

## POST-CONFLICT; PARTICIPATION WOMEN AND EMPOWERMENT IN NORTH ACEH

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### **ABSTRACT**

Acehnese women living in rural areas during the conflict immediately experienced economic problems and violations. Entering a normal phase, rural women returned to their roles outside the home, helping to build the family economy. Inequality in various sectors has exacerbated the powerlessness of women living in these areas, particularly in economic matters. This study analyzes the forms of post-conflict women's participation and the obstacles they face in economic empowerment. The documents in this study are supported by various field data, informal interviews, and various sources of information from research literature on the burdens of rural women qualitatively. The results of the study indicate that women in North Aceh, particularly in the rural communities of Nisam, Guha Ulue, Alue Rambe, and Pulau Iboh in Kutamakmur District, are mostly farmers who also work as housewives. Their participation is still lacking in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of village development. Women's empowerment in Aceh faces various structural problems, including patriarchy, discriminatory interpretations of Islamic Sharia law, poverty, and low levels of political participation at the village level. The research findings indicate that rural women in Aceh have significant potential and a strategic role in village development but still face various cultural and structural barriers that limit their participation in empowerment.

**Keywords:** *rural women, gender, housewife, economic, justice.*

### **ABSTRAK**

Perempuan Aceh yang tinggal di pedesaan pada masa konflik akan langsung merasakan masalah dan pelanggaran ekonomi. Memasuki tahap normal, perempuan pedesaan kembali terlibat di luar rumah dalam membangun ekonomi keluarga. Ketimpangan di berbagai bidang telah meningkatkan kondisi perempuan yang hidup dalam ketidakberdayaan, terutama dalam masalah ekonomi. Penelitian ini menganalisis bentuk-bentuk partisipasi perempuan pasca-konflik dan hambatan yang dihadapi dalam pemberdayaan ekonomi. Dokumen dalam penelitian ini didukung oleh berbagai data lapangan, wawancara informal, dan berbagai informasi dari pustaka penelitian mengenai beban perempuan pedesaan secara kualitatif. Hasil penelitian adalah perempuan Aceh Utara, khususnya di masyarakat pedesaan Nisam, Guha Ulue, Alue Rambe dan Pulau Iboh Kecamatan Kutamakmur, sebagian besar adalah petani yang merangkap sebagai ibu rumah tangga. Partisipasi mereka masih kurang dalam perencanaan, pelaksanaan, dan evaluasi pembangunan desa. Pemberdayaan perempuan di Aceh menghadapi berbagai masalah struktural, patriarki, interpretasi Sharia Islam yang diskriminatif, kemiskinan, dan masih rendahnya partisipasi politik tingkat desa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perempuan pedesaan di Aceh memiliki potensi dan peran strategis yang besar dalam pembangunan desa, namun masih menghadapi berbagai kendala kultural dan struktural yang membatasi partisipasi dalam pemberdayaan mereka.

**Kata Kunci:** *perempuan pedesaan, gender, ibu rumah tangga, ekonomi, keadilan.*

## INTRODUCTION

The condition of women in rural areas is faced with a challenge in fixing tangled threads due to the conflict background. The acceleration of development for women in rural areas has changed the conditions of women in economic activities, but they are still unable to get rid of the double workload so that women still work at home and in the agricultural sector. By applying the principle that no one is left behind, the issue of gender equality places women should be as subjects who receive benefits from development programs also as active participants in the process of implementing and preparing the substance of development (Yuwono 2013). Empowerment in this research can be defined as the process by which individuals or groups gain power, ability, and access to control resources and actively participate in decision-making that affects their lives. Empowerment refers to the ability of individuals and vulnerable groups to meet their basic needs, by acquiring productive resources that enable them to increase their income and participate in development processes. Women's empowerment in rural areas requires attention, following the issuance of Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages. Village communities and women have the opportunity to actively participate in decision-making in development.

