

STRENGTHENING RELIGIOUS ATTITUDES AND INTERFAITH COMMUNICATION IN BUILDING SOCIAL HARMONY: PEACE AND CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

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Abstract: *Indonesia's religiously plural districts have periodically experienced tensions rooted in administrative procedures and misunderstandings in interfaith relations. This service activity aimed to identify forms of religious attitudes and communication patterns in Aceh Tengah and Aceh Singkil communities, as well as surface participatory strategies for sustaining social harmony. Using a Participatory Action Research (PAR) cycle, the program included Training of Trainers (ToT), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), participatory mapping, community education, and iterative monitoring and evaluation conducted with teachers, students, religious leaders, FKUB members, and local officials. The service showed that Aceh Tengah exhibited strong tolerance supported by inclusive Gayo cultural norms, open deliberative communication, and proactive engagement between the government and the FKUB. Aceh Singkil faced recurrent challenges related to worship-permit arrangements, yet communities maintained mutual respect and associative ties that helped de-escalate issues. The program empowered local stakeholders to act as agents of tolerance and clarified bottom-up feedback channels within existing top-down procedures, generating practical improvements and guidance for replication. In conclusion, collaborative, bottom-up communication institutionalized through government, interfaith forums, and community partnerships was essential to manage diversity and sustain harmony; the PAR-based approach provided a practical model and transferable lessons for similar plural settings across Indonesia.*

Keyword: *Interfaith Communication; Peace and Conflict; Religious Attitude; Social Harmony.*

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INTRODUCTION

Aceh, located at the northern tip of Sumatra, is widely recognized for strong Islamic adherence and enduring cultural traditions. Indonesia's diversity is a national asset, yet it can sometimes generate friction in Aceh, particularly in districts where communities of different faiths live side by side. In Aceh Tengah, a mosaic of religious and ethnic groups coexists. Still, tensions have occasionally surfaced around the establishment of places of worship and the application of Islamic law in ways perceived to disadvantage minorities, raising concerns about tolerance and equitable cooperation.

Aceh Singkil, which borders North Sumatra, has experienced more acute strains. A predominantly Muslim population lives alongside sizable Protestant and Catholic communities, but demographic imbalances, politicized spatial planning, and the instrumental use of religious symbols have periodically intensified discord. These pressures have at times escalated into destructive acts such as the burning of places of worship and the mobilization of large groups in the name of religion, illustrating how administrative, political, and social factors can converge to create flashpoints of interfaith conflict.

Religious attitudes are internal states that motivate individuals to act according to their beliefs. These attitudes are predispositions to respond positively or negatively to objects and situations, grounded in three psychological components: cognition, affect, and conation. These components interact with social environments in everyday life and shape how people communicate and negotiate meaning in their communities¹. In Indonesia, interfaith discourse remains contested in public spaces, and debates around interfaith greetings and public religiosity intersect with efforts to sustain social tolerance². From this perspective, religious awareness and experience inform the formation and expression of religious attitudes, guiding behavior consistent with one's faith and values³. Consequently, the stability of social tolerance hinges on how religious meanings are exchanged, interpreted, and moderated within local arenas of interaction.

In today's social media environment, information flows are ubiquitous and traditional

¹ Jennifer T Grant Weinandy and Joshua B Grubbs, "Religious and Spiritual Beliefs and Attitudes towards Addiction and Addiction Treatment: A Scoping Review," *Addictive Behaviors Reports* 14 (2021): 100393, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.abrep.2021.100393>.

² Firdaus Yuni Dharta et al, "MUI's Fatwa on Interfaith Greetings and Religious Tolerance: Can Indonesia Find a Middle Ground?," *Frontiers in Communication* 10, no. May (2025): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2025.1537568>.

³ Andrzej Slowikowski, "Kierkegaard's Theories of the Stages of Existence and Subjective Truth as a Model for Further Research into the Phenomenology of Religious Attitudes," *Philosophies* 9, no. 2 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.3390/philosophies9020035>; H Heryanto, "Kesadaran Beragama Dalam Perspektif Ihsan: Pengalaman Pertaubatan Preman," *Khazanah Theologia* 3, no. 2 (2021): 67–80, <https://doi.org/10.15575/kt.v3i2.10974>; Andrew Oberg, "The Self as Source and Destination for Intuitive Interpretations of Religious or Spiritual Experiences," *Religions* 13, no. 9 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13090798>.

