



The Role of Acehese Women in Post-Conflict Local Economic Development in North Aceh Regency

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Abstract: This research focuses on the role of Acehese women in post-conflict local economic development in North Aceh. Aceh is an area that has a long history of armed conflict, especially those related to the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Indonesian government. This conflict lasted for more than three decades, which not only resulted in casualties, but also destroyed infrastructure, affected economic stability, and changed the social dynamics of Acehese society. On this basis, this study seeks to identify what women experience, their strategies, structural and cultural barriers and their experiences in the local economy after conflict. Data collection is carried out through Live in, observation, in-depth interviews and the use of documents. The results of the study show that women in North Aceh play an important role in post-conflict economic development, driving the agriculture, micro enterprises, and handicraft sectors. They are active in the economic empowerment of families and communities, despite the challenges of accessing capital and education. Skills training programs help women increase their entrepreneurial capacity. In addition, they also play a role in post-conflict social reconciliation, improving intergroup relations, and fighting for women's rights in the peace process. Despite much progress, they still face difficulties in accessing education and gender equality in the job market.

Keywords: Women's Role 1; Economic Access 2; Structural-Cultural Barriers 3; Post-Conflict 4; Aceh 5;

1. Introduction

After the signing of the peace agreement in 2005, Aceh began to enter the reconstruction and reconstruction phase. However, the impact of prolonged conflict has left a major challenge in economic recovery efforts. One of the important aspects of this recovery process is the role of women, who are often the backbone of the family, especially in difficult times. However, the role of women in local economic development often does not receive adequate attention, both from the government and from various development programs launched after the conflict [1][2][3].

In North Aceh, which is one of the most conflict-affected areas, women have great potential to drive economic development. They not only play a role in the informal sector, but also begin to be involved in various micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) that can contribute to the recovery of the local economy. However, this role is still often hampered by factors such as lack of access to resources, education, and training, as well as traditional cultural norms that limit women's participation in the public economy [4].

In this context, this study attempts to understand more deeply how women in North Aceh play a role in post-conflict economic development. The study also aims to identify the challenges women face in their efforts to contribute to the local economy, as well as explore potential strategies that can be implemented to strengthen their roles. Thus, this research is not only academically relevant, but also practical in an effort to support sustainable development and women's empowerment in North Aceh.

In addition, it is important to note that post-conflict also brought significant changes in the social and economic structure in North Aceh [5]. Prolonged conflict not only leaves physical scars but also affects social relationships, power distribution, and gender roles in society [6]. Acehese women, who during the conflict have lost many husbands, fathers, or sons, often become heads of families and are forced to take a more active role in supporting the family economy. This role, although often seen as an adaptation to emergencies, has opened up new spaces for women to be more deeply involved in economic activities [7].

However, women's involvement in post-conflict economic development is not without challenges. Many women in North Aceh still face social stigma, where they are expected to remain in traditional domestic roles. This stigma is often exacerbated by a lack of structural support such as access to capital, entrepreneurial training, and opportunities to develop business networks. In addition, low levels of education and limited access to information are also significant obstacles. Thus, despite efforts from various parties to support economic recovery, the role of women is often still marginalized [8][9][10].

This research will delve deeper into how North Acehese women face and overcome these challenges, as well as how they take advantage of the opportunities available to contribute to the local economy. By exploring various successful local initiatives, such as micro-enterprises managed by women, this research is expected to provide new insights into effective strategies to support women's economic empowerment in post-conflict areas. Ultimately, this study aims to provide policy recommendations that can strengthen the role of women in economic development in North Aceh, which is not only important for post-conflict recovery but also for sustainable development in the future.

The formulation of the problem in this study focuses on a deep understanding of the role of Acehese women in the post-conflict local economic development in North Aceh, as well as the challenges and obstacles they face in these efforts. Post-conflict in Aceh, many women have begun to take an important role in economic recovery efforts, both at the household and community levels. However, despite their significant contribution, women's roles are often still ignored or not adequately recognized in existing economic development policies and programs.

The main issue raised in this study is how Acehese women, especially in North Aceh, can maximize their role in local economic development in the midst of various existing obstacles. An important question to be answered is: to what extent do women in North Aceh contribute to the local economy after the conflict, and what are the factors that support or hinder their contribution? In addition, the study also wanted to explore how women are overcoming these challenges and what kind of support they need to strengthen their role in the local economy.

Furthermore, the study will also explore how women's access to economic resources — such as capital, training, and business networks affects their participation in economic development. Given that these access is often limited due to the impact of conflict, it is important to understand how these barriers can be overcome and how better access can increase women's participation in economic activities [11]. In addition, this study will consider how cultural and social norms prevailing in Aceh affect the role of women in the economy and how changes in those norms can support or hinder women's economic empowerment.