Injustice occurs in layers due to a combination of structural inequality in the agrarian sector, state law and the political economic system, and a social system that is unfair to women (Nurdin and Pasha 2019; Yuwono 2013). Besides, the problem is gender-based disparities in the districts and cities of Aceh, especially in remote villages that are not reachable due to poor infrastructure. Women have made a significant contribution to driving the economy in Aceh. However, the situation of women and girls experiencing poverty is only focused on agricultural and plantation work in rural areas. Another obstacle is structural and discriminatory social norms such as decision-making and women's participation in politics and households in rural communities (Habsari 2015). In terms of development, women and girls in rural areas do not yet have good access to public resources and services, education and health, infrastructure, water, and sanitation. In development shows that rural women fare worse than rural men and urban women. Under these conditions, they unequally experience poverty, exclusion, and the passive impact of environmental change (Murtiyani et al. 2016).

Research has proven that women's involvement in development programs enhances the effectiveness of development interventions and mitigates rural poverty. Rural women in post-conflict Aceh have demonstrated progress in restoring the local economy through various innovative and sustainable initiatives. Rural women in Aceh are agents of economic recovery but

also contribute to social development and sustainable community empowerment. However, the involvement of the younger generation in villages is minimal, despite the potential for significant development.

Indicators of successful women's empowerment in Aceh's reconstruction include increased access to planning, implementation, and evaluation of social reconstruction programs, as well as meeting practical needs such as health, economic, and legal needs that take gender into account. However, research related to women's participation and empowerment in Aceh still highlights gender inequality, patriarchal social and cultural pressures, lack of access to financial resources, the burden of dual domestic and professional roles, and women's low self-perceptions about politics. Furthermore, the implementation of sharia regulations related to women's empowerment is also a significant challenge hindering the achievement of women's equality and empowerment.

## METHODS

This study uses Participatory Action Research (PAR), a participatory action research approach that views society from a structural perspective, with the primary goal of social change through collaboration between researchers and the community in a cycle of problem identification, action, and continuous evaluation. Focusing on in-depth analysis and systemic transformation, social change at the village level requires a comprehensive structural perspective. This study method is based on focus group discussions (FGDs) with women's groups in four villages: Nisam, Guha Ulue, Alue Rambe, and Pulau Iboh in Kutamakmur District, North Aceh, Aceh Province. FGDs were also conducted with women's groups in Bili Village, Kemukiman Aron Pidie. In the FGD discussions, women explained that women's involvement was limited to light or women's activities. Women's participation in outdoor activities served as additional income for the family. The activities in each village in North Aceh are underdeveloped, so most women's skills remain unimproved.

Informal interviews were conducted with six female activists who provide mentoring to women's groups, 12 farmers, and village heads in each of four villages in Kutamakmur sub-district. The study also examined the condition of women after the conflict in Aceh, who experienced a shift in values in their lives in North Aceh. Women in rural areas in Aceh who experienced the conflict have shown growth in all fields. This information collection was conducted with four women's groups in North Aceh and Pidie. The women who had a background as housewives, and some of them also worked as farm and garden laborers,

participated. In reality, women farmers in North Aceh have contributed to participating in innovations to increase the added value of food crops. The coaching activities of women farmer groups have been carried out to increase the added value of food crops. Women's empowerment efforts in the villages focus on fulfilling women's basic rights, developing capacity through education and training, strengthening political representation, increasing economic access and legal protection for women, and promoting gender equality in the region. Women's groups also focus on increasing women's independence, capacity, access to information, and participation in village development planning.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### **Post-Conflict: Women as Supporters of The Family Economy**

The impact of violence and suffering during conflict not only worsens justice and disparities in response to years of boredom and physical and psychological suffering in conflict situations, but Acehnese women's businesses have participated in formulating the best solution to the Aceh conflict (Noerdin 2005). This was based on Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), after long peace talks and signing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in Helsinki (Hasni 2012; Riezal 2020). The activities resulting from the economic empowerment program for post-conflict Aceh still do not meet community expectations and also experience injustice in the public and private areas.

