

EMPOWERING YOUTH GENERATION TO BE SUSTAINABLE IN INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

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Abstract

This study highlights the urgent need to empower the youth generation to actively engage in the international community in addressing sustainability challenges. Issues such as climate change, social inequality, and food security require innovative solutions driven by young people. This community service initiative was designed to enhance youth participation through education, collaboration, and digital engagement. The program was conducted virtually via Zoom and involved participants from Sriwijaya University, Indonesia; Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Kazakhstan; and ENS Lyon, France. The primary objective of this initiative was to equip youth with essential skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for contributing to sustainable development. The methodology employed included online workshops, interactive discussions, and collaborative projects focusing on sustainability practices. During the implementation phase, participants engaged in knowledge-sharing sessions, case study analyses, and social media campaigns to promote awareness and collective action. The results indicated that youth empowerment through targeted training and cross-border collaboration significantly enhances their capacity to address global issues effectively. The program demonstrated the role of digital technology and international networking in fostering sustainable practices among young individuals. Future initiatives should expand to include more diverse participants and incorporate hands-on community projects to further strengthen youth contributions to global sustainability efforts.

INTRODUCTION

Community service is an important form of social responsibility in building and empowering communities. In the current era of globalization, the challenges faced by communities, especially in remote and less developed areas, are increasingly complex. Issues such as poverty, limited access to education, health, and natural resources, as well as the impacts of climate change, require concrete attention and action. Therefore, it is important for us to make community empowerment efforts that are not only local, but also take into account the international context (Kurniawan et al., 2023). Community service and youth empowerment are pivotal in addressing global challenges, as they foster active participation and responsibility among young individuals in societal development. Empowerment theory posits that enabling youth to engage in community initiatives enhances their capacity to effect sociopolitical change, thereby contributing to sustainable development (Jamatia, 2022).

The Empowering Communities to be Sustainable in International Community activity reflects the need to empower communities to adapt and survive amidst global challenges. Community empowerment is not only concerned with increasing individual capacity, but also includes strengthening social networks, sustainable resource management, and increasing community participation in decision-making (Sarjiyanto et al., 2022). The contemporary youth generation confronts multifaceted challenges, including climate change, social inequality, and food security. Empirical evidence indicates that young people are increasingly concerned about

environmental degradation and its long-term impacts (United Nations, 2015). Moreover, socioeconomic disparities have been shown to limit access to quality education and employment opportunities, exacerbating social inequality among youth (United Nations, 2019).

Based on research and observations, many communities still depend on natural resources without thinking about the long-term impacts. Empirical studies indicate that numerous communities in Indonesia continue to rely heavily on natural resource exploitation without adequate consideration for long-term environmental consequences. For instance, between 2001 and 2016, large-scale oil palm and timber plantations accounted for over 40% of nationwide deforestation, while small-scale agriculture and plantations contributed approximately 20% of forest loss. This extensive deforestation has led to significant environmental degradation, including biodiversity loss and increased greenhouse gas emissions (Austin et al., 2019). In East Kalimantan, coal mining activities have resulted in deforestation, overlapping land concessions with human settlements, and numerous safety risks due to inadequate regulatory oversight (Werner et al., 2024).

Today's society needs a better understanding of sustainable practices and the importance of preserving the environment. This need is especially urgent in the context of increasing environmental degradation, resource depletion, and the intensifying effects of climate change that directly affect community livelihoods, particularly in rural and coastal areas. For instance, data from Faliza et al (2024) highlight how communities in disaster-prone regions of Indonesia face challenges related to food security and water availability, underscoring the critical need for education and training in resource management, sustainable agriculture, and environmentally friendly technological innovations. At the same time, mental health challenges have escalated, particularly among Generation Z, with the Pew Research Center (2019) reporting higher levels of anxiety and depression than in previous generations. This trend is fueled by academic pressure, economic uncertainty, and the pervasive influence of social media. Such multifaceted issues call for comprehensive strategies that not only enhance environmental awareness and adaptive capacity but also address mental health through targeted support systems, resilience-building programs, and the promotion of holistic well-being.

The importance of community empowerment is to bring out local strengths so that the whole community has local knowledge, local wisdom, and strong social networks. These are valuable assets that can be utilized to find innovative solutions to local problems. Then, by ensuring direct community involvement in the planning and program implementation process, we can ensure that the solutions are relevant and sustainable. And finally, strengthening community capacity and equipping them with the knowledge, skills and access to resources needed to achieve sustainability goals (Fitriani et al., 2024).

