

The Significance of the Role of Local Wisdom- Based Youth in Fulfilling Human Rights in Aceh

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the significant role of youth in promoting and fulfilling human rights in Aceh, Indonesia. Following decades of conflict, Aceh has navigated a complex legal landscape shaped by the coexistence of Islamic Sharia law and *adat* (traditional customs). While Sharia law was implemented to preserve Islamic values, it has raised concerns regarding gender equality, freedom of expression, and religious rights. Acehnese youth have emerged as key actors in human rights advocacy, leveraging their understanding of local cultural dynamics to push for social change. This paper examines the strategies employed by youth activists in advancing human rights, particularly through grassroots initiatives and digital activism. By integrating local wisdom with global human rights norms, Acehnese youth have worked to bridge the gap between tradition and modernity, engaging with community leaders and challenging restrictive social norms. The findings highlight the

challenges faced by youth, including cultural resistance and legal repercussions, while also emphasizing the opportunities for human rights advancement through culturally sensitive approaches. This research underscores the crucial role of youth in fostering a more inclusive and just society in Aceh.

Keywords: Youth, Human Rights, Aceh, Sharia Law, Adat, Gender Equality

Introduction

Aceh, a semi-autonomous province in Indonesia, is governed by a unique legal framework that includes both Islamic Sharia law and traditional customs, known as adat. These cultural and religious contexts provide both opportunities and obstacles for the fulfillment of human rights. Since the 2005 Helsinki Peace Agreement, which ended decades of conflict between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Indonesian government, Aceh has undergone significant transformations. However, challenges related to gender rights, freedom of expression, and religious freedom remain.

Youth in Aceh have emerged as significant actors in this post-conflict environment. Drawing on their experiences and understanding of local customs, they engage in various initiatives aimed at advancing human rights. This paper explores the strategies employed by Acehnese youth, their contributions to the fulfillment of human rights, and the challenges they face in a society that balances tradition with modern human rights standards.

Youth participation in the fulfillment of human rights has become a focal point for scholars and policymakers, especially in regions where traditional cultural values and modern legal frameworks intersect. In Aceh, Indonesia, the role of youth in promoting human rights is particularly significant due to the province's unique legal context, shaped by the coexistence of Islamic Sharia law and *adat* (customary law). This introduction explores the complex environment in which Acehnese youth operate, highlighting their capacity to act as agents of social change while navigating the often-complicated relationship between local traditions and international human rights norms.

Aceh's modern history is deeply influenced by the armed conflict between the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), which lasted from 1976 until the signing of the Helsinki Peace Agreement in 2005. The conflict had devastating consequences for the region, including widespread human rights violations, economic devastation, and social dislocation. The peace agreement, which ended the violence, granted Aceh special autonomy within Indonesia, including the authority to implement Sharia law alongside national laws. While the peace agreement was a landmark achievement, the introduction of Sharia law has raised significant questions regarding human rights, particularly in areas such as gender equality, freedom of expression, and religious freedom.¹

Acehnese youth, who constitute a substantial portion of the population, have taken on key roles in addressing these challenges. In a society where the legal and social frameworks are strongly influenced by both Islamic teachings and traditional values, young people have emerged as critical players in the push for human rights. They have sought to reconcile Aceh's cultural and religious heritage with global human rights principles, often using innovative strategies that draw on both local wisdom and international advocacy models. This article examines the role of Acehnese youth in

¹ Edward Aspinall, *Islam and Nation: Separatist Rebellion in Aceh, Indonesia* (Stanford University Press, 2009), 102.

the fulfillment of human rights, focusing on their efforts to navigate the region's complex legal and cultural landscape while advocating for peace, social justice, and equality.