The peak of the society occurred in Aceh, which was not making progress towards the welfare of the people of Aceh, especially the poorest area of North Aceh. With cases of women experiencing injustice, discrimination, and gender inequality in social structures that existed before the conflict (Martha and Hastuti 2014; Natasha 2013; Ningrum 2005) In contrast, injustice occurs in Aceh, a region that contributes natural resources to Indonesia's development.

Politically, the policy conditions in Aceh continue to change in carrying out regional autonomy with the implementation of Islamic law in an effort to encourage people's lives to run better within the unity of the Indonesian state. Especially improve the lives of women in rural areas. In many cases in Aceh, women always try to get involved in the informal sector to support their families, but they are not involved in the decision-making process for rural development planning (Lestari 2018). The rural situation in Aceh, from a situation of conflict, economics, gender inequality, and violence, is transformed into a process of normalizing community activities. In the urgent recovery phase of violent conflict conditions, Acehnese women put up strong resistance because they wanted to change and fight for their families. Entering a period of

peace in Aceh, the situation is that they are struggling to achieve reconciliation in their lives within the achievements of global development.

At the moment, Aceh, through the implementation of Islamic law, is also unable to protect women from violence in the domestic and public spheres, which has other negative impacts on women. Acehnese women are in the phase of achieving strength to obtain the benefits of social justice (Oktaviana and Kamaruzzaman 2021). Acehnese women and survivors have contributed to and played an important role in realizing peace in Aceh. Therefore, women can contribute to economic improvement by meeting family needs.

Tabel 1. The Condition of Women During Conflict and Post-Conflict in North Aceh  
(Source; Results of Researcher and Women's Group Meetings)

Conflict 1998-2004	Post-Conflict 2005-2023
Women as Breadwinners and Domestic Workers	Women Help in the Family Economy
Women who earn a living and make decisions	Male breadwinner
Gender Inequality in various aspects	Gender Inequality in various aspects
Limited job opportunities and closed access to information	Job opportunities open for men, limited for women.
There is no community empowerment assistance program in rural areas.	Assistance and empowerment from the government in village programs
Not safe	Safe

Changes in the lives of rural women in five villages in North Aceh after the conflict have given them more freedom to engage in activities outside the home. Unfortunately, with various challenges, women have not been able to fulfill their rights because gender inequality persists.

The transformation of women's conditions after the conflict has resulted in an openness to improving the economy for women and men. For women in rural areas, all of them return to being farmers or farm laborers and gardening. The reason is their skills are limited in getting job opportunities and are not affordable for women in rural areas. In grassroots society, women prefer to work in rural areas as domestic workers and in informal jobs for their and their families' needs. There are government assistance and community empowerment programs in several conflict-prone and poor districts, such as East Aceh, North Aceh, Aceh Bireuen, and Pidie. Empowerment and assistance programs are not yet comprehensive in their targets, so there is still an imbalance between women survivors and rural women (Utami and Afrizal 2022).

This has also encouraged women in rural areas to increase resources so that they can be involved in various activities in their villages. Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia (2024) the population living in rural areas is around 43 percent throughout Indonesia, with a total estimate of 29 percent of the Indonesian workforce working in the agricultural sector.

## Opportunities and Participation of Women

Women's participation in home decision-making is still not of high quality because of their low levels of education. Wahyuningroem (2005) asserts that it always views men as having skills and priorities and views women as having roles constrained by society, such as those related to reproduction. along with the restricted options for social engagement and the institutionalized prejudice against women. Women's access to formal employment opportunities will be restricted if they do not receive educational help. Thus, the primary responsibility in household economic activity shifts to the role of women. Women who perform household chores are never seen as having a paid job. Women are also involved in various sectors of society's social and economic systems (Salfa 2024). It is certain that women also contribute a lot to public development and the economic sector.