Empowering communities in a sustainable manner presents several significant challenges. One of the primary issues is the lack of access to essential resources, particularly for communities in remote areas (Rainboth, 2023). These communities often struggle with limited access to technology, reliable information, and adequate financial support, all of which are crucial for fostering sustainable development. Without these resources, it becomes difficult for them to engage in initiatives that promote long-term social, economic, and environmental well-being. Another major challenge is the lack of knowledge and skills in the field of sustainability. Many communities are not equipped with the necessary understanding of sustainable practices, innovative solutions, and environmental stewardship, which hinders their ability to take effective and informed action. This knowledge gap prevents them from adopting sustainable strategies that could improve their livelihoods and contribute to broader sustainability goals (Franco & Tracey, 2019).

Additionally, weak institutional structures and low levels of community participation in decision-making further complicate the process of sustainable empowerment. In many cases, local institutions lack the capacity, governance, or coordination needed to implement sustainable programs effectively. Moreover, when communities are not actively involved in shaping policies and decisions that directly impact their lives, there is a risk that these initiatives may not align with their actual needs or priorities. As a result, efforts to achieve sustainable community empowerment often face systemic obstacles that require comprehensive and inclusive solutions (Sururi et al., 2022).

The targets in this activity are the younger generation and college students who are undergoing the lecture period. Through this activity, it is hoped that synergies will be created between local knowledge and international best practices, which can strengthen the independence and competitiveness of students so that they are ready to become a community that can survive when entering the world of work (Panneer et al., 2024). This activity also aims to raise students' awareness of the importance of sustainability and environmental preservation, and facilitate access to resources needed to achieve these goals. There is a great opportunity to develop community empowerment programs based on sustainability principles. Through collaboration between various stakeholders, including government agencies, non-government organizations, and the private sector, we can create innovative and sustainable solutions. These programs will not only assist communities in overcoming existing challenges, but also increase their involvement in decision-making relating to their future (Abo-Khalil, 2024).

One of the activities of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education (Community Service) can expand understanding and knowledge in the field of community empowerment, especially in creating a sustainable society in order to achieve SDGs targets. In addition, this activity will provide insight for the development and improvement of skills for the younger generation and college students who are pursuing their studies and enter the community. So that the problem in this activity is how to become a sustainable society at the international level and be able to achieve the specified SDGs targets.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

The method used in this Community Service activity is the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach which is oriented towards community empowerment. Because empowerment must always meet the needs and solve problems that exist in the community. In addition, PAR is also oriented towards the development and mobilization of knowledge in the community so that the community can become actors of change, not objects of service. This community service initiative was conducted online via the Zoom Meeting platform in November 2024. The primary objective of this activity was to develop human resources, particularly within the community, to enable them to adopt sustainable practices and remain competitive in the international arena. A total of 47 participants were involved in this initiative, 35 youth participants from Universitas Sriwijaya, 11 from Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, and one from ENS Lyon, all of whom were selected based on their interest in acquiring skills and knowledge essential for sustainable living on a global scale. The implementation of this community service activity followed a structured process comprising three main phases: counseling, training, and practical application.

The first phase, counseling, focused on enhancing participants' understanding of sustainability concepts, including both the opportunities and challenges associated with sustainable living. Expert speakers delivered materials that emphasized the importance of creativity and innovation in achieving sustainability on an international scale. Participants were encouraged to engage in discussions to deepen their comprehension of these topics and to reflect on how they could apply them in their personal and professional lives.

Following the counseling sessions, the second phase, training, was conducted to equip participants with the necessary skills and knowledge required to implement sustainable practices effectively. This training included hands-on workshops on leveraging technology to support sustainable living, such as digital tools for environmental monitoring, renewable energy applications, and innovative solutions for waste management. The interactive nature of these sessions ensured that participants not only received theoretical knowledge but also gained practical insights into real-world applications. The final phase, practical application, provided participants with an opportunity to apply the skills they had acquired in a controlled environment. This phase involved simulations and case studies where participants worked collaboratively to develop sustainable strategies that could be implemented within their respective communities. By engaging in these practical exercises, participants were able to experience the challenges of implementing sustainability initiatives while also identifying potential solutions.

To measure the success and impact of this community service initiative, an evaluation process was conducted at the conclusion of the program. Participants were asked to provide feedback through a structured questionnaire aimed at assessing their overall experience, the

relevance of the materials provided, and the effectiveness of the training sessions. Additionally, a discussion session was held to analyze the development and progress of participants before and after the program. This qualitative evaluation allowed organizers to gauge the extent to which the activity contributed to skill development, knowledge enhancement, and the overall empowerment of participants.

