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# Animative Mentoring to Increase the Engagement of SEKAMI Children at St. Hendrikus Homa Parish

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### ABSTRACT

This community service activity aims to increase the activeness and strengthen the faith formation of SEKAMI children at St. Hendrikus Homa Station, who have so far shown limited involvement in church activities. The low participation of children is influenced by the lack of varied coaching methods and mentoring adapted to the developmental needs of children. Therefore, this program applies an animated approach that emphasizes the role of animators and animatrists in the faith mentoring process. The method used in this activity combines community education and direct mentoring approaches. The program was implemented in several stages, including movement and song animations, Scripture catechesis through storytelling and dialogue, and the introduction of liturgical instruments and vestments. Evaluation was conducted through oral questioning before and after the activities, as well as observation of children's participation, confidence, and attitudes during the sessions. The results indicate an improvement in children's participation and understanding of faith materials, as reflected in their involvement in discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and their ability to recall Scripture messages and identify the pillars of SEKAMI and basic liturgical elements. Positive changes were also observed in attitudes such as discipline, cooperation, and respect during prayer and liturgical activities. However, these improvements are still described in a general manner and are not yet supported by more specific and measurable indicators. Therefore, claims regarding the effectiveness of the animated approach should be interpreted cautiously. Nevertheless, the activity demonstrates that creative and sustainable mentoring has the potential to support the faith growth and active participation of SEKAMI children, especially in station communities with limited pastoral assistance.

## INTRODUCTION

St. Hendrikus Homa Station is one of the stations in the St. Maria Goreti Waiwadan Parish, located in a rural area with a geographically dispersed layout and relatively far from the parish center. This situation has made it difficult to consistently carry out pastoral services, particularly children's faith formation, on a regular basis. Based on initial observations and field accompaniment, children's participation in SEKAMI activities remains relatively low. The faith formation activities conducted at this station are attended by 16 children as the target group;

however, their level of engagement is still not optimal. Some children tend to be passive, lack the to answer questions, and are more often seen playing with peers rather than fully participating in the faith formation activities. This situation is influenced by the limited number of mentors, the lack of variety in faith formation methods, and the absence of an approach tailored to the developmental characteristics of children. Consequently, SEKAMI activities have not yet fully succeeded in becoming an engaging, participatory, and sustainable platform for faith formation for the children at St. Hendrikus Homa Parish.

The issue of low participation by children in religious activities has been a focus of various previous studies. Several studies indicate that the development of digital technology, changes in social interaction patterns, and children's increasing reliance on entertainment media have led to a decline in children's interest in actively participating in faith-building activities at church (Tampubolon et al., 2022). Children tend to be more interested in play activities and using electronic devices than in participating in spiritual activities, which are perceived as monotonous and less interactive. This situation has led to a decline in children's involvement in communal prayer, catechesis, and other church community activities.

In addition to technological advancements, the family environment and the quality of guidance also significantly influence children's faith development. Research conducted by Siregar & Manalu (2023) confirms that parental support, family attention, and the active involvement of mentors have a significant impact on children's spiritual development. Children who receive attention, motivation, and good examples of faith tend to be more active in church activities compared to children who receive less guidance. Thus, children's faith formation does not rely solely on church programs but also requires the involvement of families and mentors capable of creating a supportive and enjoyable environment for faith formation.

Other studies also indicate that participatory, communicative, and experience-based formation methods are more effective in increasing children's engagement in faith activities (Hutagalung et al., 2024 ; Silaban, 2021). The use of methods such as animated videos and songs, Bible storytelling, educational games, and interactive dialogue can help children more easily understand faith-related material while also increasing their confidence and participation in group activities. These findings demonstrate that a creative approach to faith formation is an essential need in children's ministry within the Church, particularly in parishes or communities with limited pastoral staff.

Nevertheless, most previous research has focused on children's faith formation within the context of schools or parishes that have relatively adequate mentors and facilities. Research on the application of an animative approach in SEKAMI faith formation within rural parish settings with limited pastoral guidance remains scarce. Therefore, this community service initiative aims to address this gap by introducing an animation-based faith guidance model tailored to the conditions and needs of SEKAMI children at St. Hendrikus Homa Parish.

Based on this study, it is evident that there remains a gap between the need for interactive faith formation for children and current mentoring practices, which tend to be one-sided in their delivery of material. Most faith formation for children emphasizes lecture-style methods and has not yet integrated many creative activities capable of actively engaging children in the faith learning process. Furthermore, the use of concrete media and approaches appropriate to children's developmental characteristics remains limited, particularly in the context of ministry at rural parishes with limited pastoral staff.