The phenomenon of social injustice throughout the history of humanity has always been a debate in every thought in society that is connected to the future, including the theme of fighting injustice against women (Tuwu 2018). The emergence of women who dare to speak out and fight proves that the situation of women being dominated by men and capital also being represented by men can be balanced (Tjandraningsih 2018). In 2018, the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) estimated that 36.1 million people worked to take care of households. Most of the work in the family and household in rural and urban areas is unpaid work, which is carried out by her duties as a wife. Men are always positioned as breadwinners, and women are housewives; even though women work, this income is considered additional income (Muin, Nasution, and Primastika 2021).

Following World War II, an increasing number of women began to look for paid job outside the home, which sparked interest in the link between work and life (Muafiah and Sofiana 2022). In rural areas, the Green Revolution Project and other similar programs are changing the social institutions of rural communities, so that the use of modern tools has begun to be more modern. Unfortunately, this opportunity is mostly part of men's work.

Social roles in the household relate to how household members have contributions and roles in public activities and extensive interaction in social activities in the community. Therefore,

the role and workload of women really help the family economy and sustainable development. However, rural women and girls only play at the level of precarious work, which has an impact on the family's economic stability. In rural areas, women's participation in household work as a whole is never paid, compounded by the problem of family pressure in terms of education and health.

The condition of rural women suffers more from the problem of poverty, gender inequality is higher among women in urban areas. Although the poor population in Aceh will decrease in 2022 from around 14.75 percent, in 2023 it will be 14.45 percent. According BPS Aceh (2023), The percentage of poor people in rural areas decreased from 17.06 percent to 16.92 percent (-0.14 points) In rural areas, one of the jobs to increase their income is that they often work in plantation areas, and wages for agricultural laborers in people's fields are an average of IDR 50,000 per day. Based on the ILO survey (2018), women in Asia Pacific work around 7.7 hours per day in one day. However, what happens to rural women is that they work between 11 and 12 hours per day, including domestic and informal work. In addition, women are often burdened with the responsibility of doing unpaid work, such as washing, cooking, looking for firewood, and caring for elderly parents and children at home. In Aceh, the majority of women in rural areas have done this work for generations in rural communities, both as plantation farmers and as rice field farmers.

In rural areas, women are heavily involved in agriculture, carrying out traditional initial and final processes. And men help with work that uses technology, such as tractors and other types of machinery. There is a shift in the role of rural women in the wider economic sector, especially changes in employment opportunities influenced by the agricultural development process. This is also influenced by the conditions in Aceh, which are starting to make it safe to carry out activities in gardens and agriculture.

Discrimination that occurs against women has a negative impact on the welfare of women and their families. The World Bank in 2001 and 2002 stated that the existence of social gender gaps resulted in economically inefficient results (Ismalina, 2018). Within the regional scope of East Asia and the Pacific, the gender gap is at 69% and will increase regionally in performance in 2021. According World Economic Forum (2022), with an estimated time of around 168 years for the gender gap to be resolved. Indonesian women's labor force participation is still relatively low, at around 53 percent in 2021, and has not changed even though there have been changes in the economic education sector and a decrease in the rate of early marriage. In addition, the World Bank (2021) the gap between men and women in labor force participation

rates in Indonesia is still one of the largest in the region, at 30 percent.

This violates the concept of family education, which places women in disadvantageous conditions who should be given the opportunity to obtain the same level of education (Hasni, 2016a). With various policies, it essentially required resources to be pooled into community strength to realize farmer welfare (Yuwono 2013). Most of the biological and social reproductive roles carried out by women are unpaid work carried out within the framework of social, household, or family relations.