Aceh's legal system is shaped by the dual influences of Sharia law and *adat*. Sharia law, which was formally introduced in Aceh after the 2005 peace agreement, is based on Islamic principles and is intended to govern the moral and religious conduct of the population. The implementation of Sharia law in Aceh has led to the creation of various legal codes that regulate personal behavior, such as dress codes, restrictions on alcohol consumption, and the administration of corporal punishment for offenses like adultery and theft. These laws are enforced by the *Wilayahul Hisbah*, or Sharia police, who ensure that Acehnese citizens comply with religious obligations.²

While many in Aceh view Sharia law as a way to preserve Islamic values, its implementation has raised concerns about the compatibility of these laws with international human rights standards. For instance, the strict interpretation of Sharia law has been criticized for imposing restrictions on women's rights, particularly regarding freedom of movement, dress, and public participation. Gender-specific regulations, such as the requirement for women to wear the *jilbab* (headscarf) and prohibitions on women being outdoors at night without a male guardian, have been cited as examples of laws that perpetuate gender-based discrimination.³ Furthermore, the enforcement of corporal punishments like flogging has drawn international scrutiny for violating principles against cruel and inhumane treatment.⁴

In parallel with Sharia law, Aceh continues to observe *adat*, the traditional customs and norms that have governed local communities for centuries. *Adat* encompasses a wide range of practices related to conflict resolution, communal decision-making, and social behavior. It is often seen as complementary to Sharia law, as both systems emphasize community cohesion, moral conduct, and respect for authority. For example, *adat* plays a critical role in resolving disputes through traditional reconciliation practices, such as the *peusijek* ceremony, a ritualized form of conflict resolution that seeks to restore harmony within the community.⁵ However, like Sharia law, *adat* has been criticized for reinforcing patriarchal structures that limit women's rights and the rights of marginalized groups. The coexistence of these two systems—Sharia and *adat*—creates a unique legal and social environment for human rights advocacy in Aceh. While both systems aim to preserve social order and moral conduct, they also present significant challenges for those seeking to promote human rights, particularly when these rights are perceived to conflict with religious or cultural values. Youth in Aceh, therefore, must navigate this complex landscape as they work to advance human rights within their communities.

This essay explores the role of Acehnese youth in the fulfillment of human rights, highlighting how local wisdom (*adat*) plays a crucial role in fostering a balance between global human rights principles and the local values of Aceh.

Discussion

1. The Legal and Cultural Context of Human Rights in Aceh

Local wisdom is a life policy, a way of looking at life or a way of living life that is passed on from generation to generation from generation to generation through oral tradition, in the form of

² R. Michael Feener, *Sharia and Social Engineering: The Implementation of Islamic Law in Contemporary Aceh, Indonesia* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 48.

³ Dina Afrianty, *Women and Sharia Law in Northern Indonesia: Local Women's NGOs and the Reform of Islamic Law in Aceh* (Routledge, 2015), 74.

⁴ Asia Human Rights Commission, "Caning under Sharia Law in Aceh," *AHRC Report* (2015), 34.

⁵ Rodd McGibbon, *Reconciling Indonesia: Grassroots Agency for Peace* (United States Institute of Peace, 2006), 120.

proverbs or folklore as well as in writing such as manuscripts or written rules and objects used (ethnography). Local wisdom is knowledge that is owned by the people of a region that is localised through experience and trial and error. that has been experienced and also trial and error and error) then made into a new knowledge that is passed on to the next generation. the next generation.⁶

The local wisdom of a region does not can only be a policy that only applies in that area, but can also be adopted to other regions so that it become cross-regional wisdom, even across tribes and nations. Local wisdom can also be adopted into national policy of a nation. Aceh Province has its own local wisdom values values passed down from their ancestors. ancestors. According to the Aceh Customary Council, the people of Aceh have local wisdom that is diverse and found in various areas of life such as in economy and livelihood, worship and muamalah, culture, politics and government, education, conservation and governance, education, human rights, conservation environment, social and society, and others.

