



FORUM KERUKUNAN UMAT BERAGAMA IN ACEH: Strategies, Roles and Barriers in Maintaining Interfaith Harmony

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Abstract: This research focuses on the roles and strategies that *Forum Kerukunan Antar Umat Beragama*/FKUB (interreligious harmony forum) plays in preserving interreligious harmony and analyzes the barriers that it encounters. This study employed a qualitative approach, interviewing 79 informants consisting of the chair and members of FKUB in three districts and cities and the FKUB of Aceh province, as well as religious and community leaders. The research subjects were selected by purposive sampling method, and the data were analyzed using a descriptive approach. The research found that the interfaith harmony in the province of Aceh is well established. There are five strategies for realizing such harmony: tolerance, equality, cooperation, mutual respect, and communication. This study also revealed that the FKUB has carried out its role optimally in creating interfaith harmony in Aceh. However, it experiences some obstacles due to sociological, internal, and external factors. Despite these challenges, the FKUB in Aceh has relatively been able to overcome those obstacles.

Keywords: Sharia, Social Conflict, Tolerance

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Introduction

SOCIOLOGICALLY, Indonesia consists of a pluralistic and multicultural society that must be honored and respected. The multicultural uniqueness enriches the diversity and becomes a solid ground for Indonesians in maintaining unity. One of the diversity in Indonesia is religion, because Indonesia is neither a

secular country nor a religious one. This country acknowledges six religions: Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Protestantism, Catholicism, and Confucianism.¹ It is a form of religious diversity officially approved by the Indonesian constitution, and is part of the Indonesian identity.

The plurality and heterogeneity reflected in Indonesian society are bounded in the unity and integrity of the nation principle known as "*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*," meaning unity in diversity.² It is the slogan and uniqueness of Indonesia that unite religious strength and harmony. However, the plurality comes with problems and potential conflicts leading to disunity.³

Indonesia's multi-ethnics and multi-religions often faces a dilemma concerning religious communities. It positively contributes this nation as a multicultural nation-state. In contrast, it also becomes a threat. The diversities in cultures, ethnics, and religions are like coals in a husk that can ignite and heat up at any time.⁴ It is normal as long as the communities realize the diversity and embrace the harmony, respect and tolerance. However, it can be a threat to the harmony between religious communities when diversity is overlooked.⁵

The interfaith harmony between communities in Indonesia is influenced by local, national, and international factors. They affect the definition, shapes, and meaning of interfaith harmony understood by the government (Ministry of Religious Affairs). There are three aspects in the harmony activities of interfaith communities that are influenced by local and global incidents. First, the ethics of religious broadcasting code issued by Ministries

¹ Rini Fidiyani, "Kerukunan Umat Beragama di Indonesia (Belajar Keharmonisan dan Toleransi Umat Beragama di Desa Cikakak, Kec. Wangon, Kab. Banyumas)," *Jurnal Dinamika Hukum* 13, no. 3 (September 15, 2013): 468–482.

² Agil Nanggala, "Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan Sebagai Pendidikan Multikultural," *Jurnal Soshum Insentif* 3, no. 2 (October 31, 2020): 197–210.

³ Adeng Muchtar Ghazali, "Teologi Kerukunan Beragama Dalam Islam (Studi Kasus Kerukunan Beragama di Indonesia)," *Analisis: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 13, no. 2 (2013): 271–292.

⁴ Gina Lestari, "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika: Khasanah Multikultural Indonesia di Tengah Kehidupan Sara," *Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan* 28, no. 1 (June 27, 2016): 31–37.

⁵ Ibid.

of Religion and Home Affairs Number 1/1979. It states that "Religious Broadcasting is all forms of activities that intend to spread the teachings of a religion." Thus, the broadcasting should be carried out with good ethics, morals, and character. Due to the regulation, religious broadcasting must be conducted peacefully to create interfaith harmony, amity and tolerance in Indonesia.⁶

Second, the procedure of establishing worship places mentioned in Ministerial Joint Decree Number 9 and 8/2006, the buildings of particular characteristics used permanently for worship for the believers of certain religion and is not included as a family worship house. This rule asserts that all worship places must have a government permit, including the building utilization permit and a maximum of two years. Third, the empowerment of interfaith forums, such as the Interfaith Harmony Forum (*Forum Kerukunan Antar Umat Beragama-FKUB*), a forum formed by society and supported by the government. Their tasks include realizing, maintaining, and empowering religious communities for harmony and prosperity.⁷

The government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, has managed the harmony between religious communities to avoid conflicts by deciding some policies; (1) Constitution Number 1/PNPS Year 1965 about prevention of blasphemy, (2) Ministerial Joint Decree Number 8 and 9 the Year 2006 regarding the guidelines for the duties implementation of Regional Heads/Deputy Regional Heads in maintaining religious harmony, empowering the religious harmony forum, and establishing the worship houses, and (3) the circular letter of the Ministry of Home Affairs Number 905/117/SJ about the fund for the interfaith harmony forum in regional budgets (APBD). However, intolerance and minor conflicts still occur in several areas in Indonesia.

