



## KNOWLEDGE-SHARING FORUM : CONTRIBUTING TO EMPOWERMENT AND SOLIDARITY IN SOUTHERN THAILAND

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**Abstract.** The majority of the population in southern Thailand adheres to Islam and uses the Malay language. They are a community that has undergone a process of assimilation in terms of identity, economy, education, and religion as a result of the rule of the Kingdom of Siam (Thailand). In this context, PERSAIT provides opportunities to collaborate in community service activities. Therefore, this paper aims to describe the collaborative activities between LPPM Unsoed and PERSAIT in the form of international community service, focusing on educational development, cultural exchange, and the strengthening of fraternal relations with Indonesia. The community service activities target school students and Islamic boarding school students and are carried out alongside the assignment of KKN field supervisors (DPL) in southern Thailand. The program locations include Darul Hikmah, Rajaprachanukhoh 39, Triamwittaya, and Muslim Pattanasart. The results of these activities indicate that school students and Islamic boarding school students greatly need additional knowledge and experiences to continue developing and progressing. These findings suggest that efforts to encourage them to pursue higher education are very important for their future lives.

**Keywords:** Southern Thailand, community service, education, solidarity, empowerment

### 1. Introduction

The present-day characteristics of southern Thai society can be traced back to the Bangkok Treaty of 1909 between the Kingdom of Siam and the British government, which placed southern Thailand under Siamese (the former name of Thailand) rule. Following the consolidation of the Thai Kingdom's authority, local communities underwent a process of assimilation in terms of identity, economy, education, and religion, Saari [1].

Nevertheless, the majority of the population in southern Thailand remains Muslim, with the Muslim community spread relatively evenly across several provinces — approximately 80% in Pattani, 68.9% in Yala, 67.8% in Satun, and significant populations in Narathiwat and Songkhla. Collectively, Muslims account for about 5.7% of Thailand's total population. In addition, many people in southern Thailand continue to use the Malay language in daily communication, reflecting their deep-rooted cultural heritage as descendants of the Malay ethnic group.

The southern region of Thailand comprises several areas bordering the Malaysian Peninsula. In general, the people of southern Thailand share ethnic roots with the Malay community, closely connected to the Malay Muslims living in Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, and Terengganu.



Southern Thailand includes several provinces such as Narathiwat, Pattani, Yala, Songkhla, Satun, Trang, Krabi, and others.

Geographically, the region is strategically located and characterized by hilly terrain. It is known for its fertile soil and abundant natural resources. In addition, the area is surrounded by extensive forests and highlands. Most residents work in the agrarian sector, including agriculture, fisheries, and plantations—particularly rubber and oil palm. As a predominantly rural area, the main occupations of the local people include fishing, rice farming, livestock raising, and rubber cultivation, Nurfalina et al. [2]. The region holds great potential for development through inclusive and sustainable policy approaches aimed at improving community welfare. Southern Thailand also has tourism potential, especially in coastal areas such as Songkhla and Satun, which offer beautiful beaches and ecotourism opportunities.

A study by Haque et al. [3] shows that the Kingdom of Thailand continues to allow Muslims to practice their religion and engage in social and community activities. However, access to education remains a challenge. The national education system is often not fully compatible with the local community's cultural needs, particularly regarding the use of Thai as the main language of instruction.

Led by the Muslim community of Pattani, education has played an important role for the people of southern Thailand in strengthening their cultural identity, preserving their language, and maintaining religious studies through Islamic education systems such as pondok pesantren, Saari [1]. So far, Islamic education in southern Thailand has developed in ways similar to Indonesia, through *pengajian* (religious study groups), Qur'anic education programs, weekly student study circles, and other activities, Haque [3].

Hussein [4] notes that Islamic religious schools in southern Thailand have continued to grow, supported by their own philosophy and identity while remaining aligned with the Thai national education system. This demonstrates the importance of continually strengthening local cultural identity among the people of southern Thailand. Official records show that there are 238 registered pondok pesantren in Pattani, 123 in Yala, and 65 in Narathiwat, totaling 426 in the three southern provinces, Ardae & Nik Wan [5].