The role of youth today has always been an interesting discussion when the strategic position held by youth in influencing all forms of strategic position held by youth in influencing all forms of changes that occur, especially in the business sector because we all know that when changes that occur, especially in the business sector because we know together that currently most of those who master technology are the youth themselves. Nowadays, most of those who master technology are the youth themselves. As already explained by those who say that the role of youth is not as object but rather as a determinant of change in every era, which encourages change in each era goes in a constructive direction and becomes a moral force that will oversee every journey of the nation. moral force that will oversee every journey of the nation in its development. In addition, it provides an explanation that youth is synonymous with the term creative and innovative. innovative, their presence is expected to be a driving force in a country, be it in the realm of education, politics, social in the realm of education, law, politics, social, and economy.⁷

The fulfillment of human rights (HAM) in Aceh is deeply intertwined with the role of youth and the influence of local wisdom. As one of Indonesia's autonomous provinces, Aceh is unique in its implementation of Sharia law and adherence to deeply rooted cultural values known as *adat*. While universal human rights are grounded in international legal norms, their application in Aceh is often interpreted through a local lens that reflects Islamic teachings and traditional customs. In this context, Acehnese youth play a pivotal role in mediating the balance between local values and international human rights standards. They act both as agents of change and as protectors of cultural traditions that emphasize communal well-being.

Aceh's special autonomy allows it to implement Sharia law, which is designed to reflect Islamic principles and morality. While Sharia law is seen as a way to protect the moral fabric of Acehnese society, it has also raised concerns about the protection of certain human rights, particularly in the areas of gender equality, freedom of expression, and religious rights. The strict interpretation of Sharia law in Aceh has resulted in regulations that restrict the behavior and dress of women, limit religious freedom for non-Muslims, and curtail freedom of expression in the arts and media. These issues highlight the complex relationship between Islamic law and human rights in the region.⁸ In

⁶ Prima Nucifera and Muhammad Taufik Hidayat. "Analisis nilai-nilai kearifan lokal Aceh melalui literasi media." *Jurnal Metamorfosa* 7.2 (2019): 211-222. <https://dx.doi.org/10.24114/edukasi%20kultura.v1i1.18321>.

⁷ Marazaenal Adipta, Emiliyan Mamuki, and Mohammad Jon Tasrif. "Eksistensi pemuda dalam mengembangkan ekonomi kreatif berbasis kearifan lokal." *Jurnal Pendidikan, Sains Sosial, dan Agama* 8.2 (2022): 687. <https://dx.doi.org/10.53565/pssa.v8i2.686>.

⁸ R. Michael Feener, *Sharia and Social Engineering: The Implementation of Islamic Law in Contemporary Aceh, Indonesia* (Oxford University Press, 2013): 102.

addition to Sharia law, *adat*—the traditional customs and norms of the Acehese people—plays a significant role in shaping the legal and social environment. *Adat* often emphasizes community cohesion, respect for elders, and reconciliation through traditional methods of conflict resolution.⁹

Acehnese youth occupy a critical position within the dynamic social framework of Aceh, particularly following the signing of the Helsinki peace agreement in 2005. After decades of armed conflict between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the central government, the role of youth in post-conflict reconstruction and human rights advocacy became vital. The conflict, which lasted more than 30 years, left deep social scars, and youth are seen as a key force in healing these wounds and promoting social transformation.

One of the major challenges faced by Acehese youth is integrating universal human rights norms with the local Sharia law that governs the province. As the inheritors of a strong tradition of Islam and local customs, Acehese youth must navigate the delicate balance between adhering to Sharia principles and advocating for human rights principles such as gender equality, freedom of expression, and access to education. Youth in Aceh have become actively involved in civil society organizations and grassroots activism, promoting justice, inclusivity, and the fulfillment of human rights in ways that respect both local customs and international norms.¹⁰

Following the end of the armed conflict, Acehese youth have taken on a central role in promoting human rights. Various youth-led organizations, such as *Forum Bangun Aceh* and *Aceh Youth for Human Rights*, have focused on raising awareness about human rights among the younger generation and the wider public. They have organized human rights education workshops, gender equality campaigns, and advocacy for social issues such as child marriage, violence against women, and minority rights.