Thus, the formulation of the problem in this study aims to identify and analyze the role of women in the development of the local economy after the conflict in North Aceh, evaluate the challenges they face, and develop recommendations that can increase women's participation and contribution in the local economy. This research is expected to provide useful insights for policymakers, community organizations, and other institutions working to promote inclusive and sustainable economic development in North Aceh.

2. Research Methods

The methodology of this study is designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of Acehnese women in the development of the local economy after the conflict in North Aceh. This research uses a qualitative approach to explore the experiences, perceptions, and challenges faced by women in their efforts to contribute to the local economy. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to gain deep and contextual insights into complex issues, which often cannot be fully explained through quantitative data [12][13]. This research will involve key informants consisting of women business actors, female heads of families, community leaders, and local government officials involved in economic development and women's empowerment programs.

Informants for qualitative research can be selected from people who are considered to understand the research problem being studied [14][15]. The informants of this study consisted of women victims of conflict who have small and medium enterprises, local Geuchiek Gampong, the Social Service, representatives of the Aceh Reintegration Agency, as well as NGOs or assistance providers to increase women's participation in MSME businesses such as PGA and the surrounding community which were determined on a purposive basis. All informants in this study were placed as research subjects.

3. Results and Discussion

The Phenomenon of the Dual Role of North Aceh Women After Conflict

In Indonesia, the movement to fight for the position and role of women has been carried out for quite a long time. Kartini is a figure who has pioneered liberating women from darkness through education. Education is considered important because education is a solution in solving all problems and misery of nations [16]. One of the differences between women today and the Kartini era or the past is that women today want, are willing, can, and are even directed to be able to fill two roles, one in the household as a mother and wife, and the other role outside the home.

The definition of women's dual roles in the development era is women's participation which includes the domestic and public sectors, which is urgently needed to support the success of development. In rural communities, the dual role of women is not new. Besides being wives, mothers also have to work outside the home, for example: farming, gardening, trading, looking for timber, working as laborers and others. Because without work, the needs of life will not be met. It means that working is a must. In general, women who have a high level of education are a resource for development, so if they are not used, it is a waste of funds because of the high cost of education.

The shift in roles (division of labor) between men and women in the family and household occurs when a mother has a very important role in society and the state. Where the role of women is not only to lead but also to lead. It must be fought for positive and definite recognition. The division of domestic and public roles is irrelevant if applied in Javanese society. Because in this society, women are used to domestic and public roles. This is especially true in Javanese society

of farmers, traders, and fishermen, where women take care of households (domestic) and earn a living [17].

The same thing also happened to the dual role of North Aceh women. Conflicts are very significant in the process of recovery and reconstruction of society. After the end of the Aceh conflict in 2005, women in North Aceh not only returned to their traditional roles as housewives and educators, but also began to be actively involved in various aspects of social, economic, and political life. Post-conflict contexts give women the opportunity to play a broader role in rebuilding lives devastated by conflict, although they still face great challenges related to social and cultural norms.

As agents of social recovery, North Aceh women play an important role in healing emotional and psychological wounds arising from conflict. They are often the liaison between family members and the community in the reconciliation process. Women also play a role in conveying the message of peace and tolerance at the local level, especially in fostering harmonious relationships between groups previously involved in conflict. They participate in community forums to strengthen peace and reduce social tensions that may arise post-conflict.

In addition, North Aceh women are taking part in economic recovery efforts in areas affected by the conflict. Many women are involved in informal economic activities, such as micro-enterprises, agriculture, and handicrafts, to improve the welfare of their families. The government and various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) provide skills training and business capital for women, with the aim of empowering them economically. This not only improves family welfare, but also strengthens the role of women in the local economy.

In the education sector, post-conflict North Aceh women also play an important role in advancing the younger generation. Many women return to continue their education after the conflict or become educators in schools to teach the values of peace and tolerance. They play a role in shaping the character of children and adolescents so that they can grow into individuals who are aware of the importance of a peaceful life, and are ready to face social and economic challenges in the future. Education is one of the main keys in ensuring the sustainability of peace and development in North Aceh.

Although North Aceh women have demonstrated significant abilities and dual roles post-conflict, they still face various challenges. Limited access to resources, including education, health, and decent work, remains a major obstacle. In addition, cultural norms that limit women's role in public life often prevent them from fully participating in politics and decision-making. However, despite this, North Aceh women have shown remarkable resilience and continue to play an important role in rebuilding a more peaceful and prosperous Aceh.

The Role of Women in Post-Conflict Local Economic Development in North Aceh

Women play a very important role in economic development, especially after the conflicts that hit North Aceh in the past. Post-conflict, the region experienced major challenges in social and economic recovery. Even so, women in North Aceh not only survive in difficult conditions, but also actively contribute to driving the local economy. They are involved in various sectors, from agriculture to small and medium enterprises, and play a key role in restoring post-conflict social and economic stability. Interview with said that post-conflict Aceh women began to be directly involved in economic empowerment, unlike before because they were constrained by social constructions as if women could not play a role in the problem [18].