Five years ago, a conflict in North Sumatra was triggered by humiliation and harassment to the Islamic teachings that cause the burning of places of worship in Tanjung Balai on 30 July 2016.⁸

⁶ Delmus Puneri Salim, "Kerukunan Umat Beragama Vs Kebebasan Beragama di Indonesia," *Potret Pemikiran* 21, no. 2 (2017): 15–34.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Arifinsyah Arifinsyah, "Analisis Deskriptif Peta Konflik Umat Beragama Di Sumatera Utara," *Jurnal Ushuluddin* 17, no. 1 (June 2019): 20–56.

Another conflict between Islam and Buddhism also occurred in 2016 due to complaint against the mosque's loudspeaker that finally becomes manifest.⁹

The interfaith conflict, Muslim and non-Muslim, also occurred in Aceh Province in the last five years. The research findings by Vidia (2016), Darmawan (2019), and Riza (2019) explained that the conflict in Aceh Singkil on 13 October 2015 was caused by the illegal establishment of places of worship, releasing pigs, and bringing pork amid Muslim communities, triggered the reaction of the Muslim Society in the area. The prevention approach to avoid conflicts has been implemented through written and oral communication to the related party. However, the Christian Communities seem to ignore it, finally leading to a conflict.

The data indicate that the interfaith harmony in Indonesia, specifically in Aceh, might cause a new conflict if the FKUB does not socialize harmony to the society optimally and communicate to the religious leaders effectively. The belief and cultural diversity factor can trigger a conflict if it is not managed properly. Overall, the interfaith harmony in the two provinces is peacefully established: harmonious and tolerant. Therefore, the researcher is interested in further studying the harmony between the religious communities in Aceh to obtain a new model to be implemented in Indonesia.

This study employed a qualitative research method based on the post-positivism philosophy. It aims to examine the condition of natural objects (in contrast to experimental), where the researcher is the key instrument. Samplings are selected by the purposive and snowball technique. Triangulation is used to validate the data, which is analyzed inductively or qualitatively. The research results emphasize on meaning instead of generalization.¹⁰

This research was conducted in three districts/cities in Aceh province: Banda Aceh, Aceh Singkil, and Southeast Aceh district. These locations were chosen based on the preliminary research

⁹ I. Made Redi Hartanta, "Analisis Konflik dan Solusi Pemolisian dalam Konflik Antar Agama di Tanjung Balai Sumatera Utara Tahun 2016," *Jurnal Ilmu Kepolisian* 11, no. 1 (2017): 55–63.

¹⁰ Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan: Pendekatan Kuantitatif, Kualitatif dan R dan D* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2011), 15.

results that found problems related to religious harmony in the areas. The subject of the study or the informants are individuals selected from the population or part of the population. The qualitative method generally selects smaller samples, and the sampling tends to be purposive rather than random.¹¹ Thus, the selection of subjects in this study was carried out purposively by considering that the subjects are considered adequate to provide in-depth information related to the research and understand the conditions of the location of this research. The subjects were four chairpersons of FKUB or related officials, 30 members of FKUB, 15 religious leaders, and 30 people in the Aceh province.

The research interviewed three chairs of FKUB, 30 religious leaders, and 40 people in the Aceh province. The interview focused on the strategies of creating harmony, the role of FKUB, and the obstacles faced by FKUB in maintaining harmony, amity and tolerance between religious communities in Aceh. Meanwhile, the observation was conducted in the research site along with the interview. The research also made use of document from the FKUB relating to its history, tasks and programs.

Strategies for Interreligious Harmony

Indonesia has a fairly high plurality in the population, including the plurality of tribes, ethnicities, cultures, and religions. Hence, it is necessary to build tolerance between tribes, ethnicities, cultures, and religions to avoid misunderstandings and conflicts that can break the unity and harmony among the Indonesian people.¹²

Diversity in religion and community pluralism is also found in Aceh, a province with a special autonomy status based on Law No. 18 of 2001. The law enforcement brings Aceh's uniqueness, especially related to the social context and Islamic law.

The implementation of sharia in Aceh Province and its democratic system of implementation provide opportunities for the community in a social context to limit the interaction between

¹¹ Noeng Muhamadji, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (Yogyakarta: Bayu Indra Grafika, 1996), 87.

¹² Ibnu Rusydi and Siti Zolehah, "Makna Kerukunan Antar Umat Beragama Dalam Konteks Keislaman dan Keindonesian," *al-Afkar, Journal for Islamic Studies*, <http://al-afkar.com> Vol. 1, No. 1, no. January 2018 (January 28, 2018): 170–181.

