

Short Communication

Post-Election Assistance and Political Participation of Indonesian Migrant Workers in Malaysian Diaspora Communities: Evaluation of Village Head Elections in Bengkulu

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Abstract. Political rights education for migrant workers may improve civic knowledge without removing the practical obstacles to participation in their villages of origin. This article reports a 2024 international community-service evaluation and post-election assistance program implemented by Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu with PCIM Malaysia, following a 2023 political-rights socialization initiative. The non-randomized mixed-method evaluation involved 142 Indonesian migrant workers from five Bengkulu villages (87 previously socialized and 55 comparison respondents), civic knowledge assessment, participation and barrier surveys, twelve focus-group discussions, village institutional interviews, and assistance dialogues. Among previously socialized respondents, the composite civic knowledge index was 74.2, compared with 48.3 in the comparison group; the retained score represented 90.9% of the 2023 post-program index (81.6). The report records election-related participation of 31.0% versus 12.7%, although the operational categorization of voting and broader engagement is inconsistent across the original report and requires record-level confirmation. Among 76 intended but non-participating respondents, 64 (84.2%) identified a procedural, economic, or administrative barrier as decisive. Village-budget enquiries were reported by 44.8% of exposed participants and 16.4% of comparison respondents. Assistance produced five aspiration submissions, three acknowledged receipts, three dialogue forums, and two village procedural provisions for migrant consultation. The experience indicates that political-rights education should be combined with accessible administrative arrangements and continuing non-electoral participation channels. The observational design does not establish a causal intervention effect.

Keywords: Migrant Workers, Electoral Inclusion, Village Head Elections, Political Participation.

1. Introduction

Indonesian workers living abroad remain connected to villages of origin through family relationships, remittances, identity documents, and decisions about local public services. Nevertheless, physical absence can restrict their capacity to participate in village head elections (Pilkades). Political participation theory distinguishes the resources, motivation, and recruitment opportunities that enable civic action [1]. Scholarship on transnational political engagement likewise demonstrates that migration changes rather than necessarily eliminates political attachment to a place of origin [2], [3]. The institutional problem is the gap between formal village membership and the ability to act on political rights. Research on external voting emphasizes that enfranchisement does not automatically produce turnout when registration, travel, and voting procedures remain difficult to access [4], [5]. Village governance in Indonesia also gives local electoral outcomes considerable significance for development planning, service delivery, and accountability [6], [7]. However, the possibility of alternative voting arrangements cannot be inferred from international election practice alone; village and district electoral rules require specific legal verification.

In 2023, Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu (UMB) and Pimpinan Cabang Istimewa Muhammadiyah (PCIM) Malaysia delivered political-rights socialization to Indonesian migrant workers. The 2024 follow-up program assessed retention of civic knowledge and subsequent participation in village head elections, investigated

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participation barriers, and facilitated post-election communication with village administrations. These goals reflect a basic distinction in civic education research between cognitive improvement and observable participation [8], [9].

This article aims to document the program implementation, present the descriptive evaluation findings, distinguish individual-level informational constraints from structural obstacles, and identify lessons for post-election civic assistance. It reports the original program data transparently while noting one unresolved discrepancy in the definition and count of electoral participation. The article does not attempt to estimate a causal effect, because exposure to the 2023 program was voluntary and comparison groups were not randomized.

2. Method

2.1 Program Design, Partners, and Participants

The international community-service program ran from February to December 2024, with UMB as implementing institution and PCIM Malaysia as principal community partner. It involved workers residing in Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, and Johor whose villages of origin belonged to five participating Bengkulu villages spanning three regencies. The descriptive mixed-method evaluation used purposive community access and referral recruitment. Of 142 respondents, 87 attended the previous 2023 socialization and 55 did not. These groups permit descriptive comparison but not randomized effect estimation.

Table 1.
Respondent
distribution by
village of origin

Village	Election month (2024)	Socialized	Comparison	Total
A	May	21	12	33
B	June	19	11	30
C	July	18	13	31
D	August	16	10	26
E	September	13	9	22
Total	—	87	55	142

2.2 Evaluation Instruments and Data Collection

A twenty-five-item knowledge instrument addressed village citizenship, village head election procedures, fiscal authority, and non-electoral civic channels. A survey recorded electoral and non-electoral participation, political efficacy, and decisive barriers among persons reporting an intention to participate. The report documents twelve focus-group discussions, interviews with village election committees and village apparatus across the five villages, and examination of aggregate voter-register and committee documents. Self-reported participation was not verified against individual ballot records. The comparison therefore requires caution about selection bias, recall error, and inconsistent definitions of an electoral participation event.

