

Empowering women and advancing peace: A study of wahid foundation's initiatives for inclusive social transformation in Indonesia

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Article Information	Abstract:
Submitted: 2024-10-24 Revised: 2025-06-10 Published: 2025-06-25	The increasing spread of radicalism in rural areas places women as the most affected group; however, they remain excluded from peacebuilding and development processes. This situation reflects a serious irony that may threaten the long-term social sustainability of Indonesia's future. This study analyzes the Peace Village Program's response to rural radicalism through women's empowerment and evaluates its impact on peace declarations and cooperative-based economic institutions. This qualitative case study employed document analysis, participatory observation, and interviews. Data were analyzed thematically using source triangulation and audit trail techniques to ensure validity and adherence to research ethics. The study findings indicate that: (1) the Peace Village Program responds to rural radicalism by empowering women through strengthening tolerance, peace, economic capacity, as well as training and advocacy; (2) the program successfully declares peace villages and empowers women as entrepreneurs; and (3) economic empowerment through the Peace Village Cooperative integrates nine peace indicators, establishes Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes), and distributes loans. The study concludes that the Peace Village Program effectively addresses radicalism and empowers women economically, but high participation does not ensure substantive power due to elite dominance and donor dependency. This study contributes to strengthening an integrative approach to village-based peacebuilding and emphasizes the importance of a power perspective, while highlighting the need to enhance women's capacity, local institutions, and economic sustainability.

Keywords:
Wahid Foundation;
Women;
Empowerment; Peaceful Village.



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INTRODUCTION

Although women play an important role in families and society, their participation in the public sphere particularly in peacebuilding and policy-making processes remains limited. Lwamba et al. (2022) highlight that women's involvement is often constrained by non-inclusive social structures. These barriers stem from patriarchal norms, gender stereotypes, and unequal access to education and resources (Tabassum & Nayak, 2021; Khan et al., 2024). Vujko et al. (2024) emphasize that women's empowerment is a crucial strategy for strengthening their economic, social, political, and cultural capacities. Anderson (2022) and Torok et al. (2023) argue that empowerment does not mean competing with men but rather creating equal conditions that enable both to develop and lead together. According to De la Torre-Castro et al. (2017), gender is a social construct that shapes the dynamic relationships between men and women. In the Indonesian context, Bräuchler (2022) notes that women often experience a dual reality as both victims and agents of change in peacebuilding processes.

Existing literature on women's empowerment can be grouped into three strands. First, education, economic initiatives, and advocacy empower women to resist radical narratives, reduce violence, and foster interreligious dialogue (Carthy et al., 2018; Lafrarchi, 2021; Smeer et al., 2024). Second, studies highlight women's roles and the impact of empowerment on social cohesion, community transformation, and peacebuilding processes (Krause et al., 2018; Cardenas & Olivius, 2021; Scheyvens & van der Watt, 2021). Third, empowered women promote tolerance, inclusivity, and sustainable peace, serving as models for gender-equitable social transformation (Shata & Seelig, 2021; Haley & Marsh, 2021; Dushkova & Ivlieva, 2024). However, prior research has not sufficiently explored the integration of women's empowerment within a structured village model or its linkage to economic institutions. This study addresses this gap by examining the Peace Village Program, which integrates women's empowerment, peacebuilding, and community-based economic development within a rural development ecosystem.

This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Peace Village Program in responding to radicalism through women's empowerment, the strengthening of tolerance, peacebuilding, and economic development, as well as to evaluate its contribution to the declaration of peace villages and the strengthening of cooperative-based economic institutions. The research questions are: (1) How is the Peace Village Program implemented in addressing rural radicalism through women's empowerment? (2) How does the program promote the declaration of peace villages and enhance women's involvement as entrepreneurs? (3) How is economic empowerment realized through the Peace Village Cooperative? Accordingly, this study contributes theoretically by strengthening the concept of women's empowerment in village-based peacebuilding and development. Practically, the findings are expected to inform the strengthening of cooperatives, Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes), and village policies to enhance women's participation, economic resilience, and the sustainability of peace programs at the local level more effectively.