Youth in Aceh serve as a bridge between traditional values and global demands for human rights. One notable achievement in this regard has been in the areas of freedom of expression and education. Despite the enforcement of Sharia law, young people have actively advocated for equal access to education and public opportunities for women. As a result, there has been a marked increase in women's participation in education and the economy, though social and religious challenges remain.¹¹

Acehnese youth also play a key role in post-conflict reconciliation efforts. Over the past few decades, they have been involved in community-based dialogue programs that aim to heal the social rifts caused by the conflict. By emphasizing local wisdom such as *musyawarah* (deliberation) and *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), they have created platforms that encourage peaceful dialogue and non-violent conflict resolution. In this way, local wisdom serves as a crucial tool for promoting human rights through inclusive community-based approaches.¹²

Local wisdom, known as *adat*, is a deeply ingrained aspect of Acehese society and plays a vital role in regulating social interactions and conflict resolution. *Adat* functions as a complement to Sharia law and, in many cases, has been instrumental in resolving disputes in a manner that upholds communal

⁹ Bowen, John R., *Islam, Law, and Equality in Indonesia: An Anthropology of Public Reasoning* (Cambridge University Press, 2003): 89.

¹⁰ Edward Aspinall, *Peace without Justice? The Helsinki Peace Process in Aceh*, 2013, in *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, pp. 194-214.

¹¹ Komnas Perempuan, *Laporan Tahunan: Advokasi Hak Perempuan di Aceh Pasca-Konflik*, 2018.

¹² Patrick Barron, *When Violence Works: Post-Conflict Community Peacebuilding in Aceh*, 2019, in *Asian Journal of Social Science*, vol. 47, pp. 23-45.

values and human dignity. The traditional *adat* practices in Aceh focus on maintaining social harmony and restoring relationships between conflicting parties, which aligns with certain aspects of restorative justice in human rights frameworks.

One example of this is the use of *adat* in resolving land disputes and other communal conflicts, where emphasis is placed on reconciliation rather than retribution. This community-based approach reflects Aceh's reliance on restorative justice, a principle also recognized in human rights discourse. However, challenges arise when *adat* and Sharia law come into conflict with international human rights standards, particularly with respect to women's rights and freedoms.

In Aceh, *adat* also reinforces a collective responsibility towards the fulfillment of basic human needs, including the right to education and the right to live in dignity. These values align with the socio-economic rights articulated in international human rights frameworks, although their implementation is sometimes complicated by local interpretations of gender roles and family responsibilities.¹³

Despite the positive role of local wisdom and the efforts of youth, challenges remain in fulfilling human rights in Aceh. The enforcement of Sharia law, particularly with regard to public morality, can sometimes infringe upon rights that are protected under international law. For example, the public punishment of individuals for moral infractions, such as consuming alcohol or engaging in premarital relationships, has been criticized by human rights organizations as violating the right to freedom from cruel or inhumane treatment.¹⁴

At the same time, Acehnese youth continue to push for reforms that ensure human rights are respected while still upholding cultural values. Their involvement in various initiatives—ranging from gender equality advocacy to environmental protection—demonstrates their commitment to advancing human rights in a culturally sensitive manner. By drawing on local wisdom and engaging in global human rights discourse, Acehnese youth are uniquely positioned to contribute to the ongoing efforts to fulfill human rights in the region.

The use of wisdom is conceptualised as responsive law. Hoogvelt proposes two concepts to characterise prismatic behaviour, namely normative and functional. In the context of the constitution, the reference for prismatic law is the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, especially Article 18B paragraph (2) and Article 28H paragraph (2) which accommodate the use of wisdom and customary law. This spirit is consistently elaborated in the UUPA, with a blend of principles that are selectively lifted from modern social values and local wisdom. Law prismatic law can function as an instrument to realise two different interest groups. different interest groups. Substantially, local wisdom is the values that apply in a community, values that are believed to be true and become a reference for behaviour.

society, values that are believed to be true and become a reference in the daily behaviour of the local community. Everyday behaviour of the local community. So it is very reasonable that local wisdom is utilised.¹⁵

2. The Role of Youth in Promoting Human Rights in Aceh

Youth in Aceh have emerged as a powerful force in promoting human rights, using their knowledge of local traditions and their familiarity with global human rights discourses to navigate the region's

¹³ Aswandi Syahputra, *Adat dan Hukum Syariah dalam Penegakan HAM di Aceh*, 2020.