Private Islamic education in southern Thailand is progressing toward a quality assurance system, although it still faces infrastructure limitations. Private schools encounter various challenges different from those of public schools, which receive subsidies from the central Thai government. It is hoped that the government will also provide subsidies for private schools in southern Thailand in accordance with the 1999 National Education Act, Hussein [4]. On the other hand, there are also initiatives calling for special autonomy for southern Thailand to independently develop its education system, Rahayu et al. [6].

Economically, Saari [1] mentions that most residents in the region work as farmers and fishermen, while a smaller number are traders or government employees, particularly in Pattani, Narathiwat, and Yala. Malay farmers in Pattani generally own small plots of land and sell their produce at low prices. The trading sector is largely dominated by ethnic Chinese, Nurfalina et al. [2]. Small-scale enterprises such as handicrafts and local food industries also exist. Although the region has economic potential, significant economic disparities remain compared to other parts of Thailand. Larger industrial and fisheries sectors are mainly dominated by Thai Buddhists, Saari [1].

The Thai government has made efforts to promote development in the southern region through infrastructure investments such as roads, bridges, and healthcare facilities. Various programs have also been initiated to encourage the integration of Malay Muslim communities into broader Thai society, although some resistance remains due to differences in identity.

Based on the explanation above, we gain an understanding of the importance of developing the social, economic, educational, and religious aspects of the Malay ethnic communities in southern Thailand. Support from various parties is also needed to share knowledge and



experience, especially for the younger generation. In this context, the Indonesian-Thai Alumni Association (PERSAIT) opens opportunities for collaboration with the academic community to carry out community service programs.

These activities aim to foster the character of the younger generation in southern Thailand in line with their socio-cultural and religious identity. In addition, the program is expected to enhance knowledge and its practical application, build broader friendships, and open global perspectives, LPPM [7]. Indonesian alumni who studied in Thailand also hope that the presence of Indonesian university students will motivate Thai students to continue their studies in Indonesia. The community service activities conducted by Jenderal Soedirman's students through the international community service program (*KKN Internasional*), together with the service team, aim to share knowledge and experiences that can contribute to empowering local communities in southern Thailand.

## 2. Methods

The adoption of cultural values within the educational process is a positive step toward internalizing and strengthening the bonds among nations of shared heritage. Strong cultural and traditional ties encourage communities to participate more actively in supporting the preservation of traditional culture (Marwah [8]; Boneta and Ne'grie [9]; Hadley and Belfiore [10]). Language, as part of local culture, serves as a symbol that reinforces the identity of a community or nation [11]. Over time, and with the influence of global transformation, the need for proficiency in English has become inevitable.

Referring to the broader framework of cultural adoption, the international community service program (*KKN Internasional*) conducted by students and faculty members focuses on the following main objectives:

1. Introducing Indonesian (Nusantara) culture and traditions as part of a shared regional heritage;
2. Conducting English teaching programs to enhance global awareness and language proficiency among young generations who use Malay as their mother tongue;
3. Providing knowledge and motivation for youth development, especially for young people originating from underdeveloped areas in southern Thailand; and
4. Delivering other forms of knowledge tailored to the learning materials and needs of the educational institutions involved in the program.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1. International Community Service Program (KKN) by Students

The International Community Service Program (KKN) in Thailand represents a cross-border community engagement initiative that involves Universitas Jenderal Soedirman students contributing to the fields of education, social development, and culture in southern Thailand. This international community service program was carried out through collaboration between the Institute for Research and Community Service, Universitas Jenderal Soedirman and PERSAIT. This program aims to strengthen interethnic and interregional relations between Indonesia and the Malay–Pattani community in southern Thailand through education-based and community empowerment activities.

In general, the implementation of this KKN program was divided into four student groups assigned to four different locations in two provinces—Pattani Province and Narathiwat Province. Each group carried out community service programs tailored to the needs and characteristics of their respective partner institutions, which included schools and Islamic educational institutions (*pondok pesantren*).



### 3.1.1 KKN Locations and Group Distribution

- First Location  
Institution: Muslim Pattanasart  
Area: Pattani Province  
Students: Naila Fadhila and Amara Febilany Nasir
- Second Location  
Institution: Triamvittaya  
Area: Pattani Province  
Students: Dutha Ridho Nugroho and Fazhia Khusnul Az-Zahra
- Third Location  
Institution: Rajaprachanukhroh 39  
Area: Narathiwat Province  
Students: Zahra Nurfadilla, Almira Dania Ramadhan, and Salsabila Ariel Putri Hartoyo
- Fourth Location  
Institution: Darul Hikmah School  
Area: Kalisa Sub-District, Ra-Ngae District, Narathiwat Province  
Student: Raihan Maulana

Overall, the International KKN program in southern Thailand not only provided students with a valuable opportunity to engage in cross-cultural learning but also strengthened educational and cultural diplomacy between Indonesia and Thailand. Through this program, the students acted as youth ambassadors who embodied the spirit of collaboration, solidarity, and kinship among southeast Asian nations.

