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**ASEAN Institute for
Peace and Reconciliation**

WORKING PAPER SERIES ON PEACE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

**Lesson Learned from the Peace Villages
in Indonesia: The Role of Village Women in
Policy-Making through Human Security Approach**

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ISSUE: 2021 - NO. 02



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ASEAN-IPR Working Paper Series on Peace & Conflict Resolution is published electronically by the ASEAN Institute for Peace & Reconciliation (ASEAN-IPR)

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ASEAN-IPR acknowledges and appreciates the contribution of Drs. Sunu Mahadi Soemarno, MA as the copy editor of the ASEAN-IPR Working Paper Series on Peace and Conflict Resolution.





Abstract

The prolonged COVID-19 pandemic, combined with economic uncertainty, has increased the burden of societies living with existing socio-political issues, including poverty, natural disasters, sectarian conflicts, as well as discrimination against women. This paper contends that human security approach is suitable in providing people with opportunity to achieve prosperity, as well as fulfillment of rights and dignity that lead to sustainable development. This writing presents the learning from ten villages in Indonesia in implementing Human Security Approach (HSA) following the UN General Assembly Resolution 66/290 through the Peace Village Initiative in Java, Indonesia. This study explores the Peace Village Initiative that supports local women's active participation in policy-making, while also promotes peace and conflict transformation, poverty reduction and gender justice. The Peace Village aims to solve the problem of elitist public security policies that limit women's and marginalized group's participation, which are ineffective in the face of crisis, such as horizontal conflict or pandemic. By using qualitative, in-depth interview method, the study finds that the Peace Village Initiative is able to synergize the HSA and the gender justice approach with components of the economy and women's empowerment. The Initiative is able to strengthen women's economic access as well as serve as a medium for meetings among different groups, which resulted in collaborative initiatives. The Initiative manages to support women's participation in public and political issues, including in cross-sectoral groups of government, religious groups and village apparatuses that creates a participative task force. These collaborations create community resilience that is significant in the decision-making process during conflict resolution. This study offers recommendations for participatory-based policy development model, specifically on how to foster collaboration between women's groups and policy makers at the local and regional levels, specifically in Southeast Asian context.



A. Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted human life, not only on the health sector, but also on other sectors such as economy, culture, politics, and religious affairs. This situation brings uncertainty and insecurity to individuals, communities and countries. In the economic context, the pandemic has led to a significant increase in poverty. Even if the handling of COVID-19 in Indonesia went well, the poverty rate was projected to rise to 9.7% by the end of 2020, with 1.3 million people become the new poor. (Suryahadi et al., 2020). By mid-2021, despite the Indonesian government has rolled out mass vaccination and economic stimulus programs, the full scale of COVID-19 impact on Indonesia's economy and economic growth remains immeasurable.

Related to religious affairs, the pandemic has made online religious studies increasingly popular. At the same time, radical Islamic groups have used online platforms to spread their ideology and recruit members. Based on research conducted by the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan), in May 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic was also accompanied by the revival of radical and extremist groups in several regions in Indonesia (Komnas Perempuan, 2020). The pandemic is

deliberately used by extremist groups to mobilize hatred against the government and considered it to be God's punishment to secular governments.

Similarly, the COVID-19 outbreak has had an impact on the increase of gender-based violence and discrimination, such as domestic violence and sexual violence triggered by limited mobility work situations, economic hardships, and tripled burdens faced especially by women that have to manage paid work, domestic unpaid labor, as well as community care. Moreover, unprepared with the scale of the pandemic, government policies in mitigating COVID-19 do not pay special attention to its impact on women (Komnas Perempuan, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact, not only on health but also on security. Crisis conditions call for efforts to redefine the concept of security traditionally viewed as the absence of military threats or disturbances towards a nation. However, the definition of security has progressed to cover non-traditional perspective, which include non-military security concerns, such as threats or disturbances caused by natural and human-induced disasters, as well as disease outbreaks, such as COVID-19 (Nurhasanah, et al., 2020).