Therefore, the novelty of this service project lies in the application of an animative approach that combines movement and song, dialogical catechesis based on and biblical storytelling, as well as the use of concrete media specifically the introduction of liturgical objects and vestments within an integrated mentoring model. This approach also positions animators not merely as conveyors of material, but as active companions who foster a participatory, communicative, and enjoyable atmosphere for faith formation among SEKAMI children. Thus, this activity focuses not only on the transfer of religious knowledge but also on the active engagement of children through learning experiences appropriate to their developmental stages. Lumbanraja (2022); Widyawati (2021); Siregar (2023) states that mentors with pastoral and pedagogical competencies are able to increase children's motivation, while Lestari (2022); Sihotang (2022); Manalu (2021); Purba (2023)

emphasize that mentors who are creative and serve as role models have a significant impact on children's faith experience.

As a solution to this problem, this community service activity was designed in the form of direct mentoring through an animative approach that integrates several faith formation activities, such as movement and song animations, dialogical Scripture catechesis, and an introduction to elements of the Church's liturgy. This approach is designed to create a more engaging, participatory, and developmentally appropriate environment for children, ensuring they are not merely passive recipients of faith content but actively involved in every mentoring activity.

The objective of this outreach activity is to increase engagement and strengthen the faith formation of SEKAMI children at St. Hendrikus Homa Parish through an animated approach implemented by animators.

## **IMPLEMENTATION METHOD**

This community service activity employs a descriptive qualitative approach, with the activity taking the form of mentoring in the faith formation of SEKAMI children. This approach was chosen because it can directly depict the process of increasing participants' engagement and understanding of faith as the activity unfolds naturally in the field. The method employed combines community education with mentoring, deemed appropriate to the partners' needs in enhancing the quality of children's faith formation. This method is also aligned with the children's characteristics, which require active, participatory, and experience-based learning.

The target group for this activity is the 16 SEKAMI children at St. Hendrikus Homa Parish, ranging in age from elementary school to early adolescence. The participants' characteristics indicate that while they tend to be active in play, they remain underengaged in faith formation activities. The selection of this target group was based on initial observations showing low levels of activity and understanding of the faith among the children, thus requiring more interactive guidance appropriate to their developmental stage.

The program will be held at St. Hendrikus Homa Station, St. Maria Goreti Waiwadan Parish, over a three-month period from August to October 2025. Sessions will be held regularly once a week, for a total of eight meetings. Each meeting will last approximately 90–120 minutes. The details of the activities include: (1) opening and communal prayer, (2) movement activities and children's spiritual songs, (3) a dialogical presentation of Scripture, (4) an introduction to liturgical items and vestments, (5) educational games or simple simulations, (6) oral reflection and evaluation, and (7) closing. The intensity of these regularly conducted activities aims to ensure that the faith formation process is sustained and provides children with opportunities to gradually become actively involved.

The implementation stages are carried out systematically and conducted over four mentoring sessions held in the hall of St. Hendrikus Homa Parish. Each session lasts approximately 45–60 minutes to ensure the children remain focused and do not easily become bored during the activity. The initial stage begins with problem identification through preliminary observation of the children's level of activity, engagement, and understanding of the faith within SEKAMI. Following this, the service team developed a program plan that included determining the materials, training methods, supporting media, and the activity schedule. Next, coordination was carried out with the parish committee and SEKAMI mentors to ensure the readiness of the venue, participants, and the smooth implementation of the activities.

The core activities were implemented in stages during each meeting. In the first meeting, the focus was on movement and song activities to create a joyful atmosphere while boosting the children's enthusiasm and fostering a sense of closeness during the formation sessions. The second and third meetings featured Scripture catechesis using dialogical and storytelling methods to encourage the children to actively ask questions, respond, and understand the messages of faith in a contextual manner. Furthermore, during the fourth session, an introduction to liturgical items and liturgical vestments of the Church was conducted using concrete materials so that the children could more easily understand the function and meaning of each liturgical item.

Throughout the entire activity process, the service team also provided direct guidance to the 16 SEKAMI children participating in the program. In the final stage, an evaluation was conducted through observation of the children's participation, their engagement in discussions, their ability to answer questions, and their involvement throughout the activities. Additionally, simple question-and-answer sessions were held before and after the activities to assess changes in the children's understanding of the faith-related material presented. As a follow-up, the outreach team, together with SEKAMI mentors and parish leaders, planned for the continuation of regular faith formation activities so that the guidance provided to the children can continue consistently.