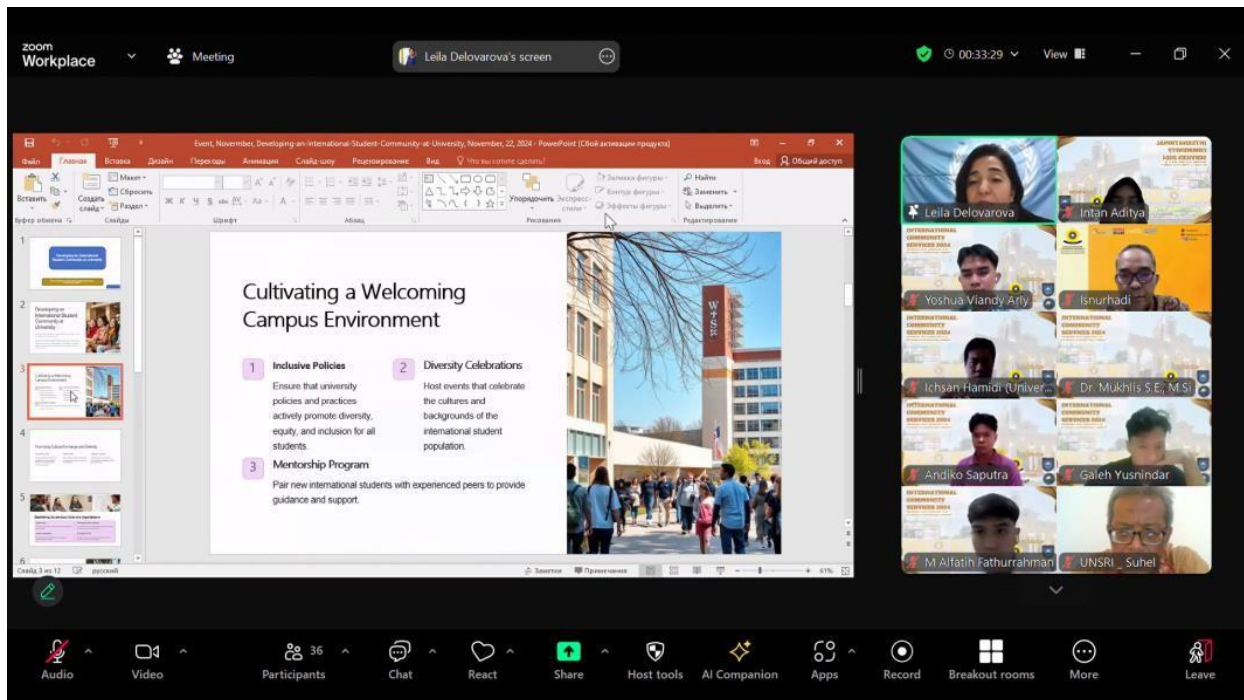
Through this structured methodology, this community service initiative aimed to create and develop high-quality human resources who are capable of contributing to sustainable living at both national and international levels. By integrating theoretical knowledge, skill-building, and practical application, the program sought to foster a well-rounded understanding of sustainability, ensuring that participants were well-equipped to face global challenges and opportunities in the future.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The international community service activity was organized by the Department of Development Economics, Universitas Sriwijaya, in collaboration with the Department of International Relations, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University. The event was conducted virtually on November 22, 2024, and featured Prof. Leila F. Delovarova, Ph.D., an Acting Associate Professor at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, as the keynote speaker. Her insights emphasized the importance of fostering international youth communities as a strategic approach to addressing globalization challenges and enhancing cross-cultural engagement.

The speaker elaborated on the significance of international youth communities in cultivating global awareness, cultural sensitivity, and effective networking. Previous research suggests that international academic collaborations contribute significantly to students' cognitive and social development (Sercu, 2023). According to Stein (2021), universities play a crucial role in preparing students for international interactions by fostering programs that enhance cultural intelligence and cross-cultural communication skills. The discussion also highlighted the benefits of forming international communities, including academic and professional networking, fostering global citizenship, and strengthening social cohesion among youth (Jones, 2013).