The non-traditional perspective on security that takes into consideration the human element as the focal point of the analysis is a response to conventional security studies focusing on military power and its role in maintaining stability. The non-traditional concept is referred to as “human security approach” that, in principle, places individual security as the point of reference and the main focus. Through the General Assembly Resolution 66/290, dated September 10th, 2012, the UN adopted human security approach to identify and address cross-cutting challenges to people’s survival, livelihood and dignity by adhering to the principle of mainstreaming individual rights to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair (Human Security Unit of the United Nation, 2016). In the context of this study, the human security approach (HSA) is important because it is able to identify and respond to the fundamental needs of the community. Human security does not focus solely on physical security to stop armed violence, but also highlights the importance of communities’ peaceful environment and people’s needs to be met in the long term. The Resolution 66/290 also recognized the inter-linkages between peace, development and human rights, and equally considers civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

This working paper explores the women’s community within 10 Peace Villages in Java, Indonesia, in implementing the HSA and gender justice in village policies. The Peace (Village) program is a grassroots community initiative, in collaboration with UN Women, that commits to maintaining and fostering peace and justice. By combining the approaches of human security, gender justice, economic empowerment, peace-building and local wisdom, this movement has been able to encourage women’s participation in policy making. Moreover, economic empowerment has not only been successful in improving the welfare of families, but has also become a channel among different groups to meet and build collaborative actions. These women’s groups have succeeded in encouraging the establishment of village policy plans that adopt the principles of gender equality, inclusiveness and peace. This paper will discuss the three stages of the peace village program: first, the formation of women’s groups to promote peace at the grassroots level; second, the collaboration between the community and the government on the prevention of radicalism and terrorism; and third, the implementation of women’s groups’ initiatives in village policy.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the women’s groups have succeeded in demonstrating community resilience in facing crises. The women’s groups of Peace Villages have successfully raised public awareness of health



protocols and the prevention of COVID-19, as well as encouraged anti-discrimination against COVID-19 patients and their families. Furthermore, these women's groups were able to play an important role in mitigating the economic impact of COVID-19, both by providing social assistance and by revitalizing women's businesses. The important point from the achievements of the 10 Peace Villages is that in building community resilience, the mainstreaming of the ownership and human-centered aspects in the implementation of the HSA is inseparable from the process. Women's groups in each Peace Village have different priorities. Those priorities are based on what exists in their local community. Additionally, in the implementation of the HSA, the approach to local wisdom is always a major consideration. As such, to raise ownership within the 10 villages, women's groups always encourage joint collaboration among all of the community elements in every action. The joint collaboration is achieved by consistently involving the government and village community police in implementing the action plans.

Before detailing the achievement of Peace Village, in the next section the paper will discuss the study's objectives and methodology, followed by the conceptual

framework of the HSA and its implementation in the 10 Peace Villages. Subsequently, the paper will expound the research finding and analysis on the women's participation in addressing the issues they faced in their respective communities, namely intolerance and increase participation in terrorism, as well as integrating the HSA in village policies through the formation of women's agencies and joint working groups. The final section of the paper will present the important points that drive the success, along with elaboration on the challenges and lessons learned related to the women's groups in integrating the HSA in village policies.

B. Research Objectives and Methodology

This paper has two main objectives. Firstly, it expounds the conceptual framework of the HSA and women in peace and conflict transformation, with their implementation in the 10 Peace Villages in Java, Indonesia. Secondly, it identifies the level of participation of village women in promoting village policies based on the HSA. The study utilizes qualitative methodology of case study approach with primary source of the women in the Peace Village. The case study approach is considered invaluable when used to obtain in-depth information on a particular phenomenon or event (Yin RK, 2009). Case study approach is used to identify the implementation of the Peace Village Action Plan to generate in-depth



and multi-faceted understanding. Research data collection was done using in-depth interviews of representatives in the 10 Peace Villages and a review of the impact evaluation of the Peace Village implementation in Java with main informants coming from the villages' governmental agencies and village women.

C. Conceptual Framework

This working paper uses two conceptual frameworks to analyze the role of women in peace-building as well as in promoting the HSA in village policies. The conceptual framework of the HSA is adopted from the United Nations (UN) General Assembly Resolution No. 66/290/2012 and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 regarding the role and contribution of women to preventing conflict and building peace.

a. Human Security Approach

The Human Security Approach (HSA) is a non-traditional security concept that focuses on the security at the individual level. The HSA is different from the traditional security concept that emphasizes on state security and its being free from outside attacks. Meanwhile, the HSA is centered on individual security (Wibowo, & Zamzamy, 2015). The concept of human security first appeared in the UNDP

Human Development Report (1994). The document explains the concept of "security" in a narrow context, that is an understanding of security from aggression coming from outside, or which is more closely related to the notion of state security. The concept of human security should consider human conditions and threats, such as diseases, hunger, repression, etc., which can come from homes, communities, and even the state. This report identifies two components of human security, namely 'freedom from fear' and 'freedom from desire'. From these two components, there are seven categories of human security namely, economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security (Martin and Owen, 2013). The HSA is a conceptual framework used by the UN to identify, develop and integrate various responses to current global issues. The HSA refers to the UN General Assembly Resolution No. 66/290 of 2012. This resolution indicated that the HSA would be a new approach for UN member states in responding to human rights, poverty and other complex problems. (Human Security Unit - United Nations, 2016).