¹⁴ Human Rights Watch, *Policing Morality: Abuses in the Application of Sharia in Aceh*, 2010.

¹⁵ Sulaiman, "Rekonsiliasi Berbasis Kearifan Lokal di Aceh." *Kanun Jurnal Ilmu Hukum* 18.3 (2016): 367-376. See also: Ankie M. Hoogvelt, *Sosiologi Masyarakat Sedang Berkembang*, (Jakarta: Rajawali, 1985), hlm. 194.

complex legal and cultural landscape. In many instances, young people act as mediators between traditional leaders and human rights organizations, advocating for progressive changes while respecting cultural norms.

One example is the Youth Peace Forum, which was established to foster dialogue and reconciliation in post-conflict Aceh. The forum has facilitated discussions on sensitive topics such as gender rights and religious tolerance, using culturally relevant approaches to engage with both elders and young activists.¹⁶ These initiatives have contributed to creating spaces where human rights can be discussed in a manner that resonates with Acehese values.

One of the most pressing human rights challenges in Aceh relates to gender equality. Under Sharia law, women face restrictions on their personal freedoms, including dress codes and curfews. However, youth-led organizations such as the Women's Empowerment Network have been at the forefront of advocating for women's rights in Aceh. These groups have used social media campaigns to raise awareness of gender-based violence and discrimination, challenging traditional gender norms while working within the boundaries of adat and Sharia law.¹⁷

Through grassroots advocacy and digital activism, young women in Aceh are reclaiming their rights to education, employment, and personal autonomy. By engaging with religious leaders and community elders, these youth groups have been able to frame their arguments for gender equality in terms that align with Islamic teachings on justice and equality.

In the years following the peace agreement, Acehese youth have emerged as significant actors in the region's human rights landscape. Young people, who often bring new perspectives and a willingness to challenge established norms, have been at the forefront of efforts to promote gender equality, freedom of expression, and peacebuilding in Aceh. Their activism is often rooted in a deep understanding of local cultural and religious values, combined with a commitment to global human rights principles.

One of the key areas where youth activism has had a profound impact is in the promotion of gender equality. Under Sharia law, women in Aceh face numerous restrictions on their personal freedoms, including dress codes, curfews, and limitations on public participation. In response to these challenges, youth-led organizations have emerged to advocate for women's rights, often working within the framework of Islamic teachings to argue for greater equality and justice for women. Groups such as the Women's Empowerment Network have used digital platforms to raise awareness of issues such as domestic violence, child marriage, and women's access to education and employment.¹⁸ By framing their advocacy in terms of Islamic principles of justice and fairness, these youth groups have been able to engage with religious leaders and community elders in a way that respects Acehese values while pushing for progressive change.

In addition to gender equality, Acehese youth have also played a key role in promoting freedom of expression. The implementation of Sharia law has placed significant limitations on artistic and cultural expression, with regulations that restrict the types of music, dance, and visual arts that are considered permissible under Islamic law. Youth artists and musicians in Aceh have found themselves at the center of debates over the boundaries of creative freedom in a society governed by strict moral codes. Some have used their art as a form of resistance, challenging cultural and legal

¹⁶ Edward Aspinall, *Islam and Nation: Separatist Rebellion in Aceh, Indonesia* (Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 145

¹⁷ Antje Missbach, *Troubled Transit: Asylum Seekers Stuck in Indonesia* (ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2017), p. 203.

¹⁸ Ma Milallos, "Muslim Veil as Politics: Political Autonomy, Women and Syariah Islam in Aceh." *Contemporary Islam* 1, no. 3 (2007): 289-301. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-007-0028-5>.

restrictions through performances and exhibitions that push the limits of acceptable expression.¹⁹ Digital activism has become an important tool for these young artists, allowing them to share their work with wider audiences and connect with global human rights organizations that support freedom of expression.