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gatekeeping is weakened. Empirical studies in Indonesia show that religious hoaxes and disinformation circulating online can polarize communities, erode trust, and trigger intolerance, underscoring the need for digital literacy and dialogic responses at the local level⁴. Socioeconomic and political incentives can encourage actors to invoke religious legitimacy for partisan interests. When such instrumentalization escalates, consequences may include harassment, disruption of worship, and episodic violence, reinforcing the importance of preventive communication and transparent governance⁵.

Public attention to religious life in Indonesia remains high, and numerous cases illustrate how intergroup labelling and disputes over issues such as interfaith marriage and blasphemy can escalate into wider tension. In Aceh, analyses of house-of-worship permitting disputes show that flashpoints in Aceh Singkil involve intertwined political and administrative factors beyond doctrinal differences. It underscores the need for participatory, problem-solving communication among authorities, the FKUB, and communities⁶. Evidence from Indonesian cities further indicates that FKUB coordination and communication strategies can help mitigate interfaith tensions when adequately resourced and linked to transparent procedures, although implementation gaps persist⁷. Taken together, these patterns suggest that the trajectory of religious life is shaped less by abstract doctrine than by the everyday practices and institutional arrangements through which communities negotiate difference.

Building on empirical experiences in Aceh Tengah and Aceh Singkil, there remains a need for further inquiry and practical support to clarify how religious attitudes relate to patterns of interfaith communication at the community level. The research question guiding this initiative is: What are the forms of religious attitudes and communication patterns present within Aceh Tengah and Aceh Singkil? This community service aimed to identify religious attitudes and interfaith communication patterns in Aceh Tengah and Aceh Singkil.

⁴ Rizal Fathurrohman et al., "Framing Religious Hoaxes: Logical, Religious, and Legal Perspectives in Indonesia," *Religious: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama Dan Lintas Budaya* 8, no. 2 (2024): 141–56, <https://doi.org/10.15575/rjsalb.v8i2.15545>.

⁵ Latifah and Titing Reza Fahrissa, "The Role of Social Media in Changing Community Social Behaviour: Study Case Wahhabi Conflict in East Lombok Peran Media Sosial Dalam Mengubah Perilaku Sosial Masyarakat: Studi Kasus Konflik Wahhabi Di Lombok Timur," *Jurnal Sosiologi Dialektika* 18, no. 2 (2023): 112–23, <https://dx.doi.org/10.20473/jsd.v18i22023.112-123>.

⁶ Muzakkir and M Anzaikhan, "Qanun and House of Worship Conflict: The Irony of the Aceh Government in Aceh Singkil," *Journal of Ecobumanism* 3, no. 7 SE-Articles (October 3, 2024): 511–22, <https://doi.org/10.62754/joe.v3i7.4221>.

⁷ Sutamaji Sutamaji and Lukman Hakim, "Communication Strategies of FKUB in Managing Conflicts Among Religious Communities in Nganjuk and Kediri," *Tribakti: Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman* 35, no. 2 (2024): 225–42, <https://doi.org/10.33367/tribakti.v35i2.5423>.

METHOD

This community service employed a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach. PAR was selected because interfaith mentoring in Aceh requires bottom-up problem solving, safe dialogue spaces, and shared solution ownership. The approach facilitates joint learning and collaboration to address issues related to religious attitudes and patterns of interfaith communication in Aceh Tengah and Aceh Singkil. Consistent with field guidelines for PAR, the mentoring emphasized ideas and initiatives emerging from the grassroots so that changes in attitudes and communicative practice are internalized rather than imposed. Activities occurred in Aceh Tengah and Aceh Singkil, Indonesia, over four months (August–November 2022).