Although the concept of human security has been commonly used in Indonesia, it does not have a legal basis in Indonesia, whilst the phrase 'national security' has appeared in the National Security Bill. This bill states that national security consists of four types: human security, public security, internal security and



external. The meaning of human security is explained as being free from threats of various kinds, such as pandemics, famine, natural disasters, poverty, crimes against humanity, and extreme stress. The national security bill itself is included in the Indonesian government's 2020-2024 national legislation program (Alexandra, 2015). Despite the lack of national legal basis, this working paper uses the HSA introduced by the Human Security Unit - United Nations (2016) as a conceptual framework to identify and analyze the implementation of HSA in the 10 Peace Villages. In detail, this paper analyzes to what extent the 10 Peace Villages apply the four principles of HSA, namely people-centered, comprehensiveness, context-specificity, and prevention-orientation in strengthening protections and empowerment of all humans and communities.

b. Women for Peace and Conflict

Transformation

Another conceptual framework used in this working paper is the role of women in peace-building and conflict transformation as stated in the UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. The UN Resolution 1325 in principle focuses on the impact of war on women and the contribution of women in

preventing conflicts and building peace (Puechguirbal, 2010).

Indonesia supports the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 through its statement at the Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security in 2010. Just like other UN member states, the support only turns into action when the country adopted the resolution into a national regulation and in Indonesia it was done in 2014 through Presidential Regulation (*Perpres*) No. 18 of 2014 concerning the National Action Plan for the Protection and Empowerment of Women and Children in Social Conflict (RAN P3AKS). This implementation is strengthened by the Ministry of Home Affairs' Circular No. 460/5131/PUM concerning the Acceleration of the Implementation of RAN P3AKS in the local regions. This regulation guarantees the protection and empowerment of women in conflict areas and women's involvement in policy-making related to conflict and peace issues in accordance with Indonesian conditions. The RAN P3AKS is divided into three main intervention programs, namely prevention, handling, and empowerment and participation.

To connect the two aforementioned concepts with relevant case study, this working paper shows to what extent the women's groups in the 10 Peace Villages are able to integrate the HSA and conflict transformation in sustaining peace in the Peace Village programs and activities. The Peace Village in Java, Indonesia



is an initiative to increase women participation in peace and conflict transformation that begun in 2013. This working paper will examine to what extent the women's groups in the 10 Peace Villages have been able to position themselves as active actors in promoting peace and preventing violence. This paper also observes how actively involved are the women's groups in the Peace Villages' empowerment and participation program.

D. Research Result and Analysis

This section discusses the transformation of the Peace Village women's groups by adopting the perspective of HSA and women in peace and conflict transformation. The transformation is explained through a method of time-keeping that measures which aspects of the HSA and gender equality have been successfully implemented. There are three stages of the transformation process. In the first stage, the women's groups in Peace Villages primarily focused on efforts to promote tolerance and peace among communities amidst the increasing religious sentiments and conflicts. In the second stage, the women agencies were encouraged to be active in promoting peace to counter the increasing trend of women's involvement in acts of radicalism and terrorism in Indonesia. In the third stage, women's groups in the 10

Peace Villages are able to make a positive contribution in handling the spread of COVID-19 while at the same time encouraging the adoption of the HSA in village policies.

a) Women's participation in promoting interfaith tolerance

The Peace Village was initiated by the Wahid Foundation (WF), an advocacy group for freedom of religion and belief in Indonesia that was started in 2003. During the decade of WF's journey, the foundation believes there are unresolved challenges in promoting tolerance and peace in Indonesia. It was seen that social and economic inequality is one of the driving factors for the birth and propagation of acts of intolerance and radicalism (Wahid Foundation, 2014). Intolerance and discrimination are prone to occur in areas with limited access to economic, educational, and information resources. Social inequality, coupled with the inability to access education, allows individuals to be provoked to hate and commit acts of violence against other groups.

Based on those considerations, in 2013, the foundation formulated a program called *Kampung Damai* (Peace Village) that focused on promoting peace and preventing women-targeted violence. The selection of women as the main target was because of their role in initiating peace at the grassroots level during large-scale conflicts in Indonesia. Women are



recognized as having conducted peace efforts indirectly through economic activities and meeting other basic needs. This value is what the Foundation tries to revitalize in its economic empowerment program for peace (UN WOMEN, 2013).