### 3.1.2. Implementation Period

The International KKN program in Thailand was conducted over approximately one month, from July 14 to August 11, 2025. During this period, students implemented a series of educational and community engagement activities in local institutions and surrounding communities across Pattani and Narathiwat Provinces. Each site had distinct program focuses aligned with the institution's needs and the learning characteristics of the students.

### 3.1.3. Program Materials and Activities at Each Location

#### 3.1.3.1. Muslim Pattanasart (Pattani Province)

At Muslim Pattanasart, student activities focused on English language instruction and the introduction of Indonesian culture for junior secondary school students (Grades 1–3). The main programs included:

- Weekly English Basic, English Games, and Indonesian Culture classes.
- English lessons covering Parts of Speech—Adjectives, Adverbs, and Conjunctions—taught to Grade 2 and 3 students (one Grade 2 class and two Grade 3 classes).
- Writing and Time in English for Grade 1 students, continued with English letter-writing practice.
- Cultural learning through batik drawing as an introduction to Indonesian arts.
- Participation in a Radio Ta'awoon TV podcast titled “The Use of English in Indonesia and Thailand,” serving as a cross-cultural reflection and a public learning medium.
- These activities emphasized communicative learning, cultural appreciation, and student confidence-building in language use.

#### 3.1.3.3. Triamvittaya (Pattani Province)

At Triamvittaya School, students engaged in both junior and senior high school programs through formal and extracurricular activities. The program details included:

- English and Malay language classes focusing on grammar, speaking, conversation, and educational games (Games in English).



- Introduction to basic Malay grammar and usage in daily communication.
- Serving as supervisors for the English Club, guiding students through practical language activities.
- Assisting the school principal in supervising teaching performance using official evaluation sheets.
- Introducing Indonesian language and culture through batik-making (using cardboard, rice paper dye, and HVS paper) and traditional Indonesian dance (*Tari Piring*).

The activities at Triamvittaya emphasized the integration of education and culture, fostering friendship and mutual understanding between the two nations through collaborative learning.

#### 3.1.3.4. Rajaprachanukhroh 39 (Narathiwat Province)

The KKN program at Rajaprachanukhroh 39 encompassed three main areas: computer technology, chemistry, and English language. Students were assigned to specific classes and responsibilities:

- Computer Technology: Teaching Grades 2 and 3 junior high students about Microsoft Word, CPU components, and basic computer operations.
- Chemistry: Teaching Grade 3 senior high students about carbon chains using applied learning methods.
- English Language: Teaching basic grammar and English for Environmental Topics to Grades 1–3 at both junior and senior high levels.
- Additional activities included:
  - Teaching Qur'an recitation as a weekend extracurricular program.
  - Conducting a reflective writing session (impressions and messages) in English and Malay during the final week.
  - Batik-making and coloring activities.
  - Participating in the Islamic New Year parade by preparing banners and decorations.

The activities reflected an integration of science, religion, and art, fostering holistic student development.

#### 3.1.1.5 Darul Hikmah School (Kalisa Sub-District, Ra-Ngae District, Narathiwat Province)

At Darul Hikmah School, students carried out academic, cultural, and social community activities as follows:

##### Academic Activities:

- Teaching Arabic and Malay as compulsory subjects for both junior and senior high school students.
- Supervising dormitory programs focused on religious and social education.
- Conducting the “Our Voice for the Future” Political Class, addressing civic awareness and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through discussion-based learning.
- Implementing a Model United Nations (MUN) Political Class to train students in diplomacy, public speaking, and critical thinking.

##### Cultural Activities:

- Introducing Indonesian Culture Classes through traditional games (e.g., *Congklak* and *Bola gateng kuwuk*) and performing Indonesian regional songs and dances (*Tari Saman / Ratoeh Jaroe*).

##### Social and Leadership Activities:

- Creating and installing classroom name boards as infrastructure support.