Women play a very important role in economic empowerment, both at the family and community levels. In many cases, women are the main pillars in managing household finances and creating family economic stability. With greater economic empowerment, women can increase their access to education, training, and employment opportunities, which in turn

strengthens their ability to contribute optimally to the economy. When women are given the opportunity to develop their skills and participate in the workforce, they not only improve their own well-being, but also improve the quality of life of their families and communities.

In addition, women's economic empowerment also has a positive impact on the country's overall economic growth. Studies show that increasing women's participation in the workforce can accelerate economic development and reduce poverty. Women who are financially independent tend to be better able to make wise decisions in terms of health, education, and the economy. Therefore, it is important to create policies that support gender equality and provide women with equal access to resources and economic opportunities. In this way, women's empowerment can create a domino effect that brings positive change in various aspects of life.

Women in North Aceh are not only housewives, but also the main drivers in the economic empowerment of families and communities. They are involved in various economic activities such as agriculture, handicrafts, trade, as well as the service sector. Post-conflict, many of them were involved in microeconomic activities, by establishing small businesses that provided jobs for the local community. They not only demand their rights, but also show initiative to improve economic well-being.

Education and Training for Women

Education and training are key to post-conflict women's empowerment in North Aceh. With limited access to education during times of conflict, many women started from scratch. However, with the skills training program, they acquire new skills that support economic activities. Training in entrepreneurship, technical skills, and business management gives women in North Aceh the confidence to develop their businesses and increase their family's economic capacity.

The micro business sector in North Aceh is mostly managed by women, who have succeeded in establishing small businesses such as stalls, handicrafts, and agricultural businesses. Thanks to their active role, many of these businesses are thriving and have a positive impact on the local economy. These micro-enterprises not only create jobs for women, but also encourage economic growth at the village and sub-district levels. They often use loan capital or government assistance to start a business, which then becomes a sustainable source of income.

One of the main challenges faced by women in North Aceh is limited access to capital and economic resources. Although they are highly productive in economic activities, they often face obstacles in obtaining credit or business loans. For this reason, various non-governmental organizations and local governments have played an important role in providing financial management training and access to microloans for women. This support allows them to enlarge their efforts and expand their market network.

Women's organizations in North Aceh play a strategic role in strengthening the role of women in the economy. Through various organizations, women are given space to share experiences, get information, and participate in trainings that can improve their entrepreneurial skills. These organizations also help women in building business networks and fighting for their economic rights. Thus, women are not only part of the family economy, but also play a role in broader economic development.

In the context of local economic development, women in North Aceh also play an important role in natural resource management. Many women are involved in the agriculture, fisheries, and forestry sectors. They contribute to preserving nature, as well as ensuring that the use of natural resources is carried out in a sustainable manner. Through their involvement in such management, women not only support the economy, but also help create an ecological balance that supports long-term sustainability.

Women as Agents of Peace and Reconciliation in Aceh

The prolonged conflict in Aceh has left deep wounds in society. Women play an important role in the process of social reconciliation and recovery. As figures close to family and community, women are often a bridge to rebuild relationships damaged by conflict. They help create an atmosphere of peace, reduce tensions, and strengthen social cohesion that is the foundation for local economic development. Women are also heavily involved in dialogue and post-conflict healing processes, which have a positive impact on economic recovery.

The role of women in the peace and reconciliation process in Aceh is crucial, especially after the decades-long conflict between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Indonesian government. Women are not only victims of conflict, but also play an important role as agents of peace and reconciliation after the Helsinki peace accords in 2005. Some important aspects of the role of women in this context Post-conflict, women in Aceh play the role of trauma healers. They are often the first to revive war-torn social and family networks. In addition, women are often the liaison in the reconciliation process at the community level, bringing together opposing parties and encouraging dialogue between groups involved in conflict.

Women in Aceh are active in facilitating the peace process, both at the local and national levels. They are involved in peace talks, provide input in policy formulation, and fight for women's rights in peace agreements. In many cases, women are pushing for peace treaties to recognize their rights that are often overlooked during conflict. Despite their great contribution, women in North Aceh still face a number of challenges in local economic development. One of them is the difficulty in accessing higher education, inequality in the job market, and gender-based violence that hinder them from developing. In addition, there are still social stereotypes that assume that women are only suitable for certain jobs, which limits their potential in broader sectors.

4. Conclusion

Overall, women in North Aceh have proven their vital role in post-conflict economic development. With the right empowerment, they are able to overcome various challenges and contribute significantly to the recovery of the local economy. Support from the government and various civil society organizations is essential to increase women's capacity, provide greater access to resources, and create equal opportunities in economic development. In the future, it is important for all elements of society to continue to support the role of women in the economy, so that sustainable and inclusive development can be realized.

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