This study is based on the argument that the Wahid Foundation's Peace Village Program, through a community-based approach, is effective in responding to rural radicalism while simultaneously expanding women's participation and strengthening the local economy. The integration of peacebuilding and economic empowerment agendas has led to the institutionalization of peace values in village governance and encouraged the formation of women-based economic institutions. However, these achievements have not fully resulted in a substantive transformation of power relations. High levels of women's participation do not automatically translate into equal access to strategic decision-making at

the village level; thus, women's agency may still be constrained by patriarchal social and cultural structures. In addition, the sustainability of the program largely depends on local capacity and post-intervention institutional commitment. Therefore, while the program demonstrates progressive success, it remains in a transitional stage toward a more inclusive and structurally equitable social transformation.

METHOD

Research Approach

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design ([Tazkianida, 2025](#)) to explore the Wahid Foundation's Peace Village Program in responding to rural radicalism through women's empowerment ([Wolff, 2024](#)). The approach examined women's participation and agency, peace village declarations, and women's entrepreneurial engagement. In line with Gangrade et al. (2023) and Alasuutari (2009), this descriptive qualitative study captured the complexity of local realities, including women's leadership and peacebuilding practices. Particular attention was given to economic empowerment through the Peace Village Cooperative, which strengthens institutional capacity and village economic resilience while revealing how empowerment is negotiated within diverse socio-cultural contexts.

Data Collection

Data were collected through document analysis, participatory observation, and semi-structured interviews with women participants of the Peace Village Program ([Lim, 2024](#)). Document analysis examined Wahid Foundation reports, village policies, peace declarations, and cooperative and Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes) data ([Bowen, 2009](#)). Observations were conducted during training sessions, peace forums, and women's economic activities. These methods were used to analyze the program's response to radicalism, its contribution to peace village declarations and women's entrepreneurship, as well as the role of cooperatives in strengthening institutional capacity and village economic resilience.

Data Analysis

Data analysis used a qualitative thematic approach involving data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. Thematic coding identified patterns, empowerment strategies, and women's roles in social inclusion and peace. The unit of analysis was the Wahid Foundation's women's empowerment and peacebuilding program. Campbell et al. (2020) note that this unit examines interactions between local context and program outcomes, including responses to rural radicalism. Site selection was purposive based on: program sustainability, women's participation, peace village declarations, women's entrepreneurial engagement, and documentation of the cooperative's role in strengthening institutional capacity and village economic resilience. Razia & Abu-Bakar (2023) and Åhlfeldt et al. (2023) emphasize that this approach ensures selected sites provide sufficient empirical grounding to evaluate the actual impact of empowerment initiatives.

Data Validity

To ensure data validity, this study applied source and method triangulation by comparing information obtained from various documents, observations, and secondary data. Triangulation was conducted by comparing Wahid Foundation reports, village policies, cooperative data, and peace village declaration documents ([Palinkas et al., 2015](#)). Audit trail techniques were employed to maintain the transparency and traceability of the research process, allowing the findings to be verified. The audit trail documented all sources and analytical procedures transparently ([Thomson et al., 2021](#)). This approach helps reveal the

interconnections between empowerment practices and social impacts (Merino et al., 2024), assess program sustainability (Rashid et al., 2019), and enable a context-based analysis of gender-responsive peacebuilding (Blomqvist et al., 2021).

Research Ethics

This study adhered to ethical principles by ensuring the confidentiality of personal data and sensitive information. All documents, observations, and research findings were used in accordance with academic ethical standards to ensure that no parties were harmed during the research process or the publication of the study results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The Wahid Foundation and gender mainstreaming policy

The development of gender mainstreaming since the *Gus Dur* era has revealed a gap between progressive normative visions and implementation realities, which remain influenced by patriarchal culture and inconsistent political commitment. The Wahid Foundation, as a civil society actor emerging from the anti-extremism agenda, faces structural limitations due to its dependence on donor funding and short-term program cycles. Although its elite leadership has gained global recognition, women's participation at the local level has not fully reflected a substantive transformation of power relations.