Oral evaluations were conducted at the beginning and end of the activity through simple questions tailored to the mentoring material. The evaluation questions covered the participants' understanding of the pillars of SEKAMI, figures and messages from the Holy Scriptures, the functions of liturgical items, the liturgical colors of the Church, as well as the meaning of prayer and Church activities. The initial evaluation is conducted to assess participants' baseline level of understanding before the mentoring begins, while the final evaluation is used to observe changes in understanding after the activity concludes. Additionally, documentation in the form of activity photos and field notes is used as supporting data to reinforce the results of observations and evaluations.

Data collection techniques in this activity were conducted through observation and oral evaluation. Observation was used to monitor participants' engagement, participation, and attitudes during the activity. Meanwhile, oral evaluation was conducted by asking participants questions before and after the activity to measure their understanding of the presented material, such as the pillars of SEKAMI, the content of the Holy Scriptures, and the functions of liturgical items. The evaluation instruments used consisted of a guide for oral questions and an observation sheet covering aspects of participants' activity, courage, cooperation, and understanding. The data obtained was then analyzed using qualitative descriptive techniques, specifically by describing changes in attitude, levels of participation, and improvements in children's understanding of faith following the activity.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The faith accompaniment activities for Sekami children at St. Hendrikus Homa Parish were conducted through eight sessions using an animated approach that combined movement and song, dialogical Scripture catechesis, and an introduction to liturgical objects and vestments. Based on the results of observations and oral evaluations, an improvement was found in the participants' levels of engagement, understanding of the faith, willingness to participate, and religious attitudes after participating in the faith accompaniment activities.

In the initial phase of the activity (pre-test), most participants still demonstrated a low level of understanding regarding the pillars of Sekami, the content of the Bible, and the functions of liturgical items and vestments. Out of 16 participants, only about 5 children were able to correctly name the four pillars of Sekami, while the majority remained hesitant and did not yet understand their meanings. During the Scripture sessions, the children also struggled to retell the content of the readings or explain the moral message of the stories presented. Additionally, most participants were unable to distinguish the names and functions of liturgical items such as the chalice, paten, ampoule, and the colors of the priest's liturgical vestments.

The initial observation results also indicated that the participants' level of participation was still low. The children appeared passive, lacked confidence, and tended to be shy about asking or answering questions. Out of 16 participants, only about 4–5 children were actively engaged in discussions, while the others remained mostly silent and participated passively. Attendance was also inconsistent, and some children frequently arrived late.

After the mentoring activities were conducted regularly, the final evaluation (*post-test*) results showed a significant change. Thirteen children were able to correctly recite the four pillars of Sekami and explain their meanings simply in their own words. During the Scripture catechesis sessions, most participants began to retell the content of the readings and connect them to daily life, such as the importance of praying, helping parents, and sharing with others.

In the liturgical introduction sessions, participants also showed improved understanding. The children began to recognize the names of liturgical items and their basic functions in the celebration of the Eucharist. Additionally, they began to understand the meaning of liturgical vestment colors and their use during the Church’s liturgical seasons. This improvement was evident in the participants’ ability to answer oral questions with greater confidence compared to before the mentoring program began.

Changes were also observed in the participants’ participation and attitudes. Based on observation results, the majority of children showed greater enthusiasm during the activities. The children appeared more active in participating in movement and song activities, were more willing to answer questions, and engaged in group discussions. Attendance became more consistent, and the children began arriving on time. Additionally, changes in attitude emerged, such as increased cooperation, politeness, respect for liturgical items, and the courage to lead simple prayers.

Following the implementation of the mentoring activities, positive changes were observed in the children’s understanding and engagement during the sessions. The children began to show the courage to ask and answer questions, were more active in discussions, and were able to recall the messages from the Holy Scriptures that had been conveyed. Some children were also able to name the pillars of SEKAMI and recognize the basic functions of the Church’s liturgical items and vestments. In addition to aspects of understanding, changes were also evident in the children’s attitudes during the activities, such as increased enthusiasm, cooperation, discipline, and attentiveness in participating in the faith formation process. These findings indicate that the animative approach used in the mentoring program was able to create a more participatory and enjoyable atmosphere for faith learning among the SEKAMI children at St. Hendrikus Homa Parish.