2.3 Assistance Activities and Evaluation Procedure

Following data collection within each village cohort, the team provided four assistance modules: post-election reflection; village governance and budget literacy; non-electoral civic channels; and preparation for a subsequent election. The report records 22 assistance sessions, five collective aspiration documents, and three hybrid dialogues involving migrants and village authorities. The evaluation considered knowledge, self-reported behavior, reported obstacles, and institutional responses. Qualitative accounts informed interpretation, but this article avoids attributing unquoted causal mechanisms to specific individuals.

2.4 Ethics and Analytic Limitations

The program report states that respondent participation was voluntary, survey findings were presented in aggregate, individual candidate preferences were not elicited, and facilitators maintained non-partisanship. Analyses below retain those safeguards. Percentages are calculated from the denominators printed in the report, except where a discrepancy is explicitly flagged. No statistical significance or causal inference is asserted without the underlying respondent-level dataset. In particular, conflicting voting counts in the report are treated as an outstanding verification issue.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Knowledge Retention and Political Efficacy

The composite post-socialization knowledge score reported for 2023 was 81.6; the 2024 follow-up score among previously socialized respondents was 74.2, corresponding to 90.9% retention. The unsocialized group scored 48.3 in 2024, a descriptive difference of 25.9 index points. The steepest domain decline was in knowledge of election procedures (11.3 points), which may be harder to maintain without opportunities for practical application. Although these findings are consistent with civic education scholarship [8], they should not be interpreted as randomized treatment effects.

Table 2.
Knowledge and
political efficacy
indices

Indicator	Socialized	Comparison / baseline	Interpretation
2023 knowledge index	81.6	—	Post-socialization baseline
2024 knowledge index	74.2	48.3	Difference +25.9 points
Knowledge retention	90.9%	—	74.2 / 81.6
Internal efficacy	68.7	47.2	Difference +21.5 points
External efficacy	52.4	44.9	Difference +7.5 points

The internal political efficacy index was 68.7 among socialized respondents and 47.2 among comparison respondents; corresponding external efficacy values were 52.4 and 44.9. This wider internal-than-external gap is relevant to the distinction between self-assessed civic competence and confidence in institutional responsiveness [10]. It supports the rationale for including dialogue with village authorities in a program that otherwise might end after informational training.

3.2 Electoral Participation and Reporting Consistency

The final report summarizes an election-related participation measure of 27 of 87 previously socialized respondents (31.0%) and 7 of 55 comparison respondents (12.7%), a difference of 18.3 percentage points. However, another row records “voted in person” for only 19 and 5 respondents, while its village-level voting table sums to 27 socialized voters. The narrative further describes 19 respondents returning and voting. These are incompatible counts unless the categories refer to different validated events; no respondent-level reconciliation is provided. Consequently, this article treats the 31.0% versus 12.7% comparison as a report-level participation indicator of “uncertain operational definition”, not as an independently verified turnout estimate. It does not use the village-level voting totals to rank actual turnout.

The reported gap nevertheless motivates a useful institutional question: does political-rights education translate into action when the costs of return are high? Participation theory predicts that information alone may be insufficient when time, transportation, or administrative access remain binding constraints [1], [4]. A future evaluation should predefine voting, registration verification, remote household coordination, and other engagement as non-overlapping or explicitly overlapping indicators, then reconcile all totals against an anonymized respondent-level codebook.

3.3 Structural and Informational Barriers

Among 76 respondents who intended but did not participate, the report assigned a single decisive barrier per respondent. Thirty-one reported the absence of an accessible voting mechanism, eighteen cited travel or forgone wages, nine cited difficulty obtaining leave, and six reported a register-status problem. Together, these 64 responses account for 84.2% of cases. Ten respondents (13.1%) cited late information or eligibility uncertainty, and two identified other reasons (2.6% by exact division; the source rounds this as 2.7%). This pattern suggests that the problem extends well beyond awareness and supports linking civic education to institutional dialogue [4], [5].