Table 1

Historical Phases and Institutional Dynamics of the Wahid Foundation

No	Thematic	Historical Phase	Key Findings	Analytical Explanation
1	Normative Foundations of Gender and National Policy	2000 – Ideological Foundation Phase	Gender mainstreaming was introduced through Presidential Instruction No. 9/2000 as a foundational policy framework for gender equality in Indonesia (Wahid Foundation, 2024)	This phase reflects Gus Dur's normative vision of social justice and gender equality. However, implementation remains constrained by entrenched patriarchal norms and inconsistent political commitment
2	Institutional Emergence and Peacebuilding Mission	2004 – Early Institutional Phase	The establishment of the Wahid Institute as a response to post-9/11 extremism and socio-religious conflict, grounded in pluralism, human rights, and democracy (Susanto et al., 2022)	The institution emerged as a strategic civil society actor promoting a humanist-Islamic approach to peacebuilding, yet remains dependent on external funding and state political dynamics
3	Leadership Consolidation and Global Legitimacy	2006–2019 – Expansion of Leadership Phase	Yenny Wahid strengthened the institution through national political networks and global recognition as a female leader in peace and gender discourse (Rijaa, 2021)	Elite leadership enhances global visibility and legitimacy, but raises tensions regarding representation between elite actors and grassroots women within programs
4	Internationalization of Gender and Peace Discourse	2019 – Global Narrative Strengthening Phase	International recognition of Wahid Foundation's contributions to women's empowerment and peacebuilding initiatives. (UN Women, 2025)	Gender discourse tends to emphasize essentialist feminine traits (empathy, collaboration), which may reinforce stereotypes if not critically contextualized within structural analysis
5	Implementation	Contemporary	Peace Village programs and	A clear gap exists between

	Gaps and Grassroots Disconnect	Phase	gender initiatives lack sufficient empirical evidence regarding real impact at the local level (Barton et al., 2021)	normative policy frameworks and implementation realities, particularly regarding women's agency and transformation of local power relations
6	Wahid Foundation as a Strategic Non-State Actor	Ongoing Transformative Phase	The Wahid Foundation operates as a non-state actor filling governance gaps in peacebuilding and gender equality (Susilawati, 2019)	The organization serves as a transformative force, yet its effectiveness is shaped by donor dependency, project-based cycles, and institutional constraints

Source: compiled by the researcher, 2025.

Table 1 shows that the Wahid Foundation originated from the gender mainstreaming policy outlined in Presidential Instruction No. 9/2000, initiated by Gus Dur as a normative foundation for gender equality. Established in 2004 as a response to post-9/11 extremism, the organization promotes pluralism and human rights. Under the leadership of Yenny Wahid (2006-2019), the Foundation gained global legitimacy through international recognition. However, its gender discourse, which emphasizes essentialist feminine attributes, risks reinforcing stereotypes. An implementation gap persists, as the Peace Village program lacks sufficient empirical evidence of its local impact. As a non-state actor, the Foundation fills governance gaps, yet its effectiveness is constrained by donor dependence and short-term project cycles.

Based on the findings, the historical profile of the Wahid Foundation reveals a tension between progressive normative visions and structurally constrained implementation realities. The ideological phase (2000) positioned gender mainstreaming as an imperative; however, patriarchal culture and political inconsistency weakened its institutionalization. The elite leadership phase (2006-2019) enhanced global visibility, but raised questions regarding the representation of grassroots women's voices. The internationalization of gender discourse (2019), which emphasizes empathy and collaboration, risks essentializing women without addressing structural barriers. The contemporary implementation gap indicates that programs such as the Peace Village have not yet demonstrated clear evidence of transforming power relations. As a strategic non-state actor, the Foundation's position remains fragile due to donor dependence and short-term project cycles. Therefore, long-term effectiveness requires strengthening substantive participation and reducing external dependency.

Implementation of the Wahid Foundation's Peace Village Program

The Peace Village Program demonstrates complex dynamics between participatory achievements and structural transformation challenges. Although the program has successfully expanded women's involvement in peacebuilding activities, economic empowerment, and social advocacy, high participation rates do not automatically ensure equal influence in strategic decision-making at the village level. The declarative and economic achievements indeed reflect positive developments; however, without more substantive changes in power relations, women's participation risks remaining symbolic in nature. Therefore, quantitative success should be balanced with an evaluation of the quality of representation, authority, and women's agency within local community governance.