The program was carried out by the non-governmental organizations Catimore and Sahabat, whose members are lecturers from IAIN Takengon, UIN Sultanah Nahrasiyah Lhokseumawe, and UIN Imam Bonjol Padang, in partnership with the Hikmah Counseling Center (HCC). In Aceh Tengah, partners included the Aceh Tengah Religious Affairs Office (Kemenag); the Inter-Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB) of Aceh Tengah (chairperson and deputy); the Ulama Consultative Assembly (MPU) of Aceh Tengah; the Gayo Customary Assembly (MAG); and religious leaders representing Islam, Catholicism, Protestant Christianity, and Buddhism. In Aceh Singkil, partners included the Aceh Singkil Religious Affairs Office (Kemenag); the FKUB of Aceh Singkil (chairperson and secretary); the Ulama Consultative Assembly (MPU) of Aceh Singkil; and religious leaders representing Islam, Catholicism, Protestant Christianity, and Buddhism. These partners co-hosted interviews, supported field observations, participated in focus group discussions, and provided documents and archives used for triangulation and reporting. The participation Action Research (PAR) workflow for this community service initiative includes the following steps:

Evidence was gathered through semi-structured interviews with government officials, FKUB members, religious leaders, customary leaders, teachers, and students, as well as focus group discussions that explored everyday interfaith contact, communication routines, and sensitivities around permits for places of worship. All activities were recorded exclusively through notes, and notes were consolidated immediately after each session; no audio or video recordings were made. Data were analyzed thematically by categorizing responses from FGD and observation notes into major themes related to tolerance and communication.

The focus group discussion (FGD) in Aceh Tengah, conducted with the Islamic Religious Guidance Division (BIMAS Islam) of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag), involved 7 participants. An FGD on resolving issues of religious understanding among religious communities in Aceh Tengah involved 12 participants, while a similar FGD in Aceh Singkil involved 7

participants. The Training of Trainers (ToT) for students on building religious attitudes and interfaith communication patterns involved 25 participants from Aceh Tengah and 35 from Aceh Singkil.



Figure 1. Workflow of Participation Action Research (PAR)

The data collection and organization techniques in this community service activity are as follows.

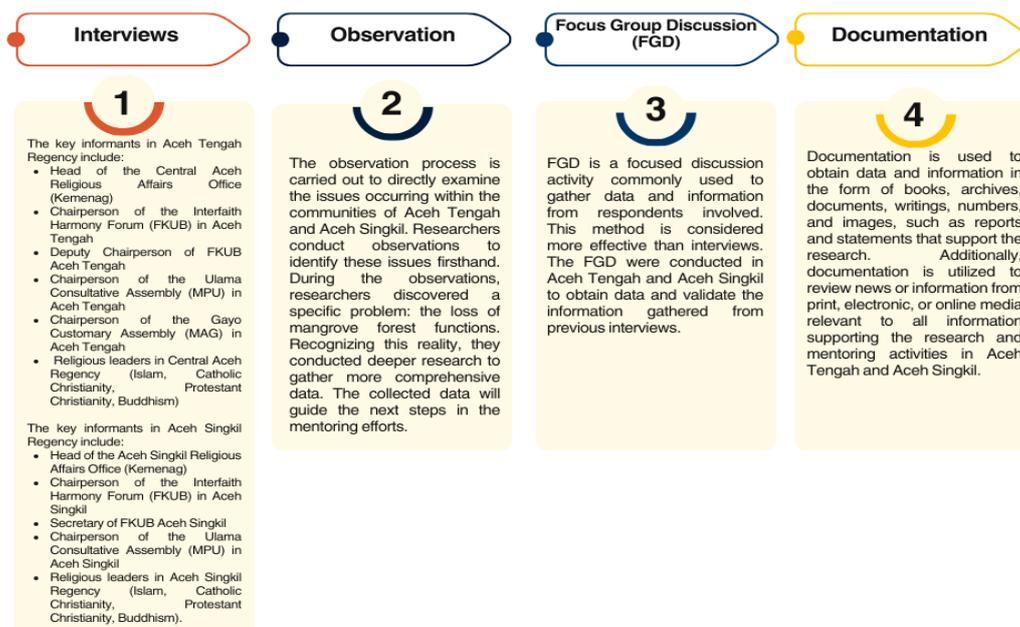


Figure 2. Data Collection Techniques

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Religious Attitudes in Aceh Tengah

The people's religious attitudes in Aceh Tengah Regency reflect a high tolerance toward religious and ethnic diversity. The community lives harmoniously, with no discrimination against minority religious groups. The values of Gayo culture, which emphasize openness, cooperation, and freedom of worship, serve as the foundation for fostering harmonious religious life. Moreover, the maturity of thought among the community is evident in how they maintain tolerance. They are capable of critical thinking before taking action and are not easily provoked by issues that could incite conflict between religious groups.