ILO Convention Number 156 of 1981 concerning workers who have family responsibilities calls for and encourages action by women and men to better reconcile work and family responsibilities. In 2000, Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid ratified Presidential Instruction Number 9 of 2000 concerning mainstreaming in national development. The relationship between gender mainstreaming as an intervention that can be carried out to accelerate the creation of gender equality and justice. Gender mainstreaming (PUG), or gender mainstreaming to encourage agricultural development, is a strategy to realize gender equality and justice in development. Because gender aspects can be integrated into the formulation of program policies and activities since they have equal opportunities. However, government agencies have limited physical reach and long distances from rural target groups. On the other hand, local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have a strong presence at the grassroots; they are familiar with the environment and local issues, implement various development programs, and have direct contact and interaction with target groups and local communities.

### **Loss of Job Opportunities in Youth People**

The pandemic negatively impacted rural and global labor market conditions. In COVID-19, women farmers, who were also mothers and even heads of households, were to comply with the policies made by the government in an effort to break the chain of spread of COVID-19. Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) data from the 2021 Inter-Census Agricultural Survey (Sutas) states that the number of female farmers in Indonesia is around 8 million people. Estimation 24 percent of the 25.4 million farmers are women farmers. BPS also noted that the number of agricultural households with women as leaders was around 2.8 million households.

The unemployment rate in 2019 was 187 million people, in 2022 it reached 205 million people, and in 2023 it was 7.9 million people (BPS, 2023). Aceh's slow recovery projects the unemployment rate to continue to increase. An increase in the number of unemployed has an impact on social problems in people's lives, especially in rural areas, which will experience an

increase in poverty rates. The unavailability of work for the population will affect the welfare of the community due to reduced income to meet the living needs of a family. The following are densely populated areas in Aceh province:

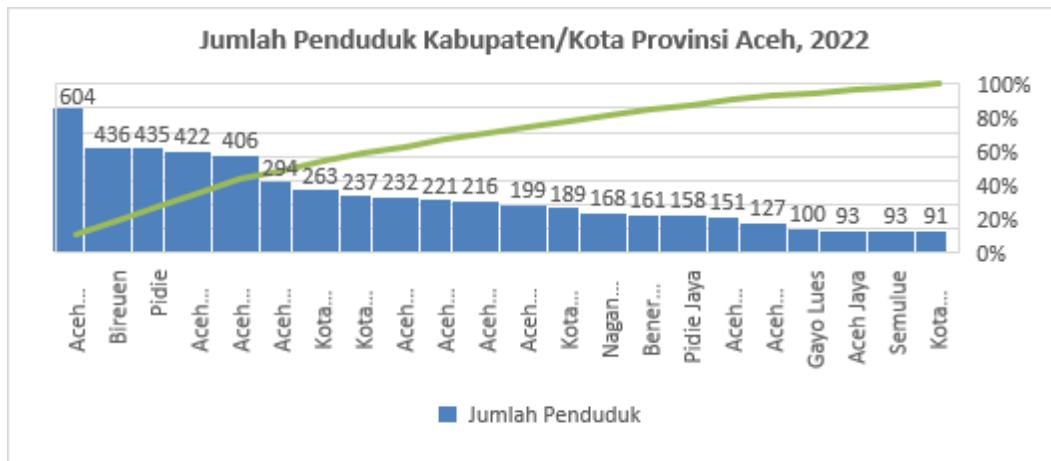


Figure 1. Areas with the Highest Population in Aceh Province

Source: BPS Aceh 2020, (Modification by Author)

North Aceh Regency in Aceh Province is the area with the most population and the poorest of the 22 districts and cities, with a total of 603,792 people. In measuring poverty, BPS uses the concept of the basic needs approach (fulfillment of basic needs). Poverty in North Aceh is seen as an economic inability to meet basic food needs. The poor population in 2021 will be 834.24 thousand people (15.33 percent), an increase of 330 people compared to the poor population in 2020, which was 833.91 thousand people (15.43 percent). The number of poor rural women (mothers) is 654.79 (Aceh 2022). Aceh's Open Unemployment Rate (TPT) in 2021 was 6.30 percent, and the highest TPT was Lhokseumawe City, namely 11.16 percent, and the lowest was Bener Meriah Regency, 1.24 percent (BPS, 2021).