Table 2
Findings of the Wahid Foundation's Peaceful Village Program

No	Thematic	Key Findings	Analytical Explanation
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1	Program: Objectives and Background	Initiated in 2017, the program aims to build harmonious, inclusive communities through peace, tolerance, and women's empowerment, responding to growing intolerance and radicalism in rural areas vulnerable to social conflict (Wahid et al., 2023).	The program represents a response to community-based extremism threats. A village-based prevention approach was adopted because the roots of conflict are often local in nature. However, its long-term effectiveness largely depends on the sustainability of commitment from village governments and local communities following the intervention phase.
2	Program Structure: Pillars, Activities, and Instruments	The program's four pillars are women's participation, economic empowerment, peace through women, and environmental sustainability, with activities mediation, interfaith dialogue, advocacy, disaster preparedness, leadership, gender planning, and instruments anti-violence manuals, local leaders, gender representation.	The program adopts a holistic and integrative approach by combining social, economic, environmental, and policy dimensions within a single peacebuilding framework. Nevertheless, the success of implementation is highly dependent on local capacity in operationalizing the training programs and institutional instruments provided.

Source: compiled by the researcher, 2025.

Table 2 shows that the Wahid Foundation's Peace Village Program was initiated in 2017 as a response to the rising intolerance and radicalism in rural areas. The program aims to build harmonious communities through peacebuilding, tolerance, and women's empowerment. A village-based approach was adopted because the roots of conflict are highly localized. The program is built on four pillars: women's participation, women's economic empowerment, peacebuilding through women, and environmental sustainability. Its activities include conflict mediation training, interreligious dialogue, policy advocacy, as well as leadership and gender-responsive planning training. The instruments used include anti-violence manuals and gender representation frameworks in governance structures.

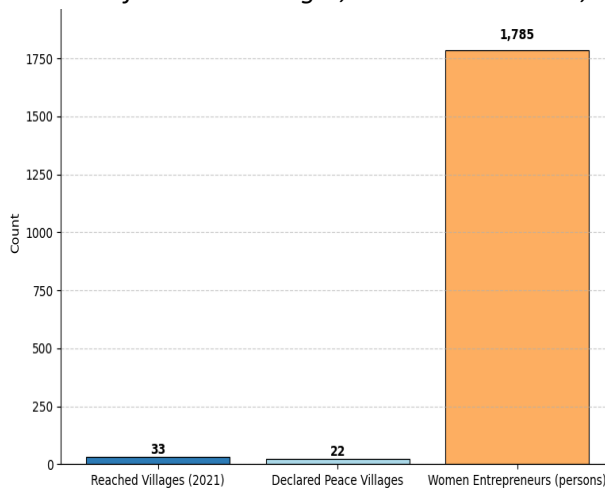
Based on the findings, the Wahid Foundation's Peace Village Program represents a strategic community-based response to the threat of rural radicalism. The selection of a village-based approach is appropriate given the localized nature of conflict; however, its long-term effectiveness is highly dependent on the sustainability of commitment from village governments and communities after the intervention ends. Structurally, the program adopts a holistic approach by integrating four pillars women's participation, women's economic empowerment, peacebuilding through women, and environmental sustainability and is supported by instruments such as anti-violence manuals and gender-responsive training. Although the design is comprehensive, implementation success is strongly determined by local capacity to operationalize the provided training and instruments. Therefore, the program's transformative potential is not yet fully secured without sustained strengthening of village-level institutions.

Women's participation and empowerment in the Peace Village Program

The Peace Village Program shows a significant increase in women's participation, as indicated by the expanded number of target villages, the high number of peace declarations, and the growing involvement of women entrepreneurs. The predominance of women's participation in numerical terms reflects broad engagement in program activities. However, these findings also indicate the need for a critical analysis of the relationship between the quantity of participation and the quality of influence. The large presence of women does not necessarily correspond to equal access to strategic decision-making at the village level.

Figure 1

Number of Reached Villages, Peace Declarations, and Women Entrepreneurs

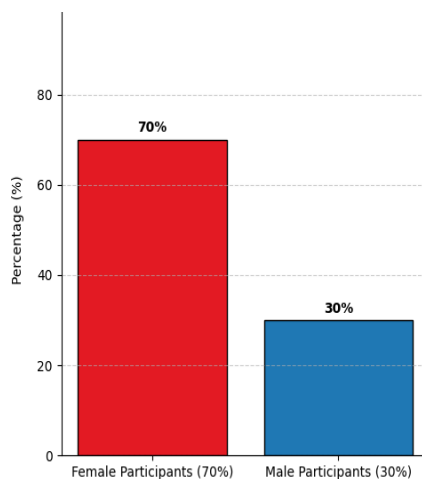


Source: compiled by the researcher, 2025.