Table 3. Decisive participation barrier among intended non-participants

Barrier	Count	Share
No accessible voting mechanism	31	40.8%
Travel / forgone wage cost	18	23.7%
Employer leave constraints	9	11.8%
Voter-register difficulty	6	7.9%
Late election notification	7	9.2%
Uncertainty about eligibility/procedure	3	3.9%
Other	2	2.6%
Total	76	100.0%

3.4 Non-Electoral Civic Engagement

The strongest participation differences were not limited to election-related activity. Enquiries about village budgets or development spending were reported by 39 of 87 exposed respondents (44.8%) and 9 of 55 comparison respondents (16.4%). Aspirations or complaints addressed to village apparatus or BPD were reported by 29.9% and 9.1%, respectively. Engagement in migrant peer discussions about village governance was more frequent (70.1% versus 38.2%). These indicators suggest that accessible forms of civic participation remain relevant even when physical attendance at elections is difficult [11], [12].

Table 4. Selected non-electoral participation indicators

	Socialized	Comparison
Village budget/development enquiry	39 (44.8%)	9 (16.4%)
Aspiration/complaint to village institution	26 (29.9%)	5 (9.1%)
Household member supported to attend deliberation	31 (35.6%)	7 (12.7%)
Migrant-peer discussion of village governance	61 (70.1%)	21 (38.2%)
Request for village planning/budget document	14 (16.1%)	2 (3.6%)

3.5 Assistance Outputs and Institutional Response

Assistance activities resulted in a collective aspiration document for every village cohort, but institutional response was uneven. All five documents were transmitted, three village administrations acknowledged receipt, and three joined hybrid dialogue forums. Two villages—A and C—reportedly incorporated provisions for migrant consultation into village planning processes, while Village B committed to earlier election notification through PCIM channels. These outcomes should be understood as documented follow-up actions, not as verified longer-term changes in electoral access or voter participation.

Table 5. Institutional follow-up reported for participating villages.

Village	Aspiration submitted	Receipt	Dialogue	Reported follow-up
A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Consultation provision
B	Yes	Yes	Yes	Earlier notification commitment
C	Yes	Yes	Yes	Consultation provision
D	Yes	No	No	None recorded
E	Yes	No	No	None recorded

3.6 Program Implications

Three practical lessons emerge. First, the gap between knowledge and access should be assessed before repeating rights-awareness activities; high knowledge retention does not remove travel and employer constraints. Second, village election committees and district authorities can examine which registration and notification procedures may lawfully be improved under applicable village election rules. The available report is not sufficient to assert that proxy, postal, or electronic voting is currently lawful for Pilkades, and such reforms would require independent legal review. Third, partnerships with diaspora organizations can support continuous, non-partisan civic channels for public-information requests and village planning input. The descriptive program design also reveals a methodological lesson. Evaluations of educational outreach should separate the exposure group from a genuinely comparable group and use stable outcome definitions across summary tables and narrative sections. Where individual ballots cannot or should not be checked, the article should consistently label measures as self-reported and corroborate only what aggregate official data permit. These safeguards strengthen the credibility of community-service research while protecting politically vulnerable respondents.

4. Conclusion

The 2024 UMB–PCIM Malaysia program combined follow-up evaluation of political-rights socialization with structured post-election assistance for workers from five Bengkulu villages. Available report data show substantial knowledge retention, higher measured internal efficacy among previously socialized respondents, and descriptive differences in civic engagement compared with respondents who had not attended the earlier program. Structural barriers accounted for 84.2% of decisive barriers among those intending but unable to participate. The assistance component generated five written aspiration submissions, three acknowledged village responses, three hybrid dialogues, and two reported procedural provisions for migrant consultation. These outcomes demonstrate the potential value of sustained institutional engagement beyond a single socialization event, but not a causal effect on voting. Village and district authorities are encouraged to strengthen lawful voter-register verification, provide early procedural information, and create accessible non-partisan consultation channels for residents living abroad. Diaspora associations and universities can maintain village budget literacy activities, help document community aspirations, and conduct subsequent evaluations with stable, mutually exclusive participation definitions. Before publication as a verified empirical account, the contradictory in-person voting figures (19 versus 27 in the exposed group) should be reconciled against original survey and committee records, and the exact legal basis for any proposed voting accommodation should be checked.

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6. Declaration

Author contributions and responsibilities - The authors made substantial contributions to the conception and design of the study. The authors were responsible for the data analysis, interpretation, and discussion of the results. The authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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