Food commodities that have a big influence on the poverty line value in rural areas and are relatively the same as in urban areas are in the staple food category. Meanwhile, non-food commodities that influence the poverty line value are housing, gasoline, and electricity costs. This is also due to the lack of job opportunities, and most women in North Aceh experience a double burden in meeting their family's basic needs. North Aceh is one of the areas prone to flooding during heavy rainfall, which can damage agricultural products in several areas of Aceh.

In government regulations, the threshold for working time per week is 35 hours; if work is done below the threshold, then a person is half unemployed (BPS, 2019). The published World Employment and Social Outlook 2021 projects that at least 220 million people are expected to be

unemployed, and there will only be slight improvements in 2022. The work that women do in rural areas is productive, depending on social factors and the conditions of their family's needs (Hasian and Rafidah 2022). Women do work at home from the routine hours of 5 and 6 a.m. to noon and are supplemented with services for the needs of the family and other family members. Men spend more time outside the home but do not fully work to earn wages. The duties of women and men to a comparison, it shows an incompatible picture between women and men. This work does not earn income and is mostly done by women; if women do housework plus hourly wage work, the burden borne by women will be even heavier. When measuring the impact of unpaid care work and inadequately paid care work on women's prospects and well-being and their impact on worsening inequality globally.

In general in Aceh, many young generations, especially men in rural areas, have decided to move to urban areas looking for work, but there are still very few women who want to change their lives outside unless they continue their education. According to most men in rural areas, agriculture does not provide more income. Moving from the village to the city because there are new opportunities from various sources of mass media information, education, urgent economic needs, personal desires, and other reasons. This reason become more of the people move to cities for reasons such as continuing their education or wanting to obtain a better-quality education, so that someone decides to leave life in the village and settle in an urban area (Ratnawati 2019; Yuniar 2022). In Aceh, one of the drivers of community mobilization in villages in urban areas is the lack of opportunities and availability of employment opportunities in rural areas, as well as poverty in rural areas due to the 2020 population increase of 5,274,871 people (Rijal and Tahir 2022). Another reason is limited employment opportunities in rural areas due to crop failure and changes in land regulations resulting from infrastructure development and other problems.

The urban situation in several cities in Aceh due to urban growth is experiencing the phenomenon of uncontrolled urbanization, resulting in many new problems such as increasing deviations due to poverty, unemployment, an increase in slum areas, and crime. The urbanization of rural residents has encouraged all ages to change jobs, from farming to working in the industrial sector, starting new businesses, and becoming civil servants or private workers (Rijal and Tahir 2022). Other factors include more diverse and wider job opportunities in urban areas, more promotional opportunities, higher wages, more complete and cheaper needs, and entertainment at night.

Job creation is a challenge for the younger generation, especially in rural areas, because the workforce is growing rapidly due to population growth, which is not commensurate with job

offers. For women in Aceh who live in rural areas, when they finish school, they prefer to stay in the village, and their activities include participating in reciting the Koran or helping their parents at home or outside the home. If there is a suitable job opportunity, they will take it, and when they get married, they choose to quit that job for the family, except for civil servant jobs.

### **Women's Economic Empowerment**

Community empowerment is an effort for the community with the aim of preparing various resources, knowledge, opportunities, and skills to increase the community's capacity to improve the community's economy. Empowerment can be realized in the form of a program that is able to empower all communities to reach the potential that exists in accordance with the environment itself. Community empowerment aims to achieve an independent society capable of generating innovation, using existing resources, and helping people to be free from poverty (Utami and Afrizal 2022). Especially for underdeveloped villages in Aceh, which have a background of conflict and other urgent matters.

