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Preservation of Traditional Arts through Training and Digital Documentation of Cultural Studios in Matotonan Village

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Abstract

Matotonan Village in South Siberut District, Mentawai Islands Regency, is situated in the remote upper reaches of the Serereket River and serves as a final stronghold for the preservation of traditional Mentawai culture, including the Lia Pullaggajat ritual art and Turuk Lagai dance. However, the sustainability of this intangible cultural heritage is threatened by limited generational renewal within customary institutions, the dominance of oral tradition, and a lack of modern digital documentation. This Community Service (PkM) initiative aims to preserve traditional arts in Matotonan Village through capacity-building training for local cultural troupes and community-led digital documentation. The program employed a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach across four stages: ethnographic needs assessment; training in troupe management and digital documentation techniques; collaborative fieldwork involving Sikerei (traditional shamans) and the younger generation; and the dissemination of a digital repository. The results demonstrate a significant improvement in the ability of troupe managers to operate audio-visual documentation equipment, craft cultural narratives, and manage digital media channels. Furthermore, the initiative successfully produced a digital repository comprising ritual recordings, catalogs of traditional attire and artifacts, and videos of the Turuk Lagai dance. The program has positively impacted the strengthening of cultural identity and laid the groundwork for sustainable cultural tourism in Matotonan.

Keywords: Matotonan Village, Digital Documentation, Lia Pullaggajat, Cultural Preservation, Arts Troupe, Sikerei.

1. INTRODUCTION

Matotonan Village, located in the upper reaches of the Serereket River, South Siberut District, Mentawai Islands Regency, is one of the remote interior regions that plays a crucial role as the last stronghold of the indigenous cultural identity of the Mentawai people. Amid the penetration of modernization and social change across the Mentawai Islands, Matotonan has consistently preserved social artifacts, customary structures, and traditional artistic expressions rooted in the Arat Sabulungan cosmology. Various performing arts, such as the traditional Turuk Lagai dance, the Tuddukat and Gajeuma' percussion music, and the major village-cleansing ritual procession Lia Pullaggajat, are maintained as symbols of harmony among humans, ancestral spirits, and the natural environment. The central role in carrying out these arts and customary rituals is held by the Sikerei (ritual leaders and custodians of local wisdom), together with the management of local cultural studios (sanggar budaya).

Nevertheless, the sustainability of traditional artistic expression in Matotonan Village faces fundamental vulnerabilities, or cultural erosion. First, there is a crisis in the regeneration of customary figures. Most Sikerei and senior traditional artists have entered old age (60–75 years), while interest among the younger generation in continuing the tradition has declined owing to the financial constraints of ritual practice and changing modern lifestyles. Second, the mechanism for transmitting artistic knowledge in Matotonan still relies on oral tradition, without the support of standardized audio-visual recording or documentation facilities. Should a Sikerei or a senior traditional dancer pass away without documenting the variety of chants, the meaning of dance movements, and percussion motifs, that portion of the cultural heritage risks being lost forever.

In addition to this internal regeneration crisis, external challenges arise from limited digital literacy and studio management capacity in Matotonan Village. The village's isolated geographic location in the upstream river area means that local art-studio managers have not yet optimally utilized digital technology to archive and publish their artistic work. Yet digital documentation and archiving play an important role in the contemporary era, not only as an instrument for safeguarding intangible heritage, but also as a medium for public education

and the promotion of sustainable cultural tourism. One form of promotion for sustainable cultural tourism is illustrated below:



Figure 1. The Lia (Pullaggajat Festival) of Matotongan Village (Source: Documentation, 2025)

To respond to these problems, this Community Service (PkM) program was designed around two main strategic pillars: (1) institutional capacity-building training for local art studios, and (2) participatory digital documentation of traditional performing arts and rituals. Through the active involvement of Sikerei, village youth, and cultural-studio management, this program seeks to transform the role of local youth from passive spectators into active agents of cultural preservation in digital media.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This community service activity was carried out in Matotongan Village, South Siberut District, Mentawai Islands Regency. The program's target partners included the Sikerei, local art-studio management, customary leaders, and the youth of Matotongan Village. The approach employed was Participatory Action Research (PAR), which facilitated the active participation of the local community at every stage:

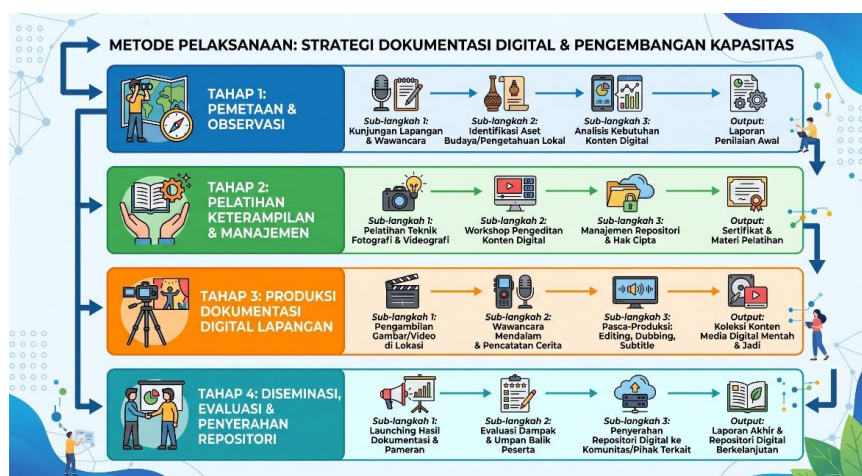


Figure 2. Community Service Implementation Method (Source: Program Data Analysis)

1) Needs Mapping and Analysis Stage: The PkM team, together with customary leaders and the Sikerei, inventoried the range of performing arts (*Turuk Lagai*) and rituals (*Lia Pullaggajat*) that urgently required documentation.

2) Skills Training Stage (Capacity Building): this stage comprised a studio management workshop providing mentorship on the administrative governance of art studios and the design of youth-engagement strategies; audio-visual documentation training covering techniques for capturing images and video of performing arts using basic devices and cameras, elementary video editing, and cultural storytelling; and digital repository

management training, which introduced participants to the operation of digital media platforms, such as the studio's YouTube channel and social media accounts, as a showcase for the digital archive.

3) Participatory Recording and Documentation Stage: art-studio managers and local youth, assisted by the PkM team, carried out recordings of the *Turuk Lagai* dance performance, recitation of oral historical narratives, and visual documentation of traditional costumes and musical instruments (*Tuddukat* and *Gajeuma*).

4) Dissemination and Evaluation Stage: the program's level of success was measured through improvements in participants' understanding, the availability of digital repository products, and the studio youth's independence in regularly publishing cultural content.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Enhancement of Management Capacity and Digital Literacy of Cultural Studios

Implementation of the studio management workshop and digital documentation training in Matotonan Village produced a positive impact on participants' technical skills and knowledge. The young people involved in the training displayed strong enthusiasm while learning field videography techniques and digital archiving. Village youth who had previously regarded local tradition as outdated began to recognize the potential of digital media to introduce Mentawai culture to a wider audience.

Through this mentoring process, a youth documentation team was formed under the auspices of the Matotonan Village art studio, equipped with the technical ability to operate audio-visual recording devices and to process recordings into educational content.

3.2. Establishment of a Digital Repository of Mentawai Arts and Traditions

This community service program successfully compiled an organized digital repository of the traditional arts of Matotonan Village. The documentation outputs include the following:



Figure 3. Digital Repository of the Matotonan Cultural Studio (Source: Documentation)

Documentary videos of performing arts: high-resolution audio-visual recordings of various forms of the *Turuk Lagai* dance (such as imitations of the movements of animals characteristic of Mentawai), complete with explanations of their symbolic meaning.

Audio-visual ritual archive: documentation of the stages of customary ritual and artistic procession within the *Lia Pullaggajat* (such as *Lia Siboitok*, the playing of *Tuddukat*, and the ritual chant *Lajot Simagre*).

Digital catalog of artistic artifacts: an inventory of photographs and ethnographic notes on ritual equipment, the *Gajeuma* musical instrument, and the traditional body ornaments used in local artistic expression.

3.3. Safeguarding Local Knowledge and Cultural Sustainability

Digital documentation in Matotonan Village has proven effective in minimizing the risk of losing traditional knowledge as the number of senior Sikerei declines. The documentation media produced serve as a learning resource for the younger generation of Matotonan to study percussion techniques and traditional dance movements without losing their authentic roots.

Beyond serving as a means of internal preservation, the online publication of the cultural studio's digital archive adds value to the development of Matotonan Village as a cultural tourism destination. Widely accessible cultural information strengthens Matotonan's branding as an authentic center of Mentawai culture and attracts the interest of cultural researchers as well as domestic and international tourists.

4. CONCLUSION

The Community Service Program in Matotonan Village, South Siberut District, Mentawai Islands Regency, successfully achieved its objective of supporting the preservation of traditional arts. Through the strengthening of studio institutional capacity and digital documentation training, the younger generation of the village was successfully equipped with the technical skills to independently record, archive, and manage the cultural studio's digital media. The availability of a digital repository documenting the Turuk Lagai dance, traditional musical instruments, and the ritual cultural expression of Lia Pullaggajat constitutes a valuable asset in preventing the extinction of local cultural heritage while strengthening the foundation for culture-based tourism in the Mentawai Islands Regency.

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