Muslim and non-Muslim communities in Aceh. It indicates that interfaith harmony in Aceh in the context of sharia implementation has been established effectively.

One of the Islamic religious leaders said that interfaith harmony in Aceh is well-established in the context of social activities, such as trade and other social contexts.¹³ A similar statement was also conveyed by other figures, that people in Aceh live harmoniously, indicated by the current conditions in general, no discrimination against people of different religions.¹⁴

In line with the two previous religious leaders, the Christian religious leaders in Banda Aceh also said that Acehnese people live side by side, interacting in social activities. This circumstance can be seen in the people of Banda Aceh living side by side in harmony.¹⁵

The chairman of the Banda Aceh Interfaith Harmony Forum (FKUB) explained that Banda Aceh is diverse in religions, including Islam, Christianity, Protestantism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. The people of Banda Aceh work well in establishing interfaith harmony and are involved in social activities.¹⁶ He added that even in Banda Aceh, there are two villages (*gampong*) that are aware of harmony: Gampong Mulia and Gampong Penayong. The village communities live very harmoniously, and there has never been a conflict.

The harmony among people in Aceh Province is great, as seen in Aceh Singkil District, where the interfaith harmony is well-developed and conducive. It is supported by the increasing understanding of people about life harmony and the socialization that has been carried out so far.¹⁷ The deputy chairman of the

¹³ Interview with M. Chalis, Muslim Religious Leader, Banda Aceh, 2 August 2021.

¹⁴ Interview with Jailani, Muslim Religious Leader, Banda Aceh, 1 August 2021.

¹⁵ Interview with Eliudin Gea, Christian Religious Leader, Banda Aceh, 2 Agustus 2021.

¹⁶ Interview with Abdul Sykur, the Chairman of FKUB Banda Aceh, 1 August 2021.

¹⁷ Interview with Cut Nyak Kaoy, Muslim Religious Leader of Aceh Singkil District, 28 July 2021.

Ulama Consultative Council (*Majelis Permusyawaratan Ulama-MPU*) of Aceh Singkil District also confirmed that the believers in Singkil live harmoniously.

The chairman of FKUB of Aceh Singkil district agreed that the religious communities in this district have been living harmoniously, and the community prioritizes tolerance. So far, there has been no violence against religious people, and the community lives harmoniously and interacts well in social activities.¹⁸

Furthermore, based on the data on the current state of interfaith life in the areas bordering Aceh and North Sumatra, we investigated further by interviewing religious leaders in the Southeast Aceh district. One of the religious leaders who is a member of the MPU of Southeast Aceh District explained that people's knowledge of harmony is increasing. They have modern thinking in realizing a harmonious life.¹⁹

This information was supported by the chairman of the Southeast Aceh district FKUB that the community has a better understanding of life harmony so that the desire to live side by side peacefully could be realized. The current interfaith harmony in Southeast Aceh district is also well-established and conducive.²⁰

Based on the above data from various sources and observations, the interfaith harmony in the province of Aceh is well-established, as indicated by several indicators: (1) Mutual respect in social relations, and (2) The high level of harmony, amity and tolerance among religious communities in districts/cities in Aceh province, Indonesia. Data on the religious population in three districts/cities (Banda Aceh, Aceh Singkil District, and Southeast Aceh District) is presented in Table 1.

¹⁸ Interview with Ramlan, the Chairman of Aceh Singkil District FKUB, 28 July 2021.

¹⁹ Interview with Sahipul Anwar, Member of Southeast Aceh District MPU, 31 July 2021.

²⁰ Interview with Baharuddin Pinim, the Chairman of Southeast Aceh District FKUB, 30 July 2021.

Table. 1 Population-based on Religion in Three Regencies/Cities

No	Religion	Banda Aceh	District/City	
			Aceh Singkil District	Southeast District
1	Islam	273.557	112.331	66.425
2	Christian	1.511	13.963	30.870
3	Catholic	721	1155	2.531
4	Hindu	30	6	0
5	Buddha	2.100	2	0
6	Konghuchu	0	0	0
7	<i>Kepercayaan</i> (mysticism)	0	254	0
Total		277.919	127.711	99.826

Source: FKUB of Banda Aceh, Aceh Singkil district, and Southeast Aceh district 2021.

The interfaith life of people in three districts/cities (Banda Aceh, Aceh Singkil District, and Southeast Aceh District) in Aceh province are peaceful, safe, comfortable, harmonious, and tolerant. This condition refutes the issues stating that the relationship among religious communities in Aceh is less harmonious.

The strategies conducted to create interfaith harmony in Aceh province are as follows.

