

Three Women & Their Pathways to Empowerment



The Gardener

The sun is halfway up when Yatini begins poking into the bushy ground. She loosens the soil, breaking it apart into uneven pieces. Clutching a few stems with her free hand, she deftly tugs the plant. Out pop some plump, brownish shells in fibrous strings, covered in dirt.

“The best time to harvest peanuts is right after the rain,” she declares. No stranger to the vagaries of Ketapang weather, after last night’s downpour Yatini arrives at the field well-prepared: full-length sleeves, a safari hat, and a basket that will soon brim with freshly picked peanuts.

Gardening is essential to Yatini’s life. She has planted many crops in her life—fruits, legumes, vegetables. But mainly, she’d

planted rice for a living, for more than a decade in Ambon, before moving with her husband to Simpang Tiga Sembelangaan, Ketapang, West Kalimantan. Four years on, as her husband works at an oil palm plantation, she alongside other women tend

a communal garden, where peanuts grow underground amid shrubs of kangkung, chilli, and cabbage.

In 2024 she and five other women decided to formalise their daily labour into a collective called Sumber Pangan—a source of sustenance.

The collective then made contact with Bumitama’s Dwi Suharyanto. He told them about Sekolah Desa Berdaya, an initiative the company rolled out with IDH to empower villagers and champion their economic inclusion through steady support and structured effort.

“**Unlike in Java or Ambon. Fertiliser alone isn’t enough. I’m glad Bumitama gives us plenty of training, so I’m confident we’ll learn how to tackle this.**”





“

Once we made an agreement [with Bumitama], within days we saw their promises delivered,” says Yatini. “They brought fertilisers, irrigation pumps, even built a road to our field.

”

Bumitama also buys Sumber Pangan’s produce to supply the company employees’ daily groceries. The proceeds allow Yatini’s group to purchase fertilisers—often an elusive commodity due to their prices—more regularly.

Moreover, their credit standing has improved. They secured low-interest financing from a state bank, which they used to set up a small stall to vend their produce.

Not all of Yatini’s crops have been as successful as the peanuts—at least not yet. She laments her chilli plants’ meagre yields. “Ketapang’s soil is tricky. It’s sandy,” she says. “Unlike in Java or Ambon. Fertiliser alone isn’t enough. I’m glad Bumitama gives us plenty of training, so I’m confident we’ll learn how to tackle this.”



The Educator

Karmila, a vocational schoolteacher from Kendawangan, shares Yatini's thirst for hands-on knowledge. Today, at the Brajang Training Centre in Bumitama's flagship biodiversity and community project—the BBCP—she joins a workshop on making traditional pineapple confections.

Even when today's topic lies outside her specialty—she teaches fishery—Karmila yearns to learn. "I'm just happy to broaden my horizons, especially when the knowledge is applicable in the community," she says cheerfully. "For sure the village women knew how to make jam. But dodol? I don't think so!" Halfway through the workshop, she is already imagining how to fold dodol-making into her entrepreneurship syllabus.

This is Karmila's second time joining a Sekolah Desa Berdaya workshop. Her first, on aquaculture, refreshed what she'd studied at university. What's more, it inspired her to encourage villagers to try freshwater fish farming. "It is an opportunity," she reasons. "People here mostly fish at sea; very few keep ponds."



By August 2025, Sekolah Desa Berdaya's Productive Economy stream has produced 293 graduates.

In 2024, before this Bumitama and IDH-led scheme, there were only 28 entrepreneurs in its coverage area. That figure has more than tripled. It would hardly be surprising if Karmila and her peers kickstart a new enterprise out of what they get from this workshop. Should they do so, they might need guidance from the more seasoned ones around.



“
I'm just happy to broaden my horizons, especially when the knowledge is applicable in the community.
— Ibu Karmila



The Entrepreneur

In 1992, Ibu Mimin and her family left their home in Garut, West Java, to embark upon a voyage they hoped would transform their lives. Their destination: a relatively undeveloped, sparsely populated hamlet deep in West Kalimantan's interior. In the three decades that followed, her family witnessed profound change take place there.

Unlike in big cities, change in Ketapang marched to a different beat. At first, they saw the earliest plots planted with oil palm seedlings by transmigrants from Java. "Then," Ibu Mimin recalls, "it felt as though one suddenly woke up surrounded by palm trees." The village found itself packed with plantation workers, its roads abuzz with activity. "I could not stand by idly. I had to take part in what was happening," Ibu Mimin confesses.

She looked around her for ideas. Bananas and cassava were so plentiful that much of them rotted post-harvest. She decided to slice them thin and make crisps out of them, placing the first bags in a friend's stall. It was 2001. Within the following year, her crisps won customers over. Word spread, her business boomed, she hired more workers. At one point, the crisps were sold in more than 50 stalls across Ketapang.

For all their irresistible tastiness, Ibu Mimin's crisps were not impervious to the cold logic of the business cycle. Her dependence on consignment sales eventually proved costly when the shops delayed paying her, even after the snacks had sold out. Some went as far as to default altogether. She refused to restock those shops. Her network of outlets shrank; the sales sank.

When in 2023 Bumitama reached out to her, the erstwhile pioneer's snack business was languishing, adrift in today's modern, hyperconnected marketplace. What marketing know-how she'd had no longer served her.

Participation in Sekolah Desa Berdaya gradually set her sales back on track. Through workshops, her business skills were honed and upgraded, her mindset opened. Counselling by Bumitama and IDH, she obtained legal standing for her venture, followed by the Home Industry Food Production Licence (PIRT) and, most recently, the Halal Certificate. With these credentials, and some connections facilitated by Bumitama, her snacks found their way into minimarkets and supermarkets in Ketapang proper, reaching as far as Pontianak.

Programme-wide, Sekolah Desa Berdaya's Productive Economy stream has lifted its participants' sales considerably.

Total revenue is projected to climb 66% year-on-year, from four to seven billion rupiah by end of 2025. Some of that will come from Ibu Mimin's snacks. Sales are steady: for banana crisps alone, she processes over 100 kg of the fruit a month.



“

Bumitama has revived my mother's flagging venture, and in doing so, her entrepreneurial spirit has returned,”

remarks Ilin, Ibu Mimin's son, now in charge of production. Mother and son look at each other, buoyed by the joy of growth, bracing for new challenges that upscaling may bring.

