empathy, and leadership. Ice-breaking sessions and group fieldwork activities promoted social interaction, strengthened participants' confidence, and improved their adaptability when working with new peers. Active participation in collective activities nurtured responsibility, leadership, and decision-making skills, enabling participants to acquire essential non-technical competencies relevant to both academic and professional contexts.



Figure 4. Poster Display Highlighting the Benefits of the Community Garden

From an academic perspective, this international community service program demonstrates a meaningful integration between theory and practice. The combination of theoretical lectures on cultivation, participatory discussions, and hands-on fieldwork created a holistic learning experience. The collective rose-planting activity functioned as a real-world simulation of inter-institutional collaboration, where academic theories were applied within a local social context. This synergy reinforces the relevance of international community engagement initiatives in



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fostering scientific development, practical skills, and experiential learning among academics, students, and community members.

The activity also emphasized environmental awareness and sustainability. The cultivation of roses in limited urban space serves as an exemplary model for transforming narrow city areas into productive and aesthetic green zones. Direct mentoring by academics and students ensured that planting, fertilizing, and maintenance followed sustainable horticultural principles. The local community benefited from a more productive garden, enhanced technical knowledge, and strengthened cooperative practices. Psychologically, the program fostered a sense of pride, ownership, and long-term motivation among residents to maintain and nurture the community garden.

Furthermore, this initiative represents a replicable model of international collaboration. The synergy among universities from Indonesia and Malaysia, together with the Fasa 5 community, facilitated mutual exchange of knowledge, experience, and best practices. The model highlights that community service extends beyond one-way knowledge transfer; it embraces respect for local context, cross-cultural collaboration, and optimal resource utilization. The program's success provides a foundation for developing similar initiatives across other communities and international networks. The analysis reveals that the impacts of this activity are multidimensional. Academically, participants gained technical skills and applied field experience. Socially, the program strengthened participation, cooperation, and solidarity among residents. Culturally, both participants and community members learned to appreciate local wisdom and collective traditions. Practically, the rose garden stands as a tangible outcome of productive urban land use. These outcomes demonstrate a synergistic effect where individual and communal benefits reinforce each other.

Overall, the international community service project in Pasir Gudang illustrates that a collaborative, knowledge-sharing approach effectively enhances academic capacity, practical competence, and social awareness. The symbolic rose planting reaffirmed shared values of mutual cooperation, solidarity, and collective responsibility. This initiative also served as a holistic learning platform integrating theory, practice, and social engagement. Through this model, community service programs can provide sustainable benefits for universities, students, local communities, and international partnerships alike.



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