2. Religious Attitudes in Aceh Singkil

In contrast, the people of Aceh Singkil regency face greater challenges related to religious diversity. As a region with a Muslim majority, followed by Protestant and Catholic communities, Aceh Singkil often encounters sensitive issues such as the licensing of places of worship. Despite these challenges, the community strives to exhibit tolerance in daily life by respecting religious celebrations, maintaining harmonious relationships, and avoiding excessive religious expressions. Associative processes like cooperation and accommodation characterize social relations in Aceh Singkil, although tensions in managing social interactions persist.

3. Patterns of Interfaith Communication

Comparative evidence from PAR interviews and FGDs indicated that Aceh Tengah relies on open, consultative deliberation, connecting bottom-up feedback to administrative coordination with FKUB and local governments, an arrangement that de-escalates issues early. In Aceh Singkil, communication is perceived as more formal and top-down, with limited opportunities for bottom-up voice. Nevertheless, interpersonal and economic ties keep relations functional. Across both districts, PAR action meetings underscored that clear procedures, timely clarification, and accessible forums are pivotal to sustaining harmony.

To contextualize these findings, the following subsection outlines how the PAR cycle was operationalized over four months, indicating the purpose of each stage, the actors involved, and the main outputs.

a. Initial Mapping

This activity involves an initial mapping process to understand the community's conditions, including social relations and their challenges, particularly regarding religious conflicts. The

mapping is conducted through observation, interviews, and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) techniques to identify social facts and religious diversity in Aceh Tengah and Aceh Singkil. To better understand the social conditions and challenges related to religious diversity in Aceh Tengah, a series of initial mapping activities was conducted in September 2022. On September 15, discussions were held with the Head of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag) in Aceh Tengah to examine the prevailing social conditions and issues related to religious conflicts. Subsequently, on September 22, the team engaged with Kesbangpol Aceh Tengah to explore the role of the Forum for National Unity and the Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB) in fostering social harmony. Finally, on September 26, social and cultural mapping was conducted with the Gayo Customary Assembly (Majelis Adat Gayo) to identify and document the region's rich cultural and customary values. These activities provided critical insights into the community's social dynamics and laid the groundwork for further actions.



Figure 3. Initial Mapping

b. Determination of the Research Agenda

The research agenda is determined with the community using the PRA approach, involving various stakeholders to identify issues and define research focuses relevant to social needs. This activity was conducted from August to September 2022, encompassing the preparation of proposals and research instruments to ensure the effective implementation of the mentoring program.

c. Participatory Mapping

Participatory mapping involves the community in identifying areas, places of worship, religious leaders, and perspectives on interfaith interactions. It aims to gather comprehensive data on the conditions of diversity. In October 2022, participatory mapping activities were conducted to document the diversity of regions and places of worship across Aceh Tengah and Aceh Singkil. On October 15, the mapping focused on Aceh Tengah, identifying the distribution of religious diversity and key places of worship within the district. This effort was extended to Aceh Singkil regency on October 20-21, where a similar mapping process was undertaken to comprehensively understand the region's religious landscape. These activities were instrumental in capturing both districts' diversity and religious dynamics.

d. Identifying Problems

Fundamental problems are formulated with the community through focused group discussions (FGD). These issues relate to religious attitudes and patterns of communication among interfaith communities. On September 12, 2022, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was held with the Islamic Religious Guidance division (BIMAS Islam) of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag) in Aceh Tengah. The discussion aimed to gather valuable input on regional social conflicts and interfaith interactions. This session provided an opportunity to understand the dynamics of religious coexistence and the challenges faced by the community, forming a foundation for developing strategies to foster harmony and address emerging issues effectively.