Tolerance between Interfaith Community

Tolerance is the primary key in realizing interfaith harmony.²¹ Tolerance can be described as mutual acceptance and respect between religious groups.²² Umar Hashim defined tolerance as the freedom of fellow human beings or citizens to practice their beliefs or organize their lives and determine their respective destinies, as long as they do not violate nor against the conditions for creating order and peace in society.²³

²¹ Moh Abdul Kholiq Hasan, "Interfaith Tolerance and Its Relevance to the Indonesian Diversity: A Study on Ibn 'Āshūr's al-Taḥrīr Wa al-Tanwīr," *Ullumuna* 22, no. 2 (December 28, 2018): 333–362.

²² Elriza Vinkasari et al., "Toleransi Antar Umat Beragama di Indonesia Untuk Mempertahankan Kerukunan," *Prosiding HUBISINTEK 1* (September 26, 2020): 67–71.

²³ Dewi Anggraeni and Siti Suhartinah, "Toleransi Antar Umat Beragama Perspektif KH. Ali Mustafa Yaqub," *Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an* 14, no. 1 (January 1,

Mutual respect between religious communities is an important aspect of building a tolerant society. This mutual respect can be seen from the acceptance of community groups or other people of different religions. The groups of different religions are given equal opportunities in society, including respecting worship and services from the government.

Mutual respect between religious communities is pivotal in establishing a tolerant society. This mutual respect is manifested in the acceptance of community groups or other people of different religions. The groups of different religions are given equal opportunities in society, including respecting the worship and accepting services from the government.

One of the Islamic religious leaders in Banda Aceh explained that harmony could be fostered by developing tolerance in the community.²⁴ The catholic religious leaders also conveyed similar ideas that the community and interfaith people in Aceh are tolerant; the community respects each other in worship. There have been no disruptions to perform worship in Aceh.²⁵ It is also similar to all districts/cities in the province of Aceh.²⁶

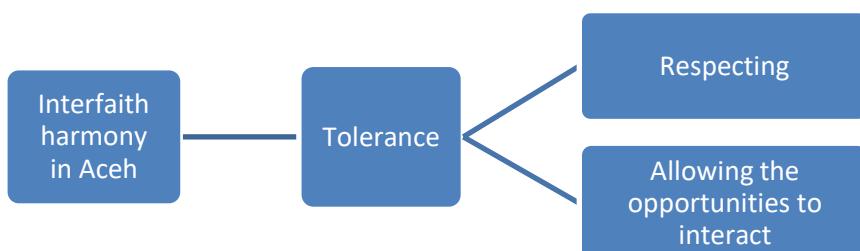


Figure 1. The Strategies for establishing interfaith harmony

Interfaith harmony in Aceh is built through the implementation of tolerance, and this strategy can also be applied

2018): 59–77.

²⁴ Interview with M. Chalis , Islam Religious Leader in Banda Aceh, 2 Agustus 2021.

²⁵ Interview with Robertus Wirjana, Catholic Religious Leader, Banda Aceh, 5 August 2021.

²⁶ Interview with A. Hamid Sarong, the Chairman of Aceh Province FKUB, 3 August 2021.

to other provinces in Indonesia. The strategies can be seen in Figure 1.

Mutual respect is the sub-indicator of tolerance found in the daily life of the Acehnese. The attitude of mutual respect is seen in various life aspects of the Acehnese, who are generally Muslim. Muslims in Aceh respect other beliefs (non-Muslim communities), such as Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, and others.

The opportunity to interact can be found in the daily life of the Acehnese; they support each other in various aspects, such as trade, agriculture, and other social aspects. The opportunity for interaction is well-established between religious communities at the provincial level to the district/city level in Aceh.

Tolerance is mutual respect and providing equal space for interaction and is an important aspect in realizing interfaith harmony. The Government of Aceh has supported this aspect by involving and collaborating with various elements, including the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Social Service, Population Service, and other agencies, especially FKUB in Aceh province and FKUB located in districts/cities in Aceh.

Equality

Each religion has its own understanding and conception of whom they worship, as mentioned in the rules of *ushul al-fiqh*, *al-ashl fi al-'ibadah al-ittiba'*. However, teachings concerning ethics and morals, such as love, tolerance, peace, justice, and equality are the predominant teachings of all religions. Therefore, all believers are expected to show tolerance and provide opportunities for each believer to practice religious rituals or worship following their beliefs and religion because it refers to equality.

Equality in this study is giving equal rights to religious people in practicing worship based on their religion. All religions have rituals of worship that have been regulated in their teachings. The equal right to worship based on their respective religions is one of the keys to realizing interfaith harmony.