Another area where youth have made significant contributions is in peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts. In the aftermath of the conflict, Aceh has faced the difficult task of rebuilding trust and cohesion within communities that were deeply affected by violence. Youth organizations, such as the Youth Peace Forum, have played a crucial role in fostering dialogue between different groups, using *adat* practices like *peusijek* to mediate disputes and promote reconciliation.²⁰ These initiatives have helped to create spaces where people can come together to discuss issues of justice, healing, and the future of Aceh in a way that respects both local traditions and international human rights norms.

3. Challenges Facing Youth in Human Rights Advocacy

Despite their efforts, youth activists in Aceh face significant challenges. One of the most persistent obstacles is cultural resistance from conservative elements in society who view human rights advocacy—especially in areas such as gender equality—as a threat to traditional values. This tension is particularly evident in cases where human rights advocacy is perceived as contradicting Sharia law or undermining the authority of traditional leaders.²¹ As a result, youth activists must carefully navigate the delicate balance between advocating for change and respecting local customs.

In addition to cultural resistance, youth activists in Aceh often face legal challenges due to the implementation of Sharia law. For example, individuals advocating for freedom of expression or gender rights risk being accused of violating religious or moral codes. The strict enforcement of Sharia law in public spaces makes it difficult for youth to organize protests or public demonstrations in support of human rights.²²

Despite the positive contributions of youth to human rights advocacy in Aceh, they face significant challenges. One of the most persistent obstacles is cultural resistance from conservative elements of society, who view human rights advocacy—particularly in areas such as gender equality and freedom of expression—as a threat to Acehnese values and identity. Youth activists who push for changes in these areas often encounter backlash from community leaders, religious authorities, and even their own families. This resistance can manifest in various forms, from social ostracism to legal consequences for those perceived as violating Sharia law or *adat* norms.²³

Another challenge is the legal framework itself. The enforcement of Sharia law in Aceh means that youth activists must operate within a legal system that often restricts the very rights they are advocating for. Organizing protests, public demonstrations, or even open discussions on sensitive topics can be difficult under laws that limit freedom of assembly and expression. Furthermore, the threat of punishment for violating moral codes, such as public caning, serves as a powerful deterrent for those who might otherwise be more vocal in their advocacy efforts.²⁴

¹⁹ Damien Kingsbury, *Peace in Aceh: A Personal Account of the Helsinki Peace Process* (Equinox Publishing, 2006), 134.

²⁰ Hedman, Eva-Lotta E., 'A State of Emergency, A Strategy of War: Internal Displacement, Forced Relocation, and Involuntary Return in Aceh', in Eva-Lotta E. Hedman, ed., *Aceh Under Martial Law: Conflict, Violence and Displacement*. Oxford: Refugee Studies Centre, 2005. (7-11).

²¹ Damien Kingsbury, *Peace in Aceh: A Personal Account of the Helsinki Peace Process* (Equinox Publishing, 2006), p. 170.

²² Rodd McGibbon, *Reconciling Indonesia: Grassroots Agency for Peace* (United States Institute of Peace, 2006), p. 58.

²³ Antje Missbach, *Troubled Transit: Asylum Seekers Stuck in Indonesia* (ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute, 2017), 211.

²⁴ Michael R. Feener, "Aceh and the Challenge of Implementing Sharia in a Democratic Indonesia," *Journal of Islamic Law* 15, no. 2 (2014): 88

Despite these challenges, Acehnese youth have also found unique opportunities for advancing human rights. One of the greatest strengths of youth activism in Aceh is the ability to bridge the gap between tradition and modernity. By grounding their advocacy in local customs and Islamic teachings, young people have been able to engage with conservative elements of society in ways that are both respectful and effective. This culturally sensitive approach has allowed youth to gain the trust of local leaders and build coalitions for change, even in a context where human rights are often seen as foreign or incompatible with local values.²⁵