Figure 1 shows that, as of 2021, the Wahid Foundation's Peace Village Program had reached 33 villages across Java Island. Of these, 22 villages declared themselves as Peace Villages, indicating a 67% success rate in achieving peace declarations. More strikingly, the program has empowered 1,785 women entrepreneurs. This figure is nearly 54 times the number of declared villages, meaning that each Peace Village hosts an average of 81 newly empowered women entrepreneurs. This economic impact provides concrete evidence that women's empowerment is not merely symbolic but also generates productive assets for the community.

Figure 2

Gender Composition of Program Participants



Source: compiled by the researcher, 2025.

Figure 2 shows that program participation is dominated by women, accounting for 70%, compared to only 30% for men. In quantitative terms, this is a positive development, as women have become the main drivers of peacebuilding activities, training, and advocacy. However, these figures also raise critical questions. Does the presence of 70% women also translate into 70% of decision-making power at the strategic village level? Without data on the quality of influence, these numbers may represent an illusion of participation. Women may be present in large numbers, yet their voices can still be marginalized in important village forums.

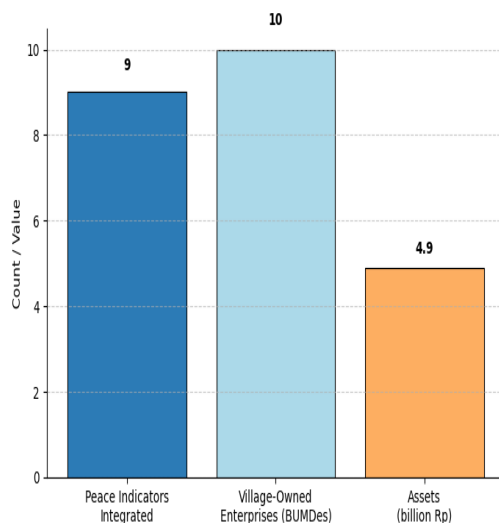
The Wahid Foundation's Peace Village Program shows impressive success in participation and economic empowerment. Wide coverage, numerous peace village declarations, and thousands of empowered women entrepreneurs reflect productive assets and reduced structural inequality. On average, each village has generated dozens of new women entrepreneurs a tangible, not merely symbolic, impact. However, high women's participation does not automatically translate into substantive power in strategic village decision-making. Without data on the quality of influence how much women's voices shape village policies participation risks becoming an illusion. Patriarchal constraints and local cultural norms may still limit women's agency, meaning physical presence in public spaces does not ensure transformation of power relations. Therefore, participatory achievements must be balanced with deeper evaluation of substantive influence.

Impact of the women's empowerment program through the Cinta Damai Cooperative

The Peace Village Program and Cinta Damai Cooperative show achievements in integrating peace policy with women's economic empowerment. Peace values are institutionalized in village governance, community economic institutions have grown, and women's participation has increased. However, these successes require critical interpretation, as institutional and economic gains do not necessarily transform power relations. Higher participation and assets may not yet reflect women's genuine control over strategic local decisions.

Figure 3

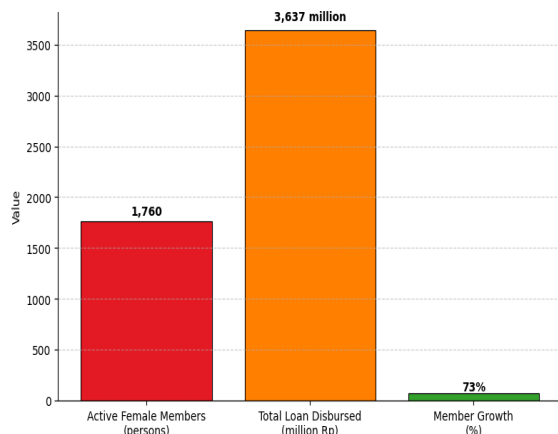
Impact, Institutionalization, and Expansion of the Peaceful Village Program



Source: compiled by the researcher, 2025.

Figure 3 shows that the Peace Village Program has successfully integrated nine peace indicators into village policies, indicating strong normative institutionalization. On the economic side, 10 Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) have been established with a combined asset value of IDR 4.9 billion, representing significant collective capital for village resilience. In addition, the program expanded to new regions such as Central Sulawesi and West Nusa Tenggara in 2024. This achievement has been supported by both international and local partners, including UN Women, JTI Indonesia, La Rimpu, local governments, and the Embassy of the Netherlands. Thus, the program does not merely remain at the level of symbolic declarations but also generates tangible economic infrastructure and policy development.