The chairman of the Aceh Province FKUB explained that interfaith harmony in Aceh is excellent, even though most of the population is Muslim. Non-Muslim communities in Aceh have the

right to worship, following their beliefs, and do their worship safely without interference.²⁷

Equality of treatment in worship and government services is one of the supporting aspects in maintaining interfaith harmony in Aceh. The Aceh government provides opportunities for all religious people to worship. All religious people have places of worship so that they can conduct the worship rituals safely and peacefully.

In terms of government services, all Acehnese residents are recognized and legal by the law regardless of their religions. So, the Aceh government openly serves the community. The equality of rights, in this case, can be seen in (1) health services, (2) education services, (3) population services, and others.

Collaboration

Collaboration is an act of working hand in hand (to take and give) and mutually benefiting from the co-existence. This action describes the active engagement of individuals joining other parties and giving empathy and sympathy to various dimensions of life, such as social, economic, cultural, and religious life. Collaboration is also defined as the reality of social relations in real actions, for example, in acts of mutual assistance or mutual assistance between religious groups. Koentjaraningrat explained that co-operation could be realized because of the interaction between active units. Meanwhile, Ashutosh Varshney saw collaboration as inter-communal bonds or networks integrating two adherents of the religion.²⁸

One of the fundamentals in realizing and maintaining harmony between religious communities is social collaboration, as explained by religious leaders in Aceh Singkil District. Social activities are highly beneficial in enhancing harmony between religious communities.²⁹

²⁷ Interview with A. Hamid Sarong, the Chairman of Aceh Province FKUB, 3 August 2021.

²⁸ Muhammad Adlin Sila and Fakhruddin, *Indeks Kerukunan Umat Beragama* (Jakarta: Litbangdiklat Press, 2020).

²⁹ Interview with Cut Nyak Kaoy, Islam Religious Leader in Aceh Singkil District, 28 July 2021.

Interfaith collaboration runs through social activities and working together activities (known as *gotong-royong*) to clean the village.³⁰ The collaboration activities between religious communities can establish a spirit of unity in society. They have different religious beliefs, but they have social attachments, such as working together (*gotong-royong*), helping the poor, and fostering teenagers and youth.³¹ Collaboration also occurs in various professions between religious communities in the province of Aceh.³²

The collaboration tradition in social activities is a joint effort to preserve harmony, tolerance between religious communities in Aceh. The following are several forms of cooperation activities.

- (1) Collaboration in cleaning the village;
- (2) Collaboration in strengthening the economics of the poor;
- (3) Collaboration in mutual assistance in times of calamity or natural disaster;
- (4) Collaboration in joint participation to protect the younger generation from drugs;
- (5) Collaboration across professions: agriculture, plantation, business, and others.

This form of collaboration can form a strong unity between religious communities. Although they have religious beliefs, they can unite in social activities, such as helping each other in social life. To sum up, social collaboration is one of the factors supporting amity and interfaith harmony in the province of Aceh.

Mutual Respect

Harmony is a condition of peace that enables all elements of society to respect each other.³³ This concept of harmony is

³⁰ Interview with Dedi Asfianto, the Secretary of Southeast Aceh District FKUB, 30 July 2021.

³¹ Interview with Baharuddin Pinim, the Chairman of Southeast Aceh District FKUB, 30 July 2021.

³² Observation Results in Southeast Aceh District, 31 Juli 2021.

³³ Umi Sumbulah, "Pluralisme dan Kerukunan Umat Beragama Perspektif Elite Agama di Kota Malang," *Journal of Social Science and Religion* 22, no. 1 (2015): 1–13.

characterized by mutual respect between religious communities. Respecting the differences in religious beliefs is an indicator of interfaith harmony.

Mutual respect is obvious in Acehnese society, including the respect between religious communities. The attitude of mutual respect can be seen in the daily activities of the Acehnese people; people greet each other whenever they meet by showing a friendly attitude.³⁴ This data is supported by observation results that the people of Aceh Singkil are very polite. Greeting each other when they meet is part of their culture.³⁵ This is a form of harmony among the people of Aceh.

A similar circumstance was also found in Kutacane, the Southeast Aceh district. The attitude of mutual respect is deeply rooted in the community, as explained by one of the Islamic religious leaders that mutual respect between religious communities can be seen at weddings; when the Islamic community invites non-Muslims, they attend the invitation and vice versa.³⁶