- Conducting community outreach to elderly residents in Darul Hikmah, promoting civic safety awareness.
- Visiting the residence of *Tok Ne Beh* (village head), the Ra-Ngae City Government Office, and the Narathiwat Immigration Office.
- Attending the Asian Olympiad on Science and Sustainable Tourism meeting organized by the Sultanate of Terengganu, Malaysia.
- Participating in the Malay Cultural Carnival commemorating *Asyura* in Kampung Pungguk.

The activities at Darul Hikmah School represented a form of multicultural education and community empowerment, where students acted not only as teachers but also as cultural mediators and social ambassadors.

### 3.2. Field Supervisors' Activities in the Implementation of the International KKN

#### 3.2.1. Monitoring and Evaluation (Monev)

Monitoring and evaluation (monev) activities formed an essential part of the International KKN to ensure that all programs ran according to plan and academic standards. The monev process was conducted three times—twice via Zoom meetings and once through a direct field visit by the supervising lecturers.

- **First Monev (July 26, 2025):**

Conducted online via Zoom, focusing on program initiation, institutional readiness, accommodation, and early-stage teaching implementation. Supervisors provided feedback on teaching strategies and coordination. Students were found to have adapted well to local socio-cultural environments.

- **Second Monev (August 3, 2025):**

Also conducted via Zoom, focusing on interim evaluation, technical challenges, and teaching effectiveness. Supervisors emphasized documentation and final-stage strategy improvements. The second monitoring showed enhanced teaching quality and stronger engagement from local teachers and students.

- **Third Monev and Field Visit (August 6–11, 2025):**

Conducted on-site across the four KKN locations, coinciding with the program's closing ceremony. Supervisors observed classes, met school officials, and assessed the impact of student activities. Results indicated strong intercultural adaptability and positive contributions to partner institutions.

Overall, monev activities served not only as administrative oversight but also as reflective learning experiences for both students and supervisors.

#### 3.2.2. Visit to Muslim Pattanasart, Triamvittaya, Rajaprachanukhroh 39, and Darul Hikmah Schools

The field supervisors (DPL) together with the community service team conducted an institutional visit to four partner schools that served as the locations for the International Community Service Program (Internasional KKN) implemented by students of Universitas Jenderal Soedirman. The four schools include Muslim Pattanasart School and Triamvittaya School, located in Pattani Province, as well as Rajaprachanukhroh 39 School and Darul Hikmah School, located in Narathiwat Province, southern Thailand. The visit took place on August 8–9, 2025. These four educational institutions serve as strategic partners of the university in the implementation of cross-border community service activities, playing an important role in providing opportunities for students to directly engage with local communities through educational, social, and cultural programs



Figure 1. Field Supervisors' Visit to the Four KKN International Partner Schools

In addition, the visit also served as a formal farewell to the partner institutions, marking the conclusion of the students' one-month participation in the International KKN. Through this visit, the supervising lecturers ensured that all students were in good health and had successfully completed their program activities in accordance with the established work plan. The supervisors also held brief discussions with teachers and school principals to evaluate the implementation of the activities, assess community reception toward the students, and explore potential areas for future collaboration.

As part of academic ethics and inter-institutional relations, the supervising team also conveyed apologies for any shortcomings or challenges that may have occurred during the program's implementation. At the same time, they expressed hope that the collaboration between Universitas Jenderal Soedirman and the educational institutions in southern Thailand would continue sustainably in the future through various forms of partnership, including the international community service program, student exchanges, teacher training, and other joint activities in the fields of education, social development, and culture.

Through this institutional visit, Universitas Jenderal Soedirman reaffirmed its commitment to actively strengthening international cooperation networks based on community service and to enhancing the role of higher education institutions in promoting educational diplomacy between Indonesia and the Malay-Muslim communities in Southern Thailand.

### 3.2.3. Closing Ceremony of the International KKN in Thailand

The closing ceremony of the International KKN in Thailand was held on August 10, 2025, at Rajaprachanukhroh 39 School in Narathiwat Province. The event was attended by all participating students, field supervisors, and representatives from PERSAIT (the Indonesian Students Association in Thailand).

