

The Role of Bank Indonesia in Strengthening the Halal Product Ecosystem Through the HEBITREN Program

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ABSTRACT

The growth of Indonesia's halal industry requires a strong supporting ecosystem to compete globally. Bank Indonesia (BI), through the Pesantren Business Economy Association (Hebitren), promotes pesantrens as centres for halal economic development. This article outlines Hebitren's profile, the process of ecosystem strengthening, and the program's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges. It explains BI's role in advancing the halal sector through pesantren involvement and offers practical insights into pesantren contributions as halal economic agents. The findings provide reference points for policymakers, academics, and industry actors in formulating national halal development strategies. Ultimately, Hebitren is expected to enhance pesantren economic independence, expand halal market access, and reinforce Indonesia's position in the global halal industry.

Introduction

Indonesia, with the largest Muslim population in the world, has enormous potential for the halal industry. Indonesia's population in 2022 will reach more than 270 million, dominated by Muslims at around 87 per cent, bringing the total Muslim population of Indonesia to 234 million. The demand for halal products, ranging from food, beverages,

medicines, cosmetics, and others, is also very high. Indonesia must be able to guarantee the availability of halal products for its Muslim citizens. (Saputro et al., 2022)

Currently, Indonesia is not among the top global halal players, with the top spot occupied by its neighbour, Malaysia. Indonesia is only a market for global halal producers, which is why Minister of State-Owned Enterprises Erick Thohir is pushing for Indonesia to become a global halal production centre through various strategies. There are several important issues in this study; first, Indonesia must become a global halal hub. Indonesia must collaborate with global halal producers to meet the supply of halal products, especially food and fashion. Indonesia must have global halal standards so that the products that enter the country are compatible with global halal requirements. Second, Indonesia must first meet domestic halal needs so that Indonesian halal products dominate domestic demand rather than imported halal products.

Third, Indonesia must be able to produce halal products for domestic and global needs in a sustainable manner. Fourth, Indonesia must have effective regulations regarding halal certification. Fifth, Indonesian halal products must be able to compete at the national and global levels. These are major challenges for the Indonesian economy. The potential of the domestic and global halal markets provides enormous economic opportunities for Indonesia. (Hasnil Hasyim, 2023)

Hebitren is part of Bank Indonesia's efforts to empower the pesantren economy by building a pesantren business ecosystem. This initiative is part of Bank Indonesia's strategic program to support sharia economic and financial development. K.H. Reza Fahlipi Bachtiar, Head of OKK DPP Hebitren Pusat, said that Hebitren has a strategic role in strengthening the business network between pesantren.

According to him, Islamic boarding schools do not only focus on educating students, but also act as the economic engine of the community that can drive economic growth in the region. HEBITREN aims to realise Islamic boarding schools as a basis for ecosystems and centres for empowerment and overcoming economic and business problems, particularly those related to halal/sharia business economics that are sovereign, competitive, highly resilient and independent, with national networks and regional and international reach. Another objective is to create Indonesia's economic sovereignty and resilience within the dynamics of the regional and international economy, as well as prosperity and justice for all Indonesians.

Profile of the HEBITREN Program

HEBITREN (Holding Ekonomi dan Bisnis Pesantren) is an independent and non-partisan organisation established to accelerate the strengthening of pesantren economies. HEBITREN is led by a Chairperson, accompanied by five vice-chairpersons, a Secretary-General and five Deputy Secretary-Generals, and a Treasurer-General and five Deputy Treasurers-General. HEBITREN's management has a term of three years. HEBITREN

has a regional management structure at the provincial level and a local management structure at the regency/city level.

The idea for the formation of Hebitren originated during the 110th Islamic Boarding School Seminar on 12 November 2019. The establishment of Hebitren was supported by Bank Indonesia since the first ISEF in 2014, which was held in Surabaya. Bank Indonesia (BI) organised the 6th Indonesia Sharia Economic Festival (ISEF) on 12-16 November 2019 at the Jakarta Convention Centre (JCC), Jakarta. The event was attended by 110 Islamic boarding schools from various regions, who declared the initiation of the formation of a holding company for Islamic boarding schools that would oversee all economic activities and businesses of Islamic boarding schools.

Then, at the Kick Off of the 7th ISEF on 7 August 2020, HEBITREN was officially launched nationally and witnessed directly by the Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia, KH. Ma'ruf Amin (Wordpress.com., 2020). To date, 16 provincial-level HEBITRENS have been established, with membership reaching around 300 Islamic boarding schools throughout Indonesia. This number is expected to increase, given the growing number of other Islamic boarding schools wishing to join HEBITREN to collectively enhance the capacity and business competencies of their enterprises.