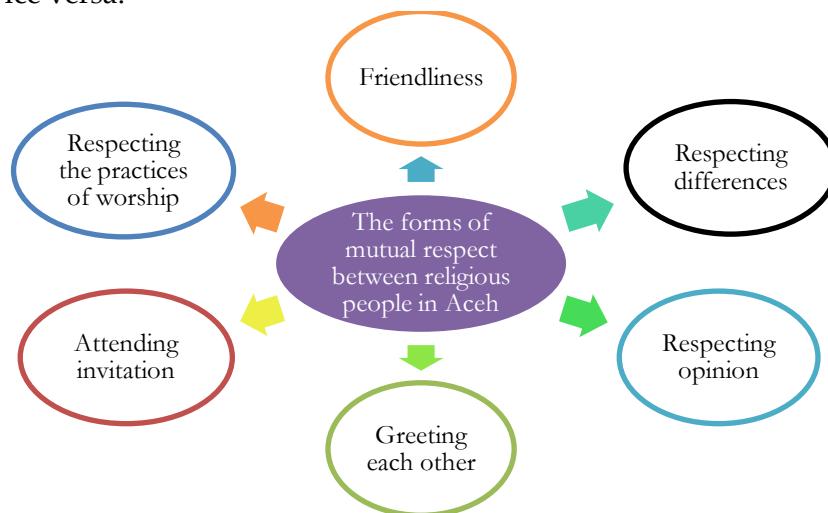


Figure 2. Forms of Mutual Respect in Acehnese Religious Communities

³⁴ Interview with Ahmad Fauzi, the Member of FKUB Aceh Singkil District, 27 July 2021.

³⁵ Observation Result in FKUB Aceh Singkil District, 28 July 2021.

³⁶ Interview with Anwar Efendi, a Muslim Religious Leader Tokoh Agama Islam Southeast Aceh, 31 July 2021.

Mutual respect between religious communities in Aceh province can be seen in several forms, as presented in Figure 2.

The following is a brief review of five forms of mutual respect between religious communities in Aceh.

- (1) Respecting the differences. Acehnese people put great attention to differences, including differences in religions. Non-Muslims in Aceh are minorities. However, the Islamic community in Aceh greatly respects the religious beliefs of non-Muslim communities.
- (2) Respect in opinion. Deliberation can be described as a joint effort in decision-making. Deliberation activities involve all religious communities in Aceh, and they can exchange opinions in an open deliberation by adhering to the principle of mutual respect.
- (3) Greeting each other. In the daily life of the people of Aceh, greeting has become a tradition or culture. This tradition is practiced between religious communities in Aceh, usually when they meet on the street or in the market. They look very harmonious.
- (4) Attending a wedding invitation. The form of mutual respect is also found between religious communities in Aceh when attending party invitations. Even though they have different religious beliefs, but they have strong mutual respect in social activities.
- (5) Respecting the practices of worship. The people of Aceh are mostly Muslim, and the province of Aceh is an area enforcing sharia. Sharia in Aceh does not limit the rights of non-Muslim communities to worship; the Islamic community in Aceh greatly respects non-Muslim communities in terms of their worship and vice. These findings are the impression of the harmonious interfaith life in Aceh.

The key to maintaining interfaith harmony is mutual respect, as practiced by the community of Aceh province. The research data show that the people of Aceh have good mutual respect. As shown in Figure 2, mutual respect and its forms are the strategies of Aceh People in establishing harmony.

Interfaith Communication

Communication in social life can be interpreted as an interaction between one person and another.³⁷ Communication interactions is usually triggered by a need. Active communication within the community and between religious communities is an indicator of harmony, amity and tolerance.³⁸

Communication between religious communities can be conducted by utilizing institutions in the community. In Aceh, one of the communication platforms is a *tuha peut* (village apparatus in Aceh), which serves as a deliberative institution at the village level in Aceh.³⁹ This institution can be used as a forum for communication between religious communities in Aceh to create harmony.⁴⁰ All problems in the community are communicated and resolved through the deliberations of the *tuha peut* institution, including issues between religious communities.

The interfaith communication in Aceh province is well-developed, and the Acehnese people have a good understanding of each other. Communication interaction takes place in dialogue between religious leaders.⁴¹ In addition, harmonious communication is also established between religious communities in the Southeast Aceh District. It is also in interfaith dialogue and

³⁷ Fauji Wikanda, Mohd. Hatta, and Abdullah, "FKUB's Communication Strategy in Maintaining Religious Harmony in Medan," *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute (BIRCI-Journal): Humanities and Social Sciences* 3, no. 3 (2020): 1541–1551.

³⁸ Muhammad Riza, "Relasi Antar Iman di Negeri Syari'at Islam (Studi Peran dan Fungsi FKUB dalam Menjaga Kerukunan Antar Umat Beragama di Aceh Tengah)," *Jurnal As-Salam* 3, no. 1 (2019): 48–60.

³⁹ Rabi Agustia and Abdurrahman, "Peran Tuha Peut Gampong Sebagai Badan Permusyawaratan Gampong Dalam Penyelesaian Perselisihan Masyarakat," *Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa Bidang Hukum Kependidikan* 2, no. 1 (2018): 109–121.