Several strategies were introduced to facilitate the development of international youth communities. These include specialized orientation programs for international students, cultural exchange initiatives, academic support services, and mentorship programs. Research by Marginson & Yang (2022) emphasizes that higher education institutions should proactively implement structured programs that encourage international student integration to maximize their engagement and learning outcomes. The speaker further underscored the need for institutional support in providing resources and an inclusive environment to motivate international students to actively participate in these initiatives. Furthermore, studies by Brewer & Leask (2022); and Volet & Vauras (2012) suggest that fostering international peer learning environments leads to long-term professional and personal growth among students.



Picture 1. Delivery of International Community Service Material

Following the keynote presentation on “Developing an International Student Community at University,” participants engaged in an interactive and reflective discussion session facilitated by the speaker. The session was designed not only to promote dialogue but also to encourage participants to contextualize the strategies presented in the keynote within their own institutional and cultural settings. Two central questions guided the discussion: “Why is your international community unique?” and “What are your community goals and slogan?” These questions were deliberately chosen to prompt participants to critically examine the distinct characteristics of their international student communities, including policy frameworks, support systems, and intercultural dynamics that set them apart.

Participants were encouraged to reflect on various aspects covered in the keynote, such as inclusive policies, cultural celebrations, student-led clubs, and mentorship programs. In doing so, they identified the ways in which their respective institutions foster diversity, build support structures, and facilitate global engagement. Discussions also explored how specific programs—such as language exchange initiatives, international cuisine festivals, and peer support networks—contributed to a stronger sense of belonging among international students. Through this activity, participants not only articulated the vision and identity of their own communities but also shared actionable insights on how to build inclusive, resilient, and globally connected student environments. The emphasis on community goals and slogans helped crystallize their institutional values and aspirations, serving as a foundation for long-term strategic development in international student engagement.

Participants were then divided into breakout rooms for a 30-minute focused discussion. Research by Volet & Jones (2012) highlights that small-group interactions in intercultural settings promote deep learning and enhance students' ability to navigate complex global issues. In these discussions, participants examined their communities' uniqueness, commonalities, and areas for improvement, aligning with findings that structured peer discussions enhance global competencies and intercultural empathy (Tran, 2013). Such engagement is crucial in shaping future global leaders by fostering adaptability and problem-solving skills (Bridgstock, 2022).

Findings from the Group Discussions

Group 1 explored how the fusion of cultures, languages, and traditions between Indonesia and Kazakhstan could serve as a mechanism for reducing discrimination and fostering mutual understanding. Cultural exchange programs have been widely recognized for their role in

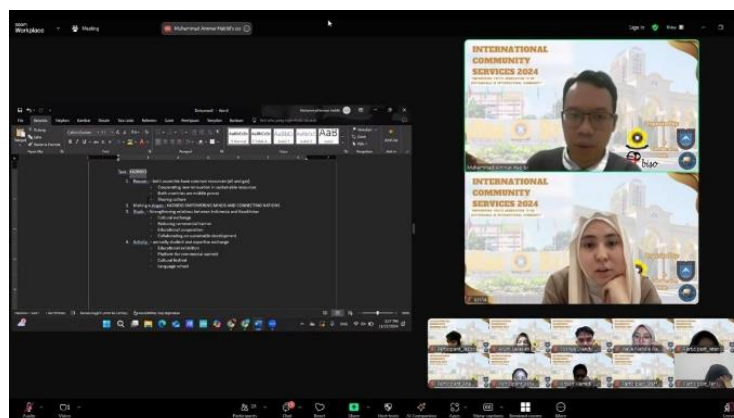
enhancing intercultural awareness and reducing biases. The group emphasized the power of the arts as a universal medium for promoting peace and inclusivity on the role of artistic expression in bridging cultural divides. The group further highlighted language exchange as a fundamental tool for improving cross-cultural communication. Studies have shown that multilingual competencies significantly reduce misunderstandings and stereotypes, fostering a more inclusive society. Through initiatives such as bilingual discussion forums, joint language courses, and international seminars, participants suggested ways to strengthen linguistic and cultural ties. Such efforts align with global trends in educational diplomacy and internationalization strategies. Additionally, research by Higuera-Castillo et al (2023) supports the idea that understanding cultural dimensions improves intercultural cooperation and minimizes conflicts in international settings.



Picture 2. Group 1 participant presentation

Furthermore, the impact of cultural exchanges in reducing discrimination has been confirmed by research from Mullins (2013), which found that international collaboration in educational settings leads to the development of empathy and mutual respect. Similarly Grace & Tham (2021) demonstrated that participation in intercultural dialogue reduces ethnocentrism and fosters inclusive attitudes among youth, reinforcing the importance of initiatives such as the one undertaken in this study.