In the first stage, the program targeted women's groups in West Java. Its primary focus in West Java is due to the region's past of being prone to violence and discrimination against minority groups. By combining economic empowerment and peace-building approaches, this program seeks to encourage women to become agents of peace. The program is still ongoing eight years after its initiation, when this paper was written.

The program's output takes the form of savings and loans cooperatives through *Koperasi Cinta Damai (KCD) Wahid* and women's joint ventures that becomes a medium for women's economic empowerment as well as social inclusion. Social inclusion through economic empowerment is not only for ethnic and religious minorities, but is also targeted towards ex-jihadist women who find it difficult to reintegrate into the community. Social cohesion among women began to emerge through weekly savings and loan meetings. Muslim women who were previously antagonistic to Christian women are unified in

the joint responsibility system existing in the cooperatives (Wahid Foundation, 2016).

The program aims to empower women through micro-finance and entrepreneurship as a method to address social inequalities and strengthen social and economic relations among interfaith communities. Until the end of 2015, the women's groups, who were the target of the development program, succeeded in producing positive interfaith synergy in the form of an interfaith community social enterprise. This program targeted 21 groups of interfaith women with a total of 308 members. Out of 308 members, 257 are Muslim, 3 are Catholic, 18 are Protestant, 2 are Christian, 4 are Buddhist, 20 are Confucian, 1 is Pentecostal, and 3 belong to the Indonesian Bethel Church. In addition, this program has been able to increase communities' commitment in promoting peace. Members of women's groups are committed to respecting differences in religions and denominations in their respective areas.

From the HSA perspective, the economic empowerment program tries to bring security to the community amid its increasingly religious sentiments. At the same time, this program succeeds in expanding economic access for women's groups through savings and loans cooperatives.

Although in the first stage the women's movement for peace was able to provide a sense of economic security as well as to contribute to community security, however,



government support remained lacking. Based on the findings found from the program evaluation results in 2014, it highlighted the lack of involvement, support and collaboration from the government. Local leaders and the village government recognize these women's groups in relation to the economic empowerment program. They consider that economic empowerment can have a positive impact on improving the economic conditions of families and communities. However, local and government leaders tend to reject the involvement of minority groups in those activities. The involvement of minority groups is considered a potential disruption to the stability and security of the village, which was addressed in the second stage of the program.

b) Women's active participation in the prevention of terrorism

An important stage for the Peace Village program was the integration of the HSA and women for sustaining peace that started in 2016. The stage aims to respond to an increase of involvement of women in acts of radicalism and terrorism (The Institute of Policy Analysis of Conflict, 2017). Moreover, research found that the driving factor for women's involvement in acts of radicalism and terrorism is the existence of personal and economic insecurities (WF and CSIS, 2017). With this

understanding, the Peace Village program focuses on efforts to prevent the spread of intolerant and radical ideologies by addressing insecurity factors that are the driving factors for the involvement of women in acts of radicalism. Those are, namely, women's personal, economic, and community-level insecurities.

The establishment and sustained activity of the Peace Village by women's groups attempted to answer the problems of leadership, restlessness, and seclusion experienced by women. The program is expected to generate a sense of togetherness, personal closeness, and dignity for women who are in the process of searching for identity and fulfilment. It also provides economic support to increase the financial resilience of women's groups from being recruited by intolerant and radical groups. Thus, the Peace Village program during this stage concentrates primarily on diminishing the factors that drive women's involvement in acts of radicalism by enhancing group ties and their economic resilience.

In the latter stage of the program, the Foundation collaborated with UN Women. This collaboration realigned the program to focus on integrating aspects of economic empowerment, strengthening women's capacity related to peace-building, gender justice, entrepreneurship, preventing violent extremism, as well as strengthening the government's involvement. Additionally, the scope of the program was then expanded to



Central Java and East Java. The Peace Village women's groups in this stage did not only encourage women's active participation in promoting peace, but also created grassroots women's initiatives as a part of the local governments' policies by institutionalizing women's participation for peace-building through village regulations.

In this regard, the Peace Village women's groups with other stakeholders at the village/*kelurahan* and regency/city levels formulated nine indicators for the Peace Village¹ that are used as a reference to encourage development of the Peace Village Action Plan in government policies² (Wahid Foundation, 2019). The development of The Peace Village Action Plan in government policies can contribute to reducing gender discrimination and violence against women and increasing access to justice for women and preventing of violence extremism. With the adoption of the Peace Village model in government policies, community-based justice

¹ The nine Peace Village indicators are commitment to a peaceful life, promotion and education, ethics of care, values of local wisdom, early warning system, a response system, women's participation, accountable governance, and infrastructure that support the spread of peace and prevent conflict and radicalism.