⁴⁰ Yulia Yulia, Faisal Faisal, and Fauzah Nur Aksa, "Penguatan Lembaga Adat Tuha Peut dalam Penyelesaian Sengketa di Kecamatan Sawang," *JATI EMAS (Jurnal Aplikasi Teknik dan Pengabdian Masyarakat)* 5, no. 1 (April 5, 2021): 7–12.

⁴¹ Interview with Hendra Sudirman, Muslim Religious Leader, Aceh Singkil District, 28 July 2021.

dialogue with religious leaders to create harmony among religious communities in Aceh.⁴²

The forms of communication conducted so far are as follows.

- (1) Communication between individuals of religious communities in Aceh.
- (2) Communication between religious leaders in Aceh.
- (3) Communication occurs through various professions in Aceh, such as agriculture, plantation, trade, and other social activities.
- (4) Communication through village institutions in Aceh, such as *tuha peut* (a village apparatus).
- (5) Communication facilitated by FKUB in Aceh.

The Roles of FKUB in Establishing Interfaith Harmony

Joint Regulations of the Minister of Religious and the Minister of Home Affairs No. 9 and No.8 of 2006 are concerning the empowerment of the Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB). Article 1 stipulates that the Religious Harmony Forum, hereinafter FKUB, is a forum formed by the community and facilitated by the government to build, maintain, and empower religious people for harmony and prosperity.

FKUB has an important role in realizing interfaith harmony, amity and tolerance in Aceh. FKUB has positively contributed to building harmony, amity and tolerance between religious communities in districts/cities in Aceh province.⁴³ Furthermore, the roles of FKUB in Aceh province in creating interfaith harmony is displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. Roles of FKUB in Aceh Province

No	Roles of FKUB in Aceh province	Activities
1.	Disseminating laws and regulations and empowering harmony	Aceh Province FKUB and Regency/City FKUB in Aceh have carried out their socialization role to the fullest. Harmony

⁴² Interview with Baharuddin Pinim, the Chairman of FKUB, Southeast Aceh District, 30 July 2021.

⁴³ Interview with A. Hamid Sarong, the Chairman of FKUB of Aceh Province, 3 August 2021.

No	Roles of FKUB in Aceh province	Activities
2.	Facilitating inter-religious dialogue	The dialogue program is one of the programs for the FKUB of Aceh province and its district/city. FKUB in Aceh regularly organizes dialogues with religious leaders to gain information and examine problems that arise between religious communities and find solutions through deliberation.
3.	Accommodating the aspirations of religious organizations and the community	FKUB of Aceh province allows all communities and religious communities in Aceh to express their opinions and aspirations. This is a forum for the people to express their opinions concerning religion and social context among Acehnese people.
4.	Forwarding the aspirations of religious organizations and the community	FKUB does not only accommodates aspirations but also conveys the aspirations of religious organizations and the community. The aspirations from religious organizations and communities are accommodated and forwarded to the government as the policy maker.
5.	Providing written recommendations for building places of worship	The places of worship are built based on the needs of religious people. The increasing population of religious people requires proper places of worship. The establishment of places of worship should not be done at the will of the religious community but based on rational needs. So far, the Aceh FKUB has provided recommendations for constructing places of worship for religious people in Aceh.

Table 2 shows that the Interfaith Harmony Forum (FKUB) in Aceh province has conducted its roles and duties well, as stipulated in the Joint Regulation of the Minister of Religious

Affairs and the Minister of Home Affairs No. 9 and No. 8 of 2006. FKUB has practiced its roles and duties neutrally and took strategic measures to create interfaith harmony in Aceh province.

Obstacles in Creating Interfaith Harmony in Aceh Province

Establishing harmony between religious communities must be supported by various elements: community, government, FKUB, and religious organizations; otherwise, it is challenging to create harmony, amity and tolerance among different religious communities. The following describes the results of the research on obstacles in creating interfaith harmony in Aceh.

The obstacles in creating interfaith harmony in Aceh based on the research results are presented as follows.

Sociological Factor

Sociologically, religion is part of social facts.⁴⁴ The multi-sociological condition of the Acehnese people, with various ethnicities and religions, and different cultures, leads to some obstacles in fostering the interfaith harmony, amity and tolerance, as each religious community has different experiences, affecting social practices in society.

The diverse social conditions of the Acehnese people, with different religions: Islam, Catholic Christianity, Protestant Christians, Hindus, and Buddhists, become the obstacles in establishing harmony. Sometimes, religious people have a selfish attitude; hence, it is difficult to encourage them to communicate to establish harmony, tolerance, and harmony. Even though this attitude is visible, it seems to exist.⁴⁵

Similarly, the religious leaders also agree that the community in Aceh has its own pattern and culture of life; some do not understand each other, causing small debates. However, these debates should be solved by the community and religious leaders through dialogue or deliberation.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Bernard Raho, *Sosiologi Agama* (Yogyakarta: Ladalero, 2019).