Indicators of the activity’s success can be seen in several changes observed during the mentoring process. The children showed greater enthusiasm, evident in their more punctual attendance and active participation in every faith formation activity. Additionally, positive changes were observed in the children’s understanding of the faith, demonstrated through their ability to recite the pillars of SEKAMI, explain the messages of the Holy Scriptures in simple language, and recognize the basic functions of the Church’s liturgical items.

The participants’ engagement also improved, particularly after the movement and song activities, which helped create a more enjoyable and participatory learning environment. The children began to be more confident in asking questions, answering questions, and engaging in discussions during the activities. In addition, the participants’ ability to recall the training material indicated that the children were beginning to understand the content of the guidance provided. Other changes were also evident in the development of the children’s religious attitudes, such as politeness, attentiveness during prayer activities, and respect for the Church’s liturgical items and vestments.

**Table 1. Results of the Implementation of Enhancing Children’s Active Participation and Faith Formation at SEKAMI**

Assessment Indicators	Results Before the Activity	Results After the Activity
<b>SEKAMI Animation Activities</b>	Children’s Engagement and Focus During the Animation The children appeared passive; some were still shy about moving, lacked focus, and did not fully follow the instructions given by the animators	The children appeared more enthusiastic, actively moving, following instructions well, and demonstrating higher levels of focus and engagement during the activity.
<b>Understanding the Meaning of SEKAMI and Delving into the Content of the Holy Scriptures</b>	Many children do not yet clearly understand the meaning of the four pillars of SEKAMI and still struggle to retell the content of the Scripture passages that were read. They also tend to be passive when asked to ask	After participating in the catechesis, the children began to be able to explain the meaning of each SEKAMI pillar and could repeat the messages of the Holy

**Understanding Liturgical Items and Their Functions**

questions or give their opinions.

Before the activity, the children were only generally familiar with the equipment used in the celebration of the Eucharist and could not yet distinguish the names or functions of liturgical objects such as the chalice, paten, or ampoule.

Scriptures with greater confidence. They also appeared more willing to answer questions and ask their own.

After the introductory session, the children were able to name the liturgical items along with their basic functions. They also showed greater interest in participating in liturgical ministry.

**Understanding Liturgical Vestments and Their Functions**

At the start of the activity, some children were unaware of the meaning of liturgical colors and did not understand when specific colors were used in the Eucharistic celebration.

After the training, the children gained a better understanding of the meanings of liturgical colors such as green, white, red, and purple. They began to recognize the liturgical seasons based on the color of the vestments worn by the priest during the Eucharistic celebration.



**Figure 1. Animation Activity**

This activity demonstrates the role of animators in enhancing the children's engagement and fostering their faith through SEKAMI movement animation. This documentation illustrates the role of animators in fostering children's active participation and faith formation through catechesis and deeper study of the Scriptures.



**Figure 2. Introduction to Liturgical Items**

This image shows the role of animators in increasing children's engagement and fostering their faith through an introduction to liturgical items so that SEKAMI children can learn about liturgical items and their functions in the Eucharistic celebration.



**Figure 3.** Introduction to Liturgical Vestments

This image illustrates the role of animators in fostering children's active participation and faith formation through an introduction to liturgical vestments, so that SEKAMI children can learn about liturgical vestments and their roles in the Eucharistic celebration.

The results of the activity indicate that the success of faith formation for SEKAMI children is inseparable from the active role of animators in designing and implementing activities tailored to the participants' characteristics. One strategy that has a positive impact on children's engagement is the use of animation methods in the early stages of the activity. Animation presented through movement, songs, and simple games creates a more enjoyable formation atmosphere, making children better prepared to participate in the mentoring activities. Field findings indicate that after the animation session, participants become more enthusiastic, confident, and active in participating in discussions and group activities. This situation demonstrates that an animated approach helps build children's emotional readiness and learning motivation before entering the core content of faith-based mentoring. These findings reinforce the views (Endrawati, 2024 ; Astuti & Pranoto, 2021) which explain that learning activities based on movement, songs, and games can enhance children's readiness to learn and their participation. Furthermore, the increased engagement of participants during the activities also indicates that active learning can foster children's motivation and self-confidence in the learning process, as explained by (Hapsari & Widodo, 2022) .