² There are seven stages of implementing a Peace Village as part of the village policy, namely, (1) Obligatory declaration as a Peace Village/*Kelurahan*; (2) Formation of a Peace Village/*Kelurahan* working group (Pokja) through the village/*kelurahan* development planning

and conflict solving mechanisms will be strongly connected to the formal justice system and service providers provided by the government.

According to the program impact evaluation report (Wahid Foundation, 2018), the Peace Village had been able to strengthen local, peace and gender values among women's groups. The Peace Village women played their role to disseminate and share knowledge about peace-building and gender concepts to whom they met every day. As a result, these women's groups succeeded in assisting other community members in gaining a better understanding about how to prevent conflict, gender-based violence, and radicalism. At the same time, the economic empowerment program that was undertaken through saving and loan activities succeeded in enhancing women's financial literacy and entrepreneurship skills. These skills were considered important in improving economic access for the women. Financial literacy and business development integrated in the Peace Village program are acknowledged to have increased the capacity of the women in the

consultative forum (Musrenbangdes); (3) Ratification of the Peace Village/*Kelurahan* working group (Pokja) in the village regulation (Perdes), or village head's decree; (4) Preparation of the framework for the Peace Village/*Kelurahan* Action Plan by the village/*kelurahan* development planning consultative forum; (5) Ratification of the Peace Village/*Kelurahan* Action Plan in the village regulation, or village head's decree; (6) Implementation of the Peace Village/*Kelurahan* Action Plan; (7) Quarterly monitoring and evaluation by the working groups and women's groups.



household and in small business financial management. In addition, entrepreneurial development was not only able to encourage the women to find their identities, but also improved their families' economies, and increased their self-confidence in expressing their opinions.

The Peace Village program has targeted 30 villages/*kelurahans* in East Java, Central Java and West Java. The total number of program beneficiaries is 2,121 women. Out of the 30 villages that were targeted by the program, 10 villages/*kelurahans* have declared themselves as Peace Villages. The consequence of a village declaring as a Peace Village is that the village has an obligation to implement the nine indicators for Peace Villages/*Kelurahans*". In a Peace Village, a working group consisting of women, local communities, religious/local leaders, and local government officials is formed to ensure that the indicators are adopted in the government system and implemented in the social practices.

Nglinggi Village in Klaten, Central Java was the first village to declare itself a Peace Village and has enacted the nine Peace Village indicators as part of their village policies. This was partly due to the social background of the Nglinggi community, which population has diverse ethnicities and religions, and partly because the village chief is a member of a

minority group. The goal is to make every religious group, every woman, man and child enjoy their rights equally, without discrimination.

A distinct activity in this second stage is the establishment of village-level working group, or locally known as Pokja, consisting representatives of the village's government, apparatuses, women's groups, and local/religious leaders with the task of implementing the Peace Village Action Plan. The Pokja has been able to bridge and coordinate the roles and functions of the multi-stakeholders that have been working "individually" in the prevention of violent extremism. The horizontal coordination by the Pokja is based on equality between the multi-stakeholders. Out of the ten case study villages, seven villages with such policies are Gemblegan and Jetis in Klaten, Central Java; Candirenggo in Malang, East Java; Sidomulyo in Batu City, East Java; Guluk-Guluk, Prancak and Payudan Dundang in Sumenep, East Java. However, there were two villages that faced challenges in establishing the working group. The challenges have been mainly due to national and local political dynamics, whereby the politicization of religions during the 2019 presidential election and the regional head elections in 2020 increased local political polarization and the exclusivism of the opposition groups. Subsequently, there was rejection and persecution of women's groups of different political and religious views. This



exhibited a lack of commitment of the two villages' government to inclusiveness and tend to reject women's groups of different political and religious views. At the level of village heads, in the midst of massive pressure from intolerant groups, the two village leaders caved in to the pressure instead of supporting the Peace Village program.

Despite the challenges faced by the two villages, across all ten villages, the second stage of the program implementation has been able to contribute to the fulfillment of human security at the economic, political and personal levels. In terms of personal security, the women's groups were able to form group ties that expanded the diversity of their interactions and relationships. In the context of economic security, the program increased access to markets and economic opportunities for women through mentoring on economic empowerment and entrepreneurship. In relation to political security, women's groups made efforts to voice their opinions concerning village policies. Furthermore, the ratification of the Nine Indicators for Peace Villages/Kelurahans encouraged the realization of political security through the implementation of inclusive and gender-equitable policies.