Figure 5. FGD with the Islamic Religious Guidance division (BIMAS Islam) of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag) in Aceh Tengah

e. Strategy Formulation

The community develops strategies to address the identified social issues. These strategies include planning systematic steps, involving stakeholders, and anticipating challenges and opportunities for success. In October 2022, strategic discussions were held to strengthen interfaith relations and address religious diversity in Aceh Tengah regency. On October 1, dialogues were conducted with the HKBP (Protestant Church) Takengon board and Buddhist religious instructors to explore collaborative approaches to fostering harmony. It was followed by discussions on October 6 with the broader interfaith community in Aceh Tengah, focusing on shared values and mutual understanding. Finally, on October 12, efforts to enhance perceptions and foster agreement were undertaken in collaboration with the Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB) of Aceh Tengah, solidifying a united approach toward sustaining interfaith cooperation and tolerance.



Figure 6. Discussions will be held with the HKBP (Protestant Church) Takengon board, the Buddhist religious community, and the interfaith community of Aceh Tengah, as well as with FKUB Aceh Tengah.

f. Community Organizing

Organizing is conducted by building social groups and networks within and outside the community. The goal is to strengthen solidarity and enhance effectiveness in addressing issues. Community organizing was conducted throughout the FGD sessions, and perception-enhancing activities were used to create a community structure supporting the program.

g. Action for Change

Concrete actions are carried out based on the formulated strategies, such as training and interventions to improve interfaith relations and resolve conflicts. In November 2022, a series of activities was conducted as part of the action for change initiative to address interfaith challenges

and promote harmony. On November 8, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was held to identify actionable solutions to existing social and religious issues in Aceh Tengah. Another FGD followed this on November 17, where stakeholders from Aceh Singkil came together to discuss conflict resolution strategies and enhance mutual understanding.



Figure 7. FGD on resolving religious understanding conflict issues among religious communities in Aceh Tengah and Aceh Singkil

FGDs in Aceh Tengah revealed strong tolerance toward religious and ethnic diversity, reflected in routine cross-group participation and an absence of reported routine discrimination. Participants described deliberative habits and early coordination with the government and FKUB that helped de-escalate sensitive issues. In Aceh Singkil, FGDs indicated everyday respect across groups and heightened sensitivity regarding the licensing of places of worship. Associative ties, such as cooperation and accommodation, supported civility despite occasional frictions. Taken together, these results identify the prevailing forms of religious attitudes, tolerant, deliberative, and civility-oriented, and the communication patterns that sustain them, namely open consultation in Aceh Tengah and more formal channels in Aceh Singkil, directly addressing the study's objective.

Training of Trainers (ToT) sessions were organized to empower educators and students. On November 11, teachers and students in Aceh Tengah were trained to foster tolerance and improve interfaith communication. Similarly, on November 15, a ToT session in Aceh Singkil focused on engaging elementary school students to instill values of respect and cooperation from a young age. These activities aimed to initiate tangible changes in fostering peace and promoting interreligious dialogue in both regions.



Figure 8. Training of Trainers (ToT) for students in Aceh Tengah and Aceh Singkil in building religious attitudes and patterns of interfaith communication.

The Training of Trainers (ToT) for teachers and students in Aceh Tengah regency, focusing on building religious attitudes and patterns of interfaith communication, was held on November 11, 2022. This activity targeted elementary and junior high school teachers and students in Aceh Tengah. Participants were educated and equipped with knowledge about diversity and strategies for fostering tolerance among religious communities, both within the school environment and in their residential areas.