Figure 4
Achievements of the Cinta Damai Cooperative (KCD) Program



Source: Wahid Foundation, 2025

Figure 4 shows that the Cinta Damai Cooperative (KCD) has achieved remarkable results. A total of 1,760 women have become active members, demonstrating that women-based cooperatives are capable of attracting strong grassroots participation. The total amount of loans disbursed reached IDR 3.64 billion, indicating members' trust in cooperative management as well as healthy liquidity. Most impressively, membership growth increased by 73 percent. This is not merely a numerical achievement, but an indicator that the women's economic empowerment program is sustainable and rapidly expanding. The KCD can serve as a model for similar initiatives in other regions.

The women's economic empowerment approach yields measurable, sustainable impacts. Integration of nine peace indicators into village policies reflects strong normative institutionalization. Ten Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) with total assets of IDR 4.9 billion show that peace agendas can progress alongside collective economic growth. Expansion to Central Sulawesi and West Nusa Tenggara indicates replication potential, though local cultural adaptation challenges remain. The Cinta Damai Cooperative records 1,760 active women members, total loan distribution of IDR 3.64 billion, and 73% membership growth strong indicators of sustainability and rapid expansion. These achievements are supported by international and local partners. However, economic benefits must reach grassroots women rather than being concentrated among local elites. Thus, both initiatives are considered suitable models for replication in other regions.

Discussion

Women's empowerment in the Wahid Foundation's Peace Village Program reveals three key findings: (1) the program responds to rural radicalism by empowering women through the strengthening of tolerance, peacebuilding, economic empowerment, as well as training and advocacy; (2) the Peace Village Program has successfully facilitated the declaration of peace villages and empowered women as entrepreneurs; and (3) economic empowerment through the Peace Village Cooperative integrates nine peace indicators, establishes Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes), and distributes loans with significant membership growth. Thus, the Peace Village Program has been effective in mitigating rural radicalism through women's empowerment and cooperative-based economic initiatives. The significant achievements across various villages demonstrate its effectiveness. However, sustainability requires scaling up the program, strengthening village policies, and ensuring continuous support so that its impact is not limited to the local level.

These findings are relevant to the Indonesian social context, where intolerance and radicalism remain persistent challenges in rural areas (Muhammad & Hiariej, 2021; Smeer et al., 2022). The Peace Village Program addresses rural radicalism by empowering women through the strengthening of tolerance, peacebuilding, economic empowerment, as well as training and advocacy. The program has successfully facilitated the declaration of peace villages, empowered women as entrepreneurs, and expanded their participation in social activities. Economic empowerment through the Peace Village Cooperative integrates nine peace indicators, establishes Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes), and distributes loans with significant membership growth. Nevertheless, elite dominance and agency gaps indicate that women's participation remains largely quantitative. While the program strengthens village institutions (Puh et al., 2022) and social cohesion (Kusuma & Susilo, 2020), donor dependence and limited influence in decision-making hinder substantive transformation and the long-term sustainability of peacebuilding at the local level.

Theoretically, the success of the Peace Village Program reinforces the view that sustainable peacebuilding must be holistic, integrating economic, social, cultural, and policy dimensions (Badaruddin et al., 2020; Oktari et al., 2021). Although women's participation in the Peace Village Program is high and contributes to increased community understanding of peace and tolerance (Krampe et al., 2021; Kellard et al., 2024), elite dominance and patriarchal barriers (Gurieva et al., 2022) reveal a gap between normative visions and implementation. This underscores that village institutional strengthening (Khosa & Abdulkareem, 2023; Lopera-Arbeláez & Richter, 2024) has not yet fully produced substantive influence. Therefore, critical power analysis and the reduction of donor dependency are required to achieve more transformative and sustainable peacebuilding outcomes.

This study provides an understanding that the success of peace programs cannot be measured solely by participation or declarations (Porter, 2013). The Peace Village Program responds to rural radicalism by empowering women through the strengthening of tolerance and peacebuilding (Jubba et al., 2022). The program facilitates peace village declarations, women's empowerment, and economic expansion; however, elite dominance indicates that high participation does not necessarily guarantee substantive power in village decision-making (Jeevanasai et al., 2023; Acim et al., 2023; Abebe & Kegne, 2023). Dependence on external funding (Muluh et al., 2019) and the risk of symbolic legitimacy (Leca & Cruz, 2021) further reinforce sustainability vulnerabilities. Therefore, women's economic empowerment should be supported by financial literacy and equitable market access (Rahmawati et al., 2023), alongside structural reforms to ensure that social transformation is truly sustainable.