Nationally, this program received recognition from the government as a grassroots initiative

prototype for the promotion of peace driven by women. One of the program's important achievements was its designation as a priority by the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection of the Republic of Indonesia. Another achievement was its integration within the National Action Plan for the Protection and Empowerment of Women and Children in Social Conflict (RAN P3AKS). As it achieved recognition in its second stage, the program continued to implement activities to adopt the aspects of peace-building, gender, economic empowerment and the HSA in village policies. This will be described further in the next section.

c) Building community resilience by integrating the HSA in village policies

The third stage of the women's action program in the 10 villages focuses specifically on implementing the Peace Village Indicators in village policies (Cite WF foundation). After the second stage, the 10 villages/kelurahans consisting of eight villages/kelurahans, which have formally adopted the nine indicators for Peace Villages/Kelurahans through their formal, legislated policies, and two villages which have not. In the third stage, the program aims to develop the Peace Village/Kelurahan Action Plans in the 10 villages/kelurahans by combining the approaches of human security, conflict prevention mechanism, peace-building and gender justice, as well as



sustainable women's economic empowerment. The program carried out a number of key interventions, including strengthening the capacity of women, working groups, village/kelurahan governments, and apparatuses; assisting in implementation of Peace Village Action Plans in the 10 villages; and developing local ability for monitoring and evaluation of the Plans. To support the integration of the HSA and gender justice in village policies, a novelty of this third stage program is the strengthening of women, working groups and the government and village apparatuses related to the HSA, the international women's human rights standards, and Indonesia's legislative framework on women's rights.

The preparation of this third phase of the program was undertaken several months before the COVID-19 pandemic occurred. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit Indonesia in March 2020, the program, which had originally planned to focus on preventing terrorism and gender justice, had to change its intervention strategy. All stakeholders, including the Foundation, village governments, women's groups, and working groups, were forced to respond to the impact of the pandemic by replanning the program strategy and agreeing that the program must be able to meet the basic needs, economic and

health accesses of the community. In this context, women's groups are encouraged to become the main actors capable of promoting community resilience in facing crises during the pandemic.

While both women's groups and working groups previously focused on promoting peace, economic empowerment and gender justice, during the COVID-19 pandemic, they have adapted to the needs of the community by actively participating in reducing its negative impact. This adaptation has taken many forms. They actively disseminate health protocols among residents who believe that COVID-19 is a hoax and propaganda.

“Recently our village received lectures from the head of the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI). His lectures included spreading incorrect information related to COVID-19, for example, COVID-19 was deliberately created and spread by China and there was a conspiracy to make this virus spread throughout the world. This message of negative sentiments and hatred caused the community to panic, particularly some residents, who believed in the information. In addition, there was a COVID-19 hoax that those who went to Puskesmas (community health centers) for medical treatment would be diagnosed with COVID-19. This made people reluctant to seek medical assistance at Puskesmas.”



That is why we thought of inviting a doctor from Puskesmas to clarify this information. The doctor explained clearly the handling of COVID-19 by health workers and the history of how this virus can be transmitted to humans. During the outreach activity, one of the sub-village (Dusun) heads, who came as a participant, asked directly about COVID-19 fake news that it was a Chinese conspiracy and all of the people, who were seeking treatment, would be diagnosed with COVID-19 by health workers. Then the doctor explained that the news was not true and was made to unsettle the public. On the one hand, we are happy to be able to hold this health outreach activity because it is a media for tabayyun (enlightenment in Arabic). If we, as a common people, explain it to the community, they usually don't believe us. Fortunately, one speaker was a doctor from the community health center, and another one was a religious leader from a trusted Islamic boarding school. As a result, the community became more open-minded³.

³ Direct interview with a member of Pasae Women's Group and the Guluk-Guluk Peace

They also collaborate with city/regency health service officers and the village governments to provide assistance to the families of COVID-19 patients without discrimination. They support distance learning activities by lending smartphones or providing free internet access to children from poor rural families. They work with the government and the Wahid Foundation in distributing staple food packages to those in need. Finally, they are at the forefront of providing economic assistance to the most economically affected groups. For instance, the businesses tied to the women's groups have been revitalized based on the presence of additional capital, which has allowed for the hiring of new members from the affected communities.