⁴⁵ Interview with Sahipul Anwar, a Member of MPU, Southeast Aceh District, 31 July 2021.

⁴⁶ Interview with Anwar Efendi, a Muslim Religious Leader, Southeast Aceh District, 31 July 2021.

Several efforts can be made to overcome these obstacles related to sociological factors. Religious leaders and FKUB in Aceh should continuously socialize about harmony to the community and religious communities in Aceh Province to promote the values of togetherness and mutual respect to create harmony, amity and tolerance between different religious communities and within one religious community can be maintained properly.

Negative Attitudes towards Other Religions

It is challenging to establish harmony, amity and tolerance if there is a negative attitude from religious people towards people of different religions. This negative attitude leads to mutual distrust of interfaith people and allows for debating and blaming followers of other religions.

The problem of negative attitudes towards other religions remains in Aceh, although not shown concrete actions. There is a concern among people of certain religions against other religions. Such negative attitudes towards other religions or people of different religions should not exist because they can damage harmony, amity and tolerance in society and religious communities.⁴⁷

One of the efforts to overcome negative attitudes towards other religions is facilitating discussion and deliberation between religious communities and religious leaders. As the figures in each religion, they are expected to guide their community.⁴⁸ The key is to eliminate negative attitudes towards people with different religions and prioritize harmony, amity and tolerance.

The Internal and External Factors

FKUB in Aceh also encounters obstacles in creating harmony between religious communities in Aceh in performing their duties and roles. These obstacles come from the members; for example, some are less involved because of their own business and living in

⁴⁷ Interview with M. Chalis, a Religious Leader Banda Aceh, 2 August 2021.

⁴⁸ Interview with A. Hamid Sarong, the Chairman of FKUB of Aceh Province, 3 August 2021.

areas far from the FKUB office.⁴⁹ Another obstacle is the inadequate operational budget for the FKUB Aceh Province; thus, many programs cannot be implemented.⁵⁰ Some FKUB offices in Aceh are also less-equipped, and the facilities are limited, such as the absence of computers.⁵¹

In short, three internal factors hindering FKUB in carrying out their roles and duties, namely:

- (1) FKUB members are less active due to their respective tasks;
- (2) FKUB's operational budget is insufficient;
- (3) The FKUB offices are not equipped with adequate facilities to support FKUB in performing the duties and roles.

Furthermore, there are also some external factors. The community is less open to FKUB. Some people lack trust in FKUB because they do not understand the role and duties of FKUB in Aceh properly yet.⁵²

FKUB has made some efforts to overcome these obstacles, for example disseminating the roles and duties of FKUB in Aceh to the community and promoting interfaith harmony, amity and tolerance in Aceh to create a peaceful and modern religious society, as shown by tolerance and mutual respect.

Conclusion

Aceh Province is a special autonomous region with a multi-population condition; Islam, Christianity, Protestantism, Buddhism, and Hinduism, and applies sharia. The majority of the Acehnese are Muslim. They have a strong understanding and commitment to maintaining the relationship with non-Muslim

⁴⁹ Interview with Baharuddin Pinim, the Chairman of FKUB of Southeast Aceh District, 30 July 2021.

⁵⁰ Interview with Ramlan the Chairman of FKUB, Aceh Singkil District, 28 July 2021.

⁵¹ The observation results of FKUB of Aceh Province, 30 July 2021.

⁵² Interview with Ahmad Fauzi, a Member of FKUB, Aceh Singkil District, 27 July 2021.

minority communities in creating interfaith harmony, amity and tolerance in Aceh.

The interfaith people in Aceh province live in harmony, amity and tolerance. So far, no conflict occurs between religious communities in Aceh, and they live peacefully. The interaction between religious communities is also harmonious and promotes tolerance. Muslim and non-Muslim communities can perform their worship safely and comfortably. These findings indicate that interfaith harmony in Aceh is well-established.

Some strategies for creating interfaith harmony in Aceh province have been implemented by implementing tolerance, equality, collaboration, mutual respect, and polite communication. Mutual respect is deeply rooted in the interfaith people in Aceh; they greet each other when meeting, show a friendly attitude, attend invitations, and respect differences in worship. This condition certainly has implications for harmony, amity and tolerance.

The Interfaith Harmony Forum (FKUB) in Aceh Province has performed its role well in conducting socialization and interfaith dialogue, accommodating and forwarding aspirations, and providing recommendations for establishing places of worship to the district/city government and the Aceh Provincial Government.

The FKUB in Aceh province also experiences obstacles in creating harmony due to sociological factors of a diverse society; some people are less open to FKUB. Furthermore, there are also FKUB internal factors and FKUB external factors hindering the performance of FKUB in realizing interfaith harmony.

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