One of the greatest strengths of Acehnese youth in promoting human rights is their ability to bridge the gap between tradition and modernity. By using local customs such as “peusijek” (traditional blessing ceremonies) as part of their peacebuilding efforts, youth groups have been able to engage the community in discussions about reconciliation and justice. These culturally grounded approaches have proven effective in gaining the trust of local leaders and fostering a more inclusive dialogue on human rights.²⁶

The rise of digital platforms has also provided new opportunities for youth in Aceh to advocate for human rights. Social media campaigns have been instrumental in raising awareness about issues such as domestic violence, child marriage, and gender-based discrimination. Through online platforms, youth activists are able to reach a wider audience, including international human rights organizations, and mobilize support for their causes without the need for physical protests, which are often restricted under Sharia law.²⁷

The youth today face significant hurdles in their efforts to promote and protect human rights. One major challenge is limited access to decision-making platforms, which restricts their ability to influence policy and legal frameworks effectively. Often, youth are excluded from key political and institutional arenas, resulting in diminished representation in critical discussions about human rights.²⁸

Furthermore, young activists encounter a lack of financial resources to sustain their campaigns and initiatives. Human rights advocacy can be financially demanding, requiring resources for organizing, educating, and mobilizing communities. Youth, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds, often struggle to secure the necessary funding to ensure the continuity of their activism.²⁹

Another significant obstacle is social and political repression. In many parts of the world, young human rights defenders face intimidation, harassment, and even violence from both state and non-state actors. Repressive governments and entrenched societal norms can criminalize activism, making it dangerous for young people to voice dissent and challenge existing power structures.³⁰

²⁵ Craig Carpenter Thorburn, *The Acehnese Gampong Three Years On: Assessing Local Capacity and Reconstruction Assistance in Post-tsunami Aceh*. Report of the Aceh Community Assistance Research Project (ACARP). Jakarta: AusAID, 2007.

²⁶ Leena Avonius, “Reconciliation and Human Rights in Post-conflict Aceh.” In *Reconciling Indonesia: Grassroots Agency for Peace*, edited by Birgit Brauchler, New York: Routledge, 2009.

²⁷ Firman Aziz, Nanny Mayasari, S. Sabhan, Z. Zulkifli, and M. F. Yasin. “The Future of Human Rights in the Digital Age: Indonesian Perspectives and Challenges.” *Journal of Digital Law and Policy*, vol. 2, no. 1, Sept. 2022, pp. 29-40, <https://doi.org/10.58982/jdlp.v2i1.292>.

²⁸ Jonathan Smith, “Youth and Political Participation in Human Rights Advocacy”, *Journal of Human Rights*, 45(3), 2021: 231-245.

²⁹ Global Youth Action Network. (2019). *Barriers to Youth Engagement in Global Human Rights*. Retrieved from <https://globalyouthaction.org>.

³⁰ Amnesty International. (2020). *Youth Under Threat: Human Rights Defenders in Hostile Environments*. Available at <https://www.amnesty.org>.

Lastly, youth advocates often grapple with intergenerational biases. Older generations in leadership roles may dismiss youth activism as naive or overly idealistic, undermining the credibility of their advocacy efforts. This generational gap in perspectives can limit opportunities for cross-generational collaboration, which is essential for the sustainability of human rights movements.³¹

Conclusion

Youth in Aceh play a crucial role in advancing human rights, acting as mediators between traditional values and modern human rights frameworks. By incorporating local customs and leveraging digital tools, Acehnese youth are working to address critical human rights issues in a culturally sensitive manner. Despite facing significant challenges, including cultural resistance and legal obstacles, the efforts of youth activists continue to contribute to the promotion of gender equality, freedom of expression, and peacebuilding in Aceh. Future strategies should focus on further empowering youth and providing them with platforms to engage in meaningful human rights advocacy.

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³¹ Luke Brown, *Intergenerational Dynamics in Human Rights Advocacy*. *International Review of Youth Policy*, 18 (2), 2020: 111-123.

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