These adaptations, made by the women's groups and working groups, occurred when the national government was trying to find a policy scheme to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic. Local and village governments usually wait for instructions from the national government without doing any significant intervention efforts in preventing the spread of COVID-19 and its impact on the socio-economic life of the community. With the lack of official actions, women's groups and working's groups stepped up to fill the gap in the support structure.

Village Working Group during the 2nd monitoring of the Peace Village Program in 2020



The COVID-19 pandemic has become a momentum for women's groups and working groups to show their existence in society as well as prove the community's resilience during times of crisis. These women's groups, which were previously underestimated by the village governments, are now being used as critical partners of the village governments. The COVID-19 crisis has made it clear that the active contribution of women's groups is very important in making the government programs successful. This situation certainly gives opportunity for the women's groups in 10 Peace Villages/*Kelurahans* to solicit the governments' commitment in developing The Peace Village Action Plan in their policies. Seeing the women's groups' active participation in handling the COVID-19 pandemic, several village governments that were previously reluctant to make the Peace Village indicators an integral part of the village policies are slowly convinced to join the program. With the pandemic, it has become clear on how the implementation of the Peace Village actions and the role of women can provide positive impact to their residents. The pandemic has contributed to the development of the Peace Village implementation. Until this working paper is written, 4 out of 10 villages/*kelurahans* have adopted Peace Village Action Plan Policy. The four villages

are Sidomulyo, Candirenggo, Payudan-Dundang, and Prancak, all in East Java. They have advocated the Peace Village Action Plan into policy. Two other villages, namely Tajur Halang in Bogor and Pengasinan in Depok, both in West Java, have progressed to issuing a decree for the formation of the working group.

Based on the Peace Village program monitoring report (2020), it was explained that the COVID-19 pandemic had at least given the government apparatuses new awareness regarding the concept of human security. Previously, the government apparatuses only saw the concept of human security in relation to public order. They admitted that the HSA is beneficial in preventing the spread of the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its citizens. In addition, the report also noted that the active involvement of Peace Village women's groups during the pandemic was considered essential and contributed positively minimizing the negative impact of COVID-19.

"I was happy. This activity to overcome pandemic has become an unforgettable thing in my life because I was involved in the activities and actions organized by women's group in Prancak Village. The spirit of this women's group is extraordinary, that is, they want to run a program called Independent Women, Prosperous Families. Everything is done together



starting from the planning, process and implementation of activities by having the principle that this activity is solely for the social-communal mission. So, they always carry social missions, namely patience and struggle. The Peace Village program allows me to make my life more meaningful because I can dedicate myself to various social and peace-building activities⁴.”

In the beginning of 2021, there are six more villages/*kelurahans*, outside the 10 case study villages, that are in the process of declaring themselves as Peace Villages. These six villages include Duren Seribu (Depok, West Java); Pondok Udik (Bogor Regency, West Java), Tipes (Solo, Central Java), Telukan (Sukoharjo, Central Java), Gunungrejo (Malang, East Java), and Gunungsari (Batu, East Java). The process is driven by women's groups aspiring for their villages to progress like the existing 10 Peace Villages. These women's groups are actively lobbying for their aspiration to gain support from all community members and village governments that may not be necessarily ready to embark on the program.

⁴ Direct interview with Naufil Hasbie, 33 years old, Village Apparatus, Working Group Member in Prancak, Sumenep, East Java during the 1st

The biggest challenge faced by the women's groups in securing their village governments and community members support is related to the points of protection of religious minorities. For example, several village governments are still reluctant to declare their villages as Peace Villages because there are conservative groups falsely campaigning that the program's missions promote religious minorities. As the program's mission received resistance, the village governments support to the Peace Village program is limited to its initiative on economic empowerment, women's empowerment and the HSA, but they are still hesitant to support the points on protecting minority groups.

Another challenge is dealing with the village governments' concern about the security of their villages, with the thinking that using the term “peace” will connote that their respective villages were previously not peaceful. Specifically, the village governments are worried that they will be targeted by the radical jihadist groups affiliated with the Indonesian Mujahidin Council led by Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, which do not agree with the Peace Village program. Despite the rigorous advocacy of the program by the local women's groups, the pressure from the radical group delays the program's implementation.

monitoring of the Peace Village Program in March 2021.