Strengthening the Halal Product Ecosystem Through the HIBITREN Program

Islamic boarding schools have abundant economic potential through their efforts to meet the needs of their residents and the surrounding community. Many of them have even developed into economic actors capable of empowering the wider community. This prompted Bank Indonesia (BI) and several related institutions to formulate the establishment of the Islamic Boarding School Economic and Business Holding (Hebitren) since the first Indonesia Sharia Economic Festival (ISEF) in 2014, which culminated in the momentum for its establishment at the 110 Islamic Boarding School Seminar at the end of 2019.

Independent and non-partisan, Hebitren seeks to foster a spirit of unity and togetherness among Islamic boarding schools throughout Indonesia, to become part of the forefront of the nation's economic recovery. Hebitren also supports the amplification of the major program Roadmap for Islamic Boarding School Independence, initiated by the government through the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, to develop Islamic boarding schools into more than just educational institutions, but also into exemplary economic movements that empower the people.

Meanwhile, BI's support for efforts to strengthen the pesantren economy through Hebitren is outlined in three strategic pillars, namely: Empowering the sharia economy through the creation of an end-to-end ecosystem, encouraging the expansion of the sharia financial market, and strengthening research, assessment and education related to sharia economic development in Indonesia. These pillars can be used as a reference in

strengthening the economic potential of pesantren by considering the following three important aspects:

- Striving for institutional stability, which consists of strengthening governance, professionalism, and accountability.
- Optimising regional resources and digitalisation through feasibility studies, knowledge transfer, and the transformation of infrastructure and payment systems.
- Synergy and active collaboration with the legislature, government, business actors, mass media, associations, and the community. (*Sustainable Development of Pesantren Economy through Support from Hebitren and Ikeru Indonesia*, 2025)

Analysis of the Strengths and Weaknesses of the HEBITREN Program

There are several studies related to the economic independence of agricultural-based Islamic boarding schools. Ramadini et al. (2022a and 2022b) analysed the development strategy of the agricultural-based business unit of the Hidayatullah Islamic Boarding School in Depok using a Strength-Weakness-Opportunity-Threat (SWOT) analysis processed with the Analytic Network Process (ANP). The results of the study show that the strength and opportunity aspects have the highest scores compared to the weakness and threat aspects.

This finding is reinforced by a rater agreement value of 0.4645, which indicates that key stakeholders of the Islamic boarding school (respondents) agree that the strengths and opportunities of the business unit management by the Islamic boarding school are more dominant or a higher priority than the weaknesses and threats. A more in-depth analysis shows that the strengths of the Islamic boarding school are as follows: i) The establishment of pesantren collaboration with both internal and external parties in the development of agricultural businesses; ii) A deep understanding of sharia, supported by the mentality and spirituality of pesantren elements; iii) The leadership and motivation of kiai in the development of the pesantren economy; iv) The quantity of human resources (students and the surrounding community) as economic capital; v) The suitability of the business field (agriculture) with the potential of local economic resources; and vi) The inclusiveness of Islamic boarding schools and the strength of social capital in interacting with the community.

The weaknesses of Islamic boarding schools are as follows: i) suboptimal product marketing management; ii) turnover of business unit managers, which hinders human resource regeneration; iii) inadequate infrastructure to support business units; iv) low level of business management professionalism; v) limited capital, and vi) inadequate risk management of business units. In terms of opportunities, the order is as follows: i) The opportunity for Islamic boarding schools as producers to supply the needs of the community (agricultural production); ii) High public trust in Islamic boarding schools as social capital; iii) The existence of various government initiative programs; and ix) The halal

lifestyle in Islamic boarding schools, whereby they only produce and consume what is halal and thayyib (good).

Finally, there are two threats to the pesantren business, as follows. First, increasingly fierce competition with more and more business competitors, both local and national business networks. Second, the increasingly high risk of business losses due to market uncertainty (both input and output markets) and the risk of price fluctuations (inflation). (Irfany, 2022)

Analysis of Opportunities and Challenges of the HEBITREN Program

The role of santri in economic empowerment in Hebitren is very interesting to discuss because santri, who are busy with learning or reciting the Qur'an every day, also have economic activities. Santri from Islamic boarding schools who are members of Hebitren are provided with various skills in the economic field, such as making products, making crafts, and trading. All of this is done by the Islamic boarding schools in an effort to equip the santri with various skills for the advancement of the boarding schools or at least to prepare the santri mentally and skillfully so that when they leave the boarding school, they can be independent. Therefore, Hebitren strives to develop itself by taking concrete actions with the santri in the economic empowerment of the community.