Similarly, the ToT for teachers and students in Aceh Singkil regency on building religious attitudes and patterns of interfaith communication took place on November 15, 2022. This session directly engaged elementary school teachers and students in Aceh Singkil. As a region with more religious diversity than Aceh Tengah, the ToT program in Aceh Singkil involved the Hikmah Counseling Center (HCC). Strengthened mentoring was provided to the students and teachers to empower them as agents of tolerance and interfaith harmony within their communities.

h. Community Education

Community education programs were strategically integrated with Training of Trainers (ToT) activities and economic empowerment workshops to holistically strengthen societal understanding of tolerance and coexistence. These initiatives provided participants with the knowledge and practical tools to promote interfaith harmony and address local challenges. By combining educational efforts with skills-based economic programs, the activities aimed to foster an appreciation for religious and cultural diversity and empower individuals to contribute to their communities' social and economic well-being. This comprehensive approach ensured that participants could internalize the values of tolerance while actively applying them in their everyday

lives, whether in the workplace, educational settings, or broader community interactions.

i. Theoretical Reflection

Theoretical reflections were an integral part of the monitoring and evaluation activities conducted during the program. These reflections aimed to assess the processes and outcomes of the initiatives, providing insights for continuous improvement. On October 29, 2022, evaluations were carried out for activities I and II, focusing on the initial stages of the program to ensure the alignment of objectives with community needs. The activity was conducted in the office of LSM Catimore and Sahabat to present reports on activities I and II. This session was directly led by the chairman of LSM Catimore and Sahabat, Dr. Edy Saputra, M.Pd, and all members of LSM Catimore and Sahabat.



Figure 9. Monitoring and evaluation of activities I and II

Similarly, on November 18, 2022, evaluations of activities III and IV were conducted to measure progress and assess the effectiveness of the implemented strategies. These reflective sessions allowed the program team and community stakeholders to analyze challenges, document successes, and draw valuable lessons that could guide future actions and ensure sustainable impact.



Figure 10. Monitoring and evaluation of activities III and IV

Monitoring and evaluating activity V marked the culmination of all activities conducted during the mentoring program on religious understanding in Aceh Tengah and Aceh Singkil. This session was held in the meeting room of LSM Catimore and Sahabat and attended by the entire team and contributors involved in the mentoring activities. The aim was to compile the final results of all activities into comprehensive academic and financial reports, which formed an essential part of the overall program documentation. The target for completing the final activity report was set for the end of November 2022.

Religious life in Aceh Tengah regency is reflected in the presence of three major religions: Islam, Catholicism, and Protestant Christianity, as well as Buddhism, which can be observed through the existence of respective places of worship. Several conditions highlight the religious attitudes and patterns of interfaith communication among the people of Aceh Tengah and Aceh Singkil. First, the diversity in Aceh Tengah Regency is exemplary. It is evident in the religious attitudes of its people, who readily accept differences in ethnicity and religion without discrimination. Aceh Tengah society exhibits a high level of tolerance towards religious differences, with a majority of the population respecting the rights of individuals to choose and practice their religion⁸. Second, the social interactions and religious practices among adherents in Aceh Tengah are moderate and not excessive, as evidenced by the community events held by its residents. This harmonious relationship is supported by a historical foundation of mutual respect and the active role of religious figures in promoting tolerance⁹. Third, the Gayo culture in Aceh Tengah fosters a highly welcoming attitude towards newcomers and ensures freedom to practice one's religion according to its teachings¹⁰. Fourth, the maturity of thought among the community promotes a strong adherence to values of tolerance, a cautious approach to actions, and resilience against divisive issues.

This maturity is reinforced by Islamic educational values integrated into higher education in Aceh, which contribute significantly to social cohesion and peacebuilding. These values, such as brotherhood, tolerance, and social justice, are embedded in the educational process, fostering personal and social transformations among students and lecturers¹¹. For these reasons, Aceh

⁸ Muhammad Riza and Syibrans Mulasi, "Analysis Of The Tolerance Attitude Of Central Aceh Society Towards Religious Differences," *Jurnal As-Salam* 8, no. 1 (2024): 100–113, <https://doi.org/10.37249/assalam.v8i1.614>.

⁹ Indah Permata Sari, "Interaksi Sosial Antar Umat Beragama Di Kecamatan Lut Tawar Aceh Tengah," *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama Indonesia* 1, no. 1 (2020): 96–106, <https://doi.org/10.22373/JSIAI.V1I1.486>.

¹⁰ Muhammad Riza, "Relasi Antar Iman Di Negeri Syariat Islam (Studi Peran Dan Fungsi Fkub Dalam Menjaga Kerukunan Antar Umat Beragama Di Aceh Tengah)," *Jurnal As-Salam* 2, no. 1 (2019): 28–35.