Despite work is still being needed to fully adopt the Peace Village program, women's groups' collaboration with the village governments in gender-responsive policy-making and crisis mitigation have been improved in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Within the ten case study villages that have adopted Peace Village Program, women's groups have increased their collaboration with village government to push for the ratification of the Peace Village Action Plan in the village policy. The Action Plan aims to reduce gender discrimination, violence against women, and increase access to justice for women. The example of the Plan's implementation is Rumah Ayom in Sidomulyo, Malang that serves to conduct early detection and provide response to gender-based violence, conflict, radicalism, and other crises. Rumah Ayom has established a networked task force system to detect and respond to conflict that starts from neighborhood unit (*Rukun Tetangga*), community unit (*Rukun Warga*), hamlet (*dusun*), up to the village levels. Furthermore, to pursue the fulfillment of comprehensive security within the HSA framework, the women's groups also worked in achieving personal, community, and economic securities, as well as to fulfill food and health securities. This was done through the women's efforts in

documenting, monitoring, and cooperating with all stakeholders to assist the implementation of the human security approaches in the Peace Village Action Plan. More recently, the women's groups obtain additional support to persuade their village governments in supporting the Peace Village Action Plan as the national government issued the National Action Plan for the Prevention and Mitigation of Violent Extremism that Leads to Terrorism (*Rancangan Aksi Nasional Pencegahan Ekstremisme Berbasis Pada Kekerasan yang Mengarah pada Terorisme – RAN PE*) in January 2021. In line with the RAN PE that was issued through Presidential Decree No. 7 of 2021, the Peace Village program supports the involvement and protection of women and children in efforts to prevent and combat violent extremism. With the recently issued regulation, the village governments would consider that it is an obligation to support the Peace Village Action Plan. Therefore, the RAN PE has provided a policy basis for the implementation of the Peace Village Action Plan. This enables women's groups to urge the village governments, who previously have been reluctant, to implement the Peace Village Action Plan.



E. Conclusion

The Peace Village program is a long-term program in efforts to promote peace. This program began as an effort to close the gaps in the previous peace and tolerance promotion program that emphasizes advocacy and mediation efforts but did not pay much attention to the conditions of the grassroots communities. Within the grassroots communities of the 10 villages that are chosen as case study of this paper, it was found that lack of access to the economy and education often become the trigger for committing acts of violence against other groups, particularly toward religious minorities. With the finding, the program incorporated economic empowerment and peace-building activities with women's groups as its main empowered actor. This decision is based on the positive attributes of women in promoting peace and preventing conflict.

Within the Peace Village program there are three main phases of implementation. The first is the initiation phase, which initiate the formation of women's groups. In the context of the HSA, through economic activities, the program has succeeded in providing capital access and opening market access. Economic activities have also become a channel between

communities of different religions and beliefs to meet and have dialogues to support the villages' building a sense of community and achieving economic security. The second phase began with addressing village communities' insecurity that was heightened due to the increased influence of radical ideologies. The Peace Village program began to focus on engaging women groups to collaborate with the government and community police. The program also continues to deepen women's capacities related to gender, peace and entrepreneurship. An important achievement in this period was that 10 villages out of the 30 villages/kelurahans declared themselves as Peace Villages. With the declaration, the residents, the governments and village security apparatuses (community police) have committed to implement the Nine Indicators for Peace Villages and to form a working group to aid its process. The adoption of the Nine Indicators for Peace Villages as formal village policies is an important step in implementing non-discriminatory and inclusive political policies. Furthermore, the Peace Village program in this phase also minimizes the impact of economic and community insecurities due to the influence of radical ideologies.

Lastly, the third stage evaluates the implementation of the Nine Indicator for Peace Villages within the village policies, especially focusing on the active role of women's groups during the COVID-19 pandemic. In these



challenging times, women's groups active participation has become the main driving factor that accelerated the establishment and continuation of the Peace Villages. The role of women's groups in supporting the provision of economic assistance, promotion of health protocols, facilitation of distance learning, and assistance to COVID-19 patients, had direct positive impact on the government's recognition of the role of women's groups.

The Peace Village program succeeded in achieving two goals. First, the program's women's groups succeeded in encouraging the adoption and implementation of the Peace Village Action Plan through acting as facilitators between informal villages' mechanisms and formal governmental

mechanisms in realizing human security and gender justice. Second, the program's Action Plan when adopted as a village policy has made positive impacts in strengthening justice for women, reducing conflict, and increasing women's participation in policy-making. Since the program's establishment, four out of 10 Peace Villages have made the Peace Village indicators and HSA into a village policy. Six others are currently planning their village actions. Furthermore, in 2021, there are six villages that are in the process of declaring themselves as Peace Villages. The overall success of the Peace Village program highlights the importance of empowering grassroots communities, especially women, to promote peace by having the agility to alter its approach when unexpected situations, such as the pandemic, occur.



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