

## Securing a business idea, stopping working overseas

Siti Mutia's family was very poor with no permanent job or regular income. It forced her husband, Joko Susanto (39) to seek work overseas as a plantation worker in Malaysia. The family had to sell their cattle to fund the cost of Joko's departure through an overseas employment agency in the town.

A month before his departure to Malaysia, on September 2007, the family received information through a community radio that there would be an entrepreneurship training for migrant workers facilitated by Qaryah Thayyibah in collaboration with ILO-Migrant Workers Project. "I was very eager to get a safer job and didn't want my husband to be a migrant worker again and again like our friends. That motivated me and my husband to be entrepreneurs and to enroll in the training selection process," Mutia (29) told her experience.

Exploring and translating their business idea into a business plan during the training, the couple then agreed to allocate some percents of earned overseas income to fund their business proposal: cultivating jamur kuping (literally translated ear mushroom).

"For our first limited financial savings, I only cultivated 3,000 blocks of mushrooms. I funded them from my husband's remittances. Impressively, the mushrooms generated a monthly income about IDR 600,000 during the first quarter. I then invested the profit of the mushrooms as well as my husband's remittances to further boost my business," Mutia said, remembering the first phases of her recently started business.

Now, almost three years of managing their mushroom business, Mutia cultivates 20,000 blocks of mushrooms that contribute about IDR 3 million for the family income. This economic improvement of the family's income has encouraged Joko to finish his contract in Malaysia. He then returned home on August 2009 to support his wife's business.

"As the ILO SIYB entrepreneurship training taught us, we have to generate our business ideas. The rapid growth of our business has inspired me to undertake market surveys in other districts. Thank God, I secured some big buyers in the province capital city. It then encouraged me to develop a partnership with my neighbors to cultivate mushrooms," Joko said.

After two years of developing their new business, the couple has now become both mushroom farmers and reputable mushroom distributors in Central Java. With their secondary business—as suppliers—the family receive an additional monthly income of IDR 1.5 to 2 million.

"The strong points of the ILO SIYB entrepreneurship training are: providing basic business management knowledge, making a measurable business plan, mapping the market, developing a marketing strategy, and winning the market. - We are Winners now," Mutia smiles proudly.