¹¹ Fuadi Mardatillah, Muchlinarwati Muchlinarwati, and Dayan Abdurrahman, "Integrating Islamic Educational Values in Higher Education: A Framework for Social Cohesion and Peacebuilding in Aceh," *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development* 20, no. 2 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.1177/15423166251342683>.

Tengah regency stands out as one of the regions with the highest levels of interfaith harmony in Aceh Province. Religious minorities in Aceh Tengah adapt through interpersonal and group communication, prioritizing cultural approaches and participating in the Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB)¹². Despite Aceh's implementation of Islamic Sharia, non-Muslims enjoy freedom in religious practices and engage in various community activities alongside Muslims¹³. These findings collectively demonstrate Aceh's success in fostering religious tolerance and social harmony among diverse communities.

Aceh Singkil regency is a region with a pluralistic society, comprising various religions, particularly Islam and Christianity. This diversity, marked by multiple faiths, often reflects a strong inclination toward individual religious identities and, at times, intense and unrestrained religious expressions. The conflicts in Aceh Singkil primarily stem from unresolved issues surrounding the permits for constructing places of worship, which remain a challenge to this day¹⁴. In terms of social interaction, the community of Aceh Singkil tends toward associative processes, characterized by patterns of blending relationships marked by cooperation, accommodation, and assimilation. These associative tendencies are influenced by social norms, individual goals, and the interpretation of social situations, which are crucial in shaping the nature and extent of everyday interactions¹⁵. The people's religious attitudes in Aceh Singkil emphasize a desire for a harmonious, peaceful, and secure life, practiced while upholding the values of diversity. These attitudes are reflected in mutual respect and appreciation for the religions and beliefs of others, honoring each other's religious celebrations, fostering closeness through interfaith gatherings, and maintaining moderate expressions of religious practices. These outcomes are consistent with the view advanced by Winda that harmony is strengthened when communities remain committed to their respective traditions while avoiding exclusionary claims of absolute truth¹⁶. They also align with Angga et al., who recommend cultivating inclusive community dispositions and strengthening religious-moderation

¹² Fachrur Rizha, Sutrisno Sutrisno, and Julia Noviani, "Communication Patterns of Religious Minority in Cultural Adaptation in Central Aceh Regency," *Profetik: Jurnal Komunikasi* 13, no. 2 (2020): 276–89, <https://doi.org/10.14421/pjk.v13i2.1889>.

¹³ Inayatillah Inayatillah, "Social-Harmony within Aceh Society: An Analysis towards Religious Tolerance of Muslim and Non-Muslim Communities in Banda Aceh," *Millati: Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 6, no. 2 (2021): 225–42, <https://doi.org/10.18326/mlt.v6i2.6405>.

¹⁴ Adelia Rizka, Bunari Bunari, and Suroyo Suroyo, "Social Conflict over the Establishment of Christian Houses of Worship in Aceh Singkil Regency (1979-2015)," *Jurnal Pendidikan IPS* 15, no. 1 (2025): 86–96, <https://doi.org/10.37630/jpi.v15i1.2226>.

¹⁵ Indah Lestari, "Interaksi Sosial Komunitas Samin Dengan Masyarakat Sekitar," *Jurnal Komunitas* 5, no. 1 (2013): 168901, <https://doi.org/10.15294/KOMUNITAS.V5I1.2376>.

¹⁶ Winda Ika Pratiwi, "Dialog Antar Agama-Konflik: Jalan Damai Konflik Islam-Kristen Di Aceh Singkil Tahun 2015," *Panangkaran: Jurnal Penelitian Agama Dan Masyarakat* 4, no. 1 (2021): 27–47, <https://doi.org/10.14421/panangkaran.2020.0401-02>.

doi: 10.35316/assidanah.v7i2.369-386

literacy through humanist, dialogic approaches to prevent conflict¹⁷. In our program, this orientation was operationalized through dialogue forums, clarification channels with FKUB and local governments, and school- and community-based education, reinforcing associative ties and providing practical tools to manage permit-related sensitivities without escalation.