Opportunities in the current era are wide open for Islamic boarding schools through their students to improve their skills in the digital world. Hebitren can collaborate with large companies to provide support in the form of expertise in digital-based businesses through information technology. Activities to improve the quality of educators and educational staff are carried out within Hebitren by bringing in experts or sending them to participate in training and seminars outside the pesantren. Maintaining the quality of educators and educational staff is the same as maintaining the quality of the pesantren as a whole. Students who are assigned to a certain place will be guided so that when they return to the pesantren, they will already understand.

Bank Indonesia's representative office in Yogyakarta and Islamic boarding schools in the province of Yogyakarta have formed HEBITREN Korwil DIY, which since 2021 has been a business holding company consisting of 17 Islamic boarding schools (Aji Putra, 2020). Currently, Holding Pesantren DIY has formed a secondary cooperative in a program to support business development in Islamic boarding schools between primary cooperatives. Currently, the business that has been carried out is the joint purchase of food supplies in the form of rice between member Islamic boarding schools of HEBITREN.

In general, there are several challenges facing HEBITREN DIY in the future. First, the lack of professional, transparent, and accountable business management. Second, responsiveness to information technology as part of efforts to accelerate the business development of the HEBITREN DIY regional coordination unit. Third, the majority of Islamic boarding schools own large areas of land, but this has not been optimally utilised in the agriculture, plantation, and livestock sectors. Fourth, the need to build a distribution centre to help meet the needs of HEBITREN member Islamic boarding schools so as to

create sustainability for the businesses developed by HEBITREN. Fifth, the competence of HEBITREN's human resources managers and operational staff is not yet optimal, so intensive assistance is needed. To address these challenges, strategic solutions are needed to optimise the potential through training programs and institutional assistance from the Hebitren DIY regional office.

This is done to support the development of pesantren business units to encourage economic activities and improve the welfare of pesantren in a sustainable manner. This activity provides benefits for HEBITREN in the preparation of the Hebitren business model, business planning and RAPB, preparation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), Financial Reports, Organisational Structure and Job Descriptions, Mapping of Prospective Hebitren Managers, and the core business to be carried out. The benefits of this event for pesantren administrators include receiving input or knowledge transfer related to the development of the Hebitren business model, business planning and RAPB, the development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), Financial Reports, Organisational Structure and Job Descriptions, Mapping of Potential Hebitren Managers, and the core business to be run. (Ali et al., 2024)

Conclusion

The growth of the halal sector in Indonesia requires a strong ecosystem to compete internationally and make Indonesia a global halal hub. Bank Indonesia (BI), through the Islamic Boarding School Business and Economic Association (Hebitren), plays a vital role in encouraging Islamic boarding schools to become centres of halal economic and business innovation. Hebitren, which has received support since the implementation of ISEF 2014 and was officially formed in August 2020, functions as an independent and neutral organisation that accelerates the deepening of the pesantren economy and strengthens business networks between pesantren.

BI's involvement in this strengthening is based on three strategic pillars, namely: empowering the sharia economy through the formation of an end-to-end ecosystem, encouraging the development of the sharia financial market, and increasing research, evaluation, and education. Hebitren has significant advantages, such as the formation of collaborations, a deep understanding of sharia, solid kiai leadership, and high potential in human resources (santri) and social capital. In addition, there are great opportunities for Islamic boarding schools to play a role as providers of community needs and to develop a halal lifestyle. However, this program is not without its weaknesses and challenges, such as suboptimal marketing management, low professionalism in business management, limited capital, and difficulties in realising professional business management, responsiveness to technological advances, and optimisation of land use and the competence of Hebitren management human resources. Overall, Hebitren has great potential to advance the economic independence of Islamic boarding schools, expand market access for halal products, and strengthen Indonesia's position in the global halal industry, provided that

the existing weaknesses and challenges can be overcome through synergy and active collaboration.

Recommendations

Hebitren should focus on improving professionalism in business management, including the development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), comprehensive business planning, and transparent and accountable financial management. Intensive assistance from Bank Indonesia and related parties is essential to train Hebitren's human resources.

In addition, Hebitren is advised to collaborate with companies or experts in the digital realm to provide training and support in online product marketing (e-commerce) and to build an integrated information system. Hebitren needs to be encouraged to maximise the use of existing land (in the agriculture, plantation, and livestock sectors) for sustainable production.

Hebitren also needs to actively strengthen and expand collaboration not only between Islamic boarding schools, but also with the government, large businesses (especially those related to supply chains and export markets), and Islamic financial institutions to overcome capital constraints and open up wider market access, both domestically and internationally.

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