Most of every village in Aceh has a women's development group to improve the standard of living, and women's innovation can open up new opportunities. The role of women in productivity has a major influence on development and meeting household needs (Muzzaki 2023). Women's participation in resource management with various jobs aims to increase the family's economic income and complement the workload of the head of the family in earning a living (Natasha 2013; Tuwu 2018). Besides, increasing the capacity of women to be able to increase productive socio-economic activities and also to increase the ability and capacity of women in community institutions, both acting as government officials and also in the community.

Most of village in Aceh has a women's development group to improve the standard of living, and women's innovation can open up new opportunities. The role of women in productivity has a major influence on development and meeting household needs (Lestari 2018); Arifi & Fathurrohman 2023). Women's participation in resource management with various jobs aims to increase the family's economic income and complement the workload of the head of the family in earning a living. Thus, increasing the capacity of women to be able to increase productive socio-economic activities and also to increase the ability and capacity of women in community institutions, both acting as government officials and also in the community.

To increase post-conflict economic empowerment, the government has implemented village programs with the assistance of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). The

establishment of micro-scale businesses in village communities has developed women's MSMEs in several districts in Aceh, for example, by opening sales businesses. Acehnese traditional cakes according to their popularity in districts and cities. In 2022, MSMEs are directed to accelerate employment and recovery, mitigating the scarring effect (the impact of fear) of the pandemic. Aceh Province has 74,810 MSMEs throughout Aceh; the overall scope of Aceh in the development of MSMEs in Aceh is growing positively (Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022). Even though production has been running smoothly, new problems have emerged where the market place (marketing place) is not on target, so the marketing program is running slowly.

In general, Aceh province is involved in areas of work in the agricultural sector, unpaid care work, and household work in the family, which are found in rural areas. Various government programs for empowering women are still lacking, and women's participation in villages is still very low. According to Dewi (2017), village instructors, especially women, and women's leadership play an important role in empowering women in the village. With low attention from the government, many women in rural Aceh are trapped in agricultural and plantation work that is paid per day. Therefore, the role of rural women has a strong contribution to food production and food security. If this can be done well, then women are the key to success in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

International Rural Women's Day is celebrated every year on October 15. An idea to encourage women to innovate highlights the important role of women in increasing development and eradicating poverty in rural areas. Since 2007, the Ministry of Women's and Children's Empowerment (Kemen PPPA) has developed a Gender Responsive Budgeting Planning (PPRG) project in village areas in districts and cities in Aceh Province. In increasing gender equality and empowering women and children at the village level, this is an effort to increase the commitment and ability of district and city officials and village heads to encourage and compile PPRG at the village level. Efforts to empower women in the economy are a process so that women have skills to become breadwinners, able to get out of economic problems and escape the trap of poverty (Elliott, 2008). Community empowerment aims to create an independent society that is able to explore and utilize the potential that exists in its area and help the community be free from backwardness (Utami and Afrizal 2022). In 2010–2014, the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) gender mainstreaming policy was integrated into the planning system.

Empowering women and communities encourage investment in the care economy, which can provide long-term human capital benefits. This can also lead to increased employment and income for women, increased company productivity, and job creation. The World Bank (2022), in manufacturing, a number of unskilled workers are still men, while skilled women are less attractive to women. As Indonesia shifts to middle-class jobs and the manufacturing and service sectors, women are still constrained in balancing childcare responsibilities and working to encourage economic productivity in line with government targets.

### **Aspirations Gender Equality and Injustice**

According to Hirway (2015), women's human resources are of lower quality due to the burden of unpaid care as well as the burden of social conventions and traditions imposed on them, thus hindering them even if they decide to seek paid work. Fighting social injustice has always been an interesting issue in human history and will continue to be the same in all thoughts and conceptions of society in the future, including the theme of injustice against women (Febriyanti 2020).