Across districts, the prevailing forms of religious attitudes and interfaith communication differed. Aceh Tengah showed tolerant and deliberative attitudes sustained by open consultation, which linked community feedback to coordination with FKUB and local governments. FGDs and interviews described routine cross-group participation, an absence of reported routine discrimination, and decision-making through open deliberation, which enabled early de-escalation when sensitive issues arose. These patterns were consistent with previous studies that identified community feedback and participation as integral to effective interfaith communication in Aceh Tengah¹⁸, highlighted the absence of routine discrimination and the active role of religious leaders as key to maintaining peace and tolerance¹⁹, and showed that open deliberation supports inclusive decision making and helps resolve issues before they escalate²⁰.

Aceh Singkil showed heightened sensitivity around permits for places of worship. Yet, everyday relations remained civil through associative ties of cooperation, accommodation, kinship, and economic interdependence, indicating a need for more bottom-up voice and clearer channels for clarification. Participatory Action Research mentoring strengthened dialogic skills and moderation literacy among teachers, students, community leaders, officials, and FKUB members, produced simple dialogue protocols and referral pathways for sensitive issues, supported school and community forums, and established routines for rapid clarification. Taken together, these gains empowered stakeholders to act as agents of tolerance. In Aceh province, FKUB contributed to interfaith harmony by facilitating tolerance, equality, cooperation, mutual respect, and clear group communication²¹. Despite constraints, it helped resolve sensitive issues and supported peaceful coexistence by linking community feedback to transparent procedures and timely clarification with local governments. Integrated with the gains from Participatory Action Research mentoring,

¹⁷ Angga Prasetiya and Soma Surya Persada, "Membaca Konflik: Problematika Dan Refleksi Atas Kehidupan Beragama Masyarakat Aceh Singkil," *JIM: Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa Pendidikan Sejarah* 7, no. 3 (2022): 156–67, <https://doi.org/10.24815/jimps.v7i3.21212>.

¹⁸ Asriadi Asriadi and Ismawati Saragih, "Moderasi Beragama Di Aceh Tengah: Strategi Membangun Dialog Lintas Agama Di Wilayah Multikultural," *Altafani* 4, no. 1 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.59342/jpkm.v4i1.794>.

¹⁹ Sari, "Interaksi Sosial Antar Umat Beragama Di Kecamatan Lut Tawar Aceh Tengah."

²⁰ Asriadi and Saragih, "Moderasi Beragama Di Aceh Tengah: Strategi Membangun Dialog Lintas Agama Di Wilayah Multikultural."

²¹ Nurdin AR et al., "Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama in Aceh: Strategies, Roles and Barriers in Maintaining Interfaith Harmony," *Ulumuna* 25, no. 2 (2021): 306–28, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujs.v25i2.457>.

FKUB's coordination enabled broader participation in decision-making, sustained harmonious engagement in social and religious activities, and reinforced practical tools to manage permit-related sensitivities without escalation.

CONCLUSION

This study found that Aceh Tengah demonstrated high tolerance, which was supported by open consultation and responsive coordination with FKUB and local governments. At the same time, Aceh Singkil faced ongoing sensitivities around worship-permit administration despite generally civil, associative relations. The stated objective to identify forms of religious attitudes and interfaith communication patterns in both districts was achieved. Participatory Action Research mentoring empowered stakeholders as agents of tolerance and supported day-to-day harmony through simple dialogue protocols and clarification routines. Collaborative, bottom-up communication institutionalized through government, interfaith forums, and community partnerships was essential to manage diversity and sustain harmony; the PAR-based approach provided a practical model and transferable lessons for similar plural settings across Indonesia. The program offers a grassroots-based model of interfaith mentoring that links community feedback to administrative channels, integrates school and community capacities for dialogue and religious-moderation literacy, and translates findings into practical tools that can be adapted in other diverse districts.

Practice and policy should maintain open, consultative forums in Aceh Tengah and expand bottom-up voice, transparent permitting procedures, and routine clarification channels in Aceh Singkil, with FKUB, schools, and government partnerships coordinating follow-up. The provincial government should monitor implementation and provide resources that institutionalize these mechanisms. Future research can track medium-term outcomes and test replication in other diverse districts.

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