The program included welcome speeches from the host institution, presentations of student reports, and reflections from each group. Supervisors delivered closing remarks emphasizing the significance of sustaining collaboration between Indonesian and Thai educational



institutions. This ceremony marked the formal conclusion of the 2025 International KKN and symbolized the strengthening of educational and cultural cooperation between Indonesia and Thailand.



Figure 2. Closing Ceremony of the International KKN

### 3.3. Activities of Lecturers as Field Supervisors in the International Community Service Program (KKN) in Thailand

In addition to the main activities previously described, the lecturers serving as field supervisors in the International Community Service Program (Internasional KKN) also carried out various forms of community engagement activities. The involvement of lecturers in these activities was intended to strengthen the synergy between the students' programs and the lecturers' own community service initiatives, thereby ensuring that both efforts mutually supported each other and produced more tangible impacts for the target communities. In principle, the international community service activities conducted by the team were expected to run optimally, effectively, and sustainably, contributing both to community empowerment and to the enhancement of educational capacity.

One of these activities was conducted with students of Darul Hikmah School, an educational institution located in southern Thailand that possesses a dual character as both a formal school and an Islamic boarding school (*pondok pesantren*). Consequently, students at this institution not only take part in academic learning activities—such as mathematics, languages, and general sciences—but also deepen their understanding of Islamic religious studies under the guidance of ustadz (Islamic teachers) and pesantren mentors. This integrated educational model plays a vital role in shaping students to become knowledgeable, ethical, and competitive individuals, while simultaneously strengthening Islamic identity and local cultural values among the young Muslim generation in southern Thailand.



Figure 3. Community Service Activities in Darul Hikmah School

During the activity, the community service team delivered two main learning sessions, which were designed based on the needs and characteristics of the students. The first session focused on developing the potential of young people. Understanding one's personal potential is considered essential in fostering awareness of individual strengths and abilities, enabling students to build self-confidence in pursuing their talents and aspirations. Through this session, participants were encouraged to explore their self-identity, recognize their strengths and limitations, overcome fears or doubts, and cultivate motivation to dream boldly and strive to achieve their goals.

The second session addressed a highly relevant issue in the digital era—raising awareness about the spread of misinformation and the dangers of fake news (hoaxes). In this session, students were taught the importance of being critical and selective in processing information circulating through social media and daily communication. Participants were guided to verify the truth and sources of information before sharing it with others, so as not to become part of the chain of misinformation. Through this learning process, it is expected that the young generation will develop strong digital literacy skills and a sense of social responsibility in using information technology, thereby contributing to the creation of a more informed, ethical, and harmonious society.

Overall, the community service activities carried out by the lecturers serving as field supervisors in the International Community Service Program (Internasional KKN) were not merely a complement to the students' activities but also a concrete manifestation of the implementation of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education, particularly in the field of international community engagement. This program also strengthened academic and cultural relations between Indonesia and the Malay-Muslim communities in southern Thailand, reflecting the university's commitment to fostering educational collaboration and cross-cultural understanding in the region.

#### 4. Conclusion

The people of southern Thailand have undergone a process of assimilation in terms of identity, economy, education, and religion as a result of the rule of the Kingdom of Siam (Thailand). However, the majority of the population in southern Thailand remains Muslim and continues to use the Malay language. Their main livelihoods are farming, cultivating land, and to a lesser extent, trading. They share cultural roots with the Nusantara region; therefore, they require support in the development of education, the strengthening of Islamic studies, the reinforcement of cultural identity, and other related aspects. In this context, PERSAIT provides opportunities to carry out community service activities aimed at enhancing knowledge of Nusantara culture and traditions, English language skills, and general knowledge among the younger generation in southern Thailand.



The international community service program (KKN Internasional), conducted by university students and the service team from mid-July to August 2025, took place at Darul Hikmah School, Rajaprachanukhoh 39, Triamwittaya, and Muslim Pattanasart. The activities were carried out within the framework of cooperation between PERSAIT and LPPM Unsoed. It is expected that these activities will provide the knowledge needed by the younger generation in the region and strengthen their motivation to pursue higher levels of education in the future.

The results of these activities indicate that the community—particularly school students and Islamic boarding school students—greatly needs additional knowledge and experience in various fields, both in scientific knowledge and in motivation to achieve a brighter future. Most of them come from underprivileged communities and are relatively left behind compared to other communities in Thailand. Therefore, continuous mentoring activities that encourage them to pursue higher education are highly meaningful for their future.

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