Group 2 introduced the slogan "Kazindo Empowering Minds and Connecting Nations," symbolizing the collaboration between Indonesia and Kazakhstan. They identified economic similarities, particularly in oil and gas resources, as a foundation for sustainable cooperation. Previous research has indicated that cross-national partnerships in energy and resource management lead to significant advancements in sustainable development (Jasanoff & Simmet, 2021). The group proposed youth-led innovation initiatives in green energy and technology, aligning with studies suggesting that empowering young entrepreneurs enhances national and regional economic resilience (Schaltegger & Wagner, 2011).



Picture 3. Group 2 participant presentation

Additionally, the group discussed trade and education cooperation, emphasizing the role of international academic exchange programs in promoting sustainable economic development. Research by Knight & De Wit (2018) confirms that student mobility and international partnerships contribute to knowledge transfer and innovation. The group's vision included organizing business forums, educational exhibitions, and cultural festivals to foster economic collaboration and strengthen diplomatic relations between the two nations. Furthermore, recent findings by Jung et al (2018) suggest that bilateral academic collaborations facilitate knowledge sharing, leading to innovation and technological advancements. Moreover, Nayyar & Malhotra (2023) argue that fostering economic cooperation through education and research strengthens diplomatic relations and promotes regional stability, making such youth-driven initiatives highly impactful.



Picture 4. Group 3 participant presentation

Group 3 outlined key objectives for establishing a strong international community, focusing on cross-cultural understanding, sustainable development, and global collaboration. They emphasized that fostering cross-cultural exchange can significantly reduce stereotypes and promote mutual respect. This aligns with findings from Lee & Eastin (2021), which demonstrate that intercultural competence training programs are instrumental in reducing ethnocentrism and increasing global engagement.

The group also linked their discussions to the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those addressing environmental sustainability, social equality, and economic growth. Prior research suggests that youth involvement in SDG-related projects enhances their capacity for leadership and problem-solving in global contexts. They proposed initiatives such as student-led environmental campaigns, international research collaborations, and inclusive educational policies to foster a sense of global responsibility among youth.

Moreover, the group emphasized the role of peace and security through international cooperation, arguing that fostering diplomatic dialogue among youth is critical in addressing global conflicts. Studies have demonstrated that youth engagement in peacebuilding activities leads to long-term stability and cooperation (McEvoy-Levy, 2018). They also highlighted the need for leadership training and capacity-building programs to prepare young individuals for influential roles in international policymaking (Bessant & Watts, 2024). Research by Akah & Chaggu (2024) further supports the notion that peace-oriented youth programs contribute to conflict resolution and diplomatic progress.

The findings from this community service activity reinforce the critical role of international youth collaboration in addressing global challenges. The interactive discussions and knowledge-sharing sessions demonstrated that structured engagement in international communities enhances cross-cultural competencies, promotes sustainable economic cooperation, and fosters global citizenship. These insights align with the broader literature on youth empowerment and internationalization in higher education (Ge, 2022).

Future initiatives should incorporate more extensive hands-on community projects, interdisciplinary collaborations, and policy advocacy programs to further amplify the impact of youth engagement. Expanding participation to a more diverse group of young leaders from

various cultural and academic backgrounds will enhance the sustainability of these efforts. As research continues to underscore the transformative power of youth in global change, institutions must provide continuous support to facilitate these initiatives effectively (Bridgstock, 2022).

Participant's Feedbacks and Evaluation

The feedback from participants regarding the International Community Services event was overwhelmingly positive. A post-event survey was conducted to quantitatively measure participant satisfaction and assess the impact of the program. The survey, completed by 45 out of 47 participants (95.74% response rate), consisted of both Likert-scale questions and open-ended responses.