Previous studies view the Peace Village as either a grassroots peace prototype (Joseph et al., 2022; Susanto et al., 2025) or a technical intervention. This study is consistent with the view that the four pillars strengthen women's leadership (Niner et al., 2023). The program responds to rural radicalism through women's empowerment, peace village declarations, entrepreneurship, and cooperative-based integration of nine peace indicators, which contribute to reducing radical thoughts and attitudes (Thelma & Ngulube, 2024; Rustemi & Kelly, 2025). However, the novelty of this study lies in three critical contributions. First, it highlights the gap between the Wahid Foundation's normative vision and its implementation, driven by structural barriers, elitism, and donor dependence an aspect overlooked in previous studies. Second, it argues that high levels of women's participation do not automatically reflect substantive power in village decision-making. Third, it shows that the positive institutional impacts of economic empowerment depend on local context (Bryan et al., 2024). This study critically challenges excessive optimism regarding quantitative achievements and offers a critical power analysis perspective.

Based on the findings, this study offers several practical recommendations. First, village governments should allocate sustainable budgets for leadership and conflict mediation training to address structural barriers and elite dominance. Second, the Wahid Foundation needs to monitor substantive participation rather than mere attendance, ensuring that women's influence in strategic village decision-making is effectively secured. Third, funding diversification through private partnerships and productive waqf is necessary to reduce dependence on foreign donors. Fourth, Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) and cooperatives should strengthen financial literacy, market access, and transparent, gender-responsive asset governance. Fifth, replication beyond Java requires cultural adaptation studies to anticipate patriarchal resistance, ensuring that the program genuinely transforms grassroots power relations.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Wahid Foundation's Peace Village Program is effective in responding to rural radicalism through women's empowerment integrated with aspects of tolerance, peacebuilding, economic development, training, and advocacy. The program has successfully facilitated the declaration of peace villages, expanded women's involvement as entrepreneurs, and strengthened economic institutions through the Peace Village Cooperative, which integrates nine peace indicators, establishes Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes), and distributes loans with significant membership growth. However, the findings indicate that these achievements are still dominated by a quantitative logic, where high participation does not automatically translate into substantive power in village decision-making. Elite dominance, structural barriers, and donor dependency reveal a gap between normative visions and implementation. Therefore, the effectiveness of the program must be critically assessed within a broader framework of deeper and more sustainable social transformation at the local level.

This study contributes to strengthening the understanding that village-based peacebuilding must be holistic, encompassing the integration of economic, social, cultural, and policy dimensions within a systemic framework. It also emphasizes the importance of a power perspective in studies of women's empowerment, where participation cannot be equated with substantive influence. Practically, the findings imply that empowerment programs should be accompanied by strengthened women's decision-making capacity, reduced dependence on donors, and reinforced local economic institutions. In addition, the integration of cooperatives and Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) should be directed toward improving market access and financial literacy so that economic impacts are more equitable and sustainable in the long term.

This study has several limitations. First, its geographical scope is restricted to selected locations of the Peace Village Program, meaning that generalization to areas with different socio-cultural contexts still needs further testing. Second, the focus on quantitative outcomes and limited interviews may overlook internal household dynamics and the subjective experiences of women that are not easily visible. Third, the non-longitudinal nature of the study makes it difficult to trace the sustainability of impacts after donor funding ends. Future research should develop comparative studies across regions with varying levels of patriarchal resistance, conduct in-depth ethnographic research on village decision-making mechanisms, and experiment with the design of monitoring systems for substantive participation. Studies on diversified funding models based on productive waqf and local private partnerships are also urgently needed to address the program's sustainability vulnerabilities.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Siswoyo Aris Munandar: Conceptualization; Data Curation; Formal Analysis; Methodology; Writing Original Draft; Writing Review & Editing; Visualization; Writing Review & Editing. **Mohammad Mu'tashim Billah.** Formal Analysis; Methodology; Writing Original Draft; Writing Review & Editing.

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