During the Scripture catechesis sessions, the dialogical approach employed by the catechists also contributed to enhancing the participants' understanding. The catechists did not merely present the material in a one-way manner, but engaged the children in simple dialogues, linked the material to everyday experiences, and provided concrete examples. The results of the observation show that this approach helps participants understand the message of faith in a more contextual way because children are able to connect the content of the Bible with real actions in daily life, such as praying, helping parents, and sharing with others. These findings indicate that the process of dialogue and active participant engagement makes faith-related material easier for children to understand and internalize. This supports the perspective of Boiliu (2023); Ratmawati et al. (2023); Atmazaki et al. (2023) which emphasizes that dialogic and reflective learning can help participants understand faith values in a more practical and contextual manner.

Furthermore, during the session introducing liturgical items and vestments, the use of concrete media and hands-on experiences helped enhance participants' understanding of the functions and symbolic meanings of the Church's liturgical equipment. Children were given the opportunity to see and become familiar with liturgical items such as chalices, patens, and altar candles firsthand, making it easier for them to understand the function of each item. The results of the activity indicate that a visual and participatory approach makes it easier for children to remember the names and uses of liturgical items during the Eucharistic celebration. Additionally, the children began to demonstrate respect for liturgical items and vestments throughout the

activity. These findings suggest that the use of concrete media significantly aids children's faith learning process, as they grasp the material more easily through observation and direct experience. These results reinforce the research [Zebua \(2025\)](#); [Harefa \(2022\)](#); [Telaumbanua \(2021\)](#) which explains that concrete media can enhance participants' understanding of the Church's liturgical symbols and practices. The respectful attitudes beginning to develop among the participants also support the view [Laia \(2023\)](#) regarding the importance of introducing liturgy from an early age in shaping children's religious attitudes.

The improvements observed during the activities were evident not only in terms of knowledge but also in participants' attitudes and behavior. Observations revealed that children became more disciplined, polite, and active throughout the formation process. The children also began to show attention during prayer activities and showed greater respect for their peers and mentors throughout the activities. These findings indicate that faith formation conducted in a participatory and sustained manner not only helps children understand religious content but also shapes their character and religious attitudes in daily life. These results support the views of the [Rahmawati \(2023\)](#); [Hyde \(2021\)](#), which state that guidance conducted in a targeted, consistent, and developmentally appropriate manner can help shape character and religious behavior from an early age.

Nevertheless, several challenges were encountered during the implementation of the mentoring process. One of the main challenges was the variation in age and ability among the SEKAMI children, resulting in differing levels of understanding among the participants. Some children grasp the material quickly, while others still require repeated explanations and more intensive guidance. To address this, the mentoring team uses simpler language, reiterates key points of the material, and provides concrete examples relevant to the children's daily lives. Additionally, the animators distribute their attention more evenly to ensure that children facing difficulties can still participate effectively in the activities.

Another challenge is the limited activity space, which restricts participants' interaction and movement, particularly during movement and song activities. To address this, the support team arranges the children's seating more flexibly and divides participants into small groups during discussion or practical sessions. This arrangement helps maintain a conducive activity atmosphere despite the limited space. Additionally, some children still exhibited shyness and a lack of confidence when speaking or actively participating in activities. In addressing this, the activity leaders adopted a personal approach by giving direct attention, encouraging children to speak slowly, and offering praise and encouragement when children dared to answer questions or engage in activities. This more intimate and persuasive approach helps the children feel more comfortable and accepted within the group, so that gradually they begin to show the courage to participate actively. Thus, the various challenges that arise during the activities do not merely become obstacles, but also serve as material for reflection for the mentoring team in adapting their training methods to the needs and characteristics of the SEKAMI children at St. Hendrikus Homa Parish.

Overall, the results of this activity indicate that a mentoring model combining animation, dialogical catechesis, and the use of concrete media is an effective strategy for enhancing the active participation and understanding of the faith among SEKAMI children. This finding also underscores that the role of animators is crucial to the success of faith formation, both in cognitive and affective aspects.

## CONCLUSION

The community service activity on the role of animators in the faith formation of SEKAMI children at St. Hendrikus Homa Parish demonstrates that an animated approach through movement and song, dialogical catechesis, and the use of concrete media can help increase children's active participation and understanding of the faith. This approach creates a more participatory, enjoyable, and developmentally appropriate learning environment, enabling participants to become more active, confident, and better able to grasp the faith material. Additionally, this activity fosters children's religious and social attitudes, such as discipline, cooperation, and respect for the Church's liturgy. As a follow-up, faith formation activities for SEKAMI children need to be carried out continuously with support from the station, the parish,

and parents, as well as through capacity building for animators and animatrixes so that children's faith formation can take place in a more creative and contextual manner.

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