Table 1 Participants' answers

Category	Survey Item	Result
Overall Satisfaction and Impact	Participants who found the event very useful or useful in expanding knowledge of international collaboration and networking	42 Participant
	Gained valuable insights into cultural exchange and international youth communities	40 Participant
	Broadened perspectives on global cooperation and increased motivation to engage in future programs	39 Participant
Language and Communication Development	Improved English communication skills through discussions and breakout sessions	36 Participant
	Increased confidence in expressing opinions in an international academic forum	34 Participant
Networking and Future Collaboration Opportunities	Established new international connections for future academic/professional collaboration	41 Participant
Areas for Improvement	Experienced technical difficulties (e.g., sound clarity, internet issues)	11 Participant
	Suggested a more structured event rundown for better time management	8 Participant
Recommendations for Future Programs	Recommended organizing similar programs regularly	43 Participant
	Suggested including more countries to enhance global collaboration	37 Participant
	Recommended adding more interactive elements (e.g., case studies, debates)	35 Participant

1. Overall Satisfaction and Impact

Based on the survey results, 93.3% of participants (42 out of 45) rated the event as either very useful or useful in expanding their knowledge of international collaboration and global networking. 88.9% of respondents (40 out of 45) stated that the event provided them with valuable insights into cultural exchange and the importance of international youth communities. Additionally, 86.7% (39 out of 45) felt that the event successfully broadened their perspectives on global cooperation and strengthened their motivation to engage in future international programs.

2. Language and Communication Development

A key objective of the event was to enhance participants' language and communication skills in an international setting. The results showed that 80% (36 out of 45) of participants reported an improvement in their English communication abilities as a result of participating in discussions and breakout sessions. Furthermore, 75.6% (34 out of 45) felt more confident in expressing their opinions in an international academic forum, highlighting the program's effectiveness in fostering intercultural communication skills.

3. Networking and Future Collaboration Opportunities

The program also aimed to create international networking opportunities for participants. 91.1% (41 out of 45) of respondents stated that they had successfully made new international connections through this event, which they believed would be beneficial for academic and professional collaborations in the future. Several participants highlighted that the event enabled them to establish relationships with peers from Kazakhstan and France, reinforcing the idea that international youth engagement fosters long-term global partnerships.

4. Areas for Improvement

Although the feedback was largely positive, some areas for improvement were identified. 24.4% of participants (11 out of 45) mentioned issues related to technical difficulties, particularly regarding sound clarity and internet connectivity during discussion sessions. Additionally, 17.8% (8 out of 45) suggested a more structured event rundown to ensure a smoother flow of activities and better time management.

5. Recommendations for Future Programs

Many participants provided constructive suggestions for future events. 95.6% (43 out of 45) of respondents expressed a strong desire for similar programs to be organized regularly, with 82.2% (37 out of 45) recommending the inclusion of more countries to further enhance global collaboration. Additionally, 77.8% (35 out of 45) suggested incorporating more interactive elements, such as case study discussions, debates, or joint project planning sessions, to further enhance the learning experience.

The International Community Services event was highly successful in achieving its objectives of fostering international collaboration, enhancing communication skills, and expanding global networks among participants. The overwhelmingly positive feedback, supported by measurable outcomes, confirms that such initiatives play a crucial role in preparing youth for global engagement. Future programs can further optimize their impact by addressing technical challenges, expanding participation, and incorporating more interactive learning methods. By implementing these improvements, future initiatives can continue to strengthen international academic collaboration and cultural exchange, contributing to the broader mission of global youth empowerment.

CONCLUSIONS

The Empowering Youth Generation to Be Sustainable in the International Community initiative has demonstrated significant benefits for young individuals in Indonesia and Kazakhstan by equipping them with essential skills to thrive in a globalized world. This program successfully fostered cross-cultural exchange, strengthened international networks, and enhanced participants' understanding of sustainability within an international framework. The overwhelmingly positive feedback highlights the program's effectiveness in broadening perspectives, improving language proficiency, and fostering global citizenship. However, several challenges were encountered during the implementation, including technical issues such as unstable internet connectivity, lack of clear communication regarding the event rundown, and time constraints that limited in-depth discussions. Addressing these challenges in future iterations through improved logistical planning, enhanced digital infrastructure, and extended discussion sessions will significantly enhance the program's effectiveness and impact.

To ensure sustainability and scalability, future community service initiatives should be integrated into academic curricula or established as recurring programs supported by universities and international organizations. Expanding participation to include a more diverse group of young individuals from various countries will further enrich cross-cultural learning and global collaboration. Additionally, creating structured mentorship programs, incorporating hands-on projects, and leveraging digital platforms for ongoing engagement will provide participants with continuous learning opportunities beyond the event itself. Establishing an alumni network and adopting a hybrid model that combines in-person and virtual interactions will make these programs more inclusive and accessible. Furthermore, securing long-term funding and institutional support will be crucial in ensuring the sustainability of these initiatives. By implementing these strategies, future programs can overcome existing obstacles, maintain long-term relevance, and strengthen the role of young generations in addressing global challenges.

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