In Aceh, the problems faced by village women range from socio-economic issues, education, and health to employment opportunities. In addition, access to education is far away, so parents limit this opportunity, especially for girls. The availability of schools can be outside the local population, long distances outside the district and city. In the development of understanding related to education in rural areas, the whole community does not yet understand how to provide equal rights to men and women, so that the position of girls is always the second priority. The mother's weak education means she cannot become a teacher for her child because the quality of the mother's education is low. Limited quality cannot be a motivator in the household, so the knowledge given to children does not develop perfectly, despite every parent's hope for their child's success. To achieve success, sometimes people do not have a strategy so that the level of success is in accordance with the standards of their own lives. In life, women are continuously faced with the same problems as their parents in the position of being wives and only fulfilling the family's needs.

Women farmers continue to struggle to find opportunities outside the home to meet their economic needs. A source of income for family needs while taking care of domestic work, and the possibility of male farmers migrating to look for other work or to stay (Hasian and Rafidah 2022). This condition leads to gender inequality, which gives rise to various forms of gender injustice, one of which is the double burden on women. The World Bank concluded in 2001 and

2002 that the existence of social gender gaps produces economically inefficient results (Ismalia 2018). In implementing gender equality, the goal is for everyone to receive equal and fair treatment in the family and society, in politics, at work, in public, and in policy.

Women's life expectancy is as high as men's, but there are gender issues and cultural barriers for women in rural areas to play an active role in development. The low level of education and skills of most women and the vulnerable position of women in society mean that women and children bear the brunt of the consequences and suffering. Aswiyati (2016) explains that in general, women who work outside the home do so not just to fill their free time or develop their careers but rather to fulfill family needs because the income earned by their husbands is insufficient, so women help and look for additional income for the family. Women can take double-standard roles (second roles) and are sometimes required to choose roles, even though, in essence, women are able to take multi-role positions without discrimination (Bayumi 2022).

According to Klasen & Lamanna (2009), employment inequality hampers economic growth in employment to a greater extent than gender inequality in education. In addition, the government's target in the 2020–2024 Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Nasional (RPJMN) is that the quality of Indonesian women must continue to improve until 2025 to pursue gender equality. Unfortunately, the government's approach and programs are not on target, so achievements in implementing gender equality cannot be fully realized, especially in rural areas. The role of gender equality will greatly determine economic development, which can have a broad impact on society. Gender equality and women's empowerment are part of the goals of equitable development and support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) program. If everyone understands the meaning of gender based on law and religion, gender will certainly become a concept of gender equality in family life and the environment (Bunga Febriyanti 2020). Understanding positive gender equality in society has many benefits in life, especially for reducing cases of gender inequality and domestic problems.

Gender inequality is a system and structure where both men and women are victims of the system. The backwardness of women reflects the existence of injustice and inequality between men and women in Indonesia; this can be seen from the description of the condition of women in Indonesia. Injustice in entrenched gender equality is a condition of social life.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that although women in rural North Aceh play a strategic role as the backbone of the post-conflict and pre-conflict economy, there has been increased access to resources, involvement in the reconstruction process, and learning about the importance of gender balance in society. Increases women's capacity to play roles as planners, implementers, and supervisors of development, promoting economic independence through entrepreneurship and access to employment. However, challenges still faced include socio-cultural barriers, gender discrimination, and limited access to education and economic resources. The participation development process remains low, and economic empowerment efforts are hampered by a double burden and structural and cultural constraints. These patriarchal norms create a double burden for women, as they must juggle household responsibilities while participating in the public sphere, limiting their time, energy, and mobility.

Otherwise, Acehnese women have contributed not only in the domestic sphere but also in the public sphere, including in social, political, and economic activities that support the peace and development process. Women are active in village planning meetings and economic activities, such as women's farming groups or sewing training, which increase income and independence. The empowerment process has successfully organized women to combat poverty through family and community involvement.

Research confirms that women's empowerment is not simply a goal of increasing women's involvement but rather a process of engagement that enables women to make decisions and control resources to achieve sustainable shared prosperity. Societal doubts about women's leadership abilities also weaken social support, particularly in politics and village development. Women's participation in politics is low, despite their larger population, and discrimination in the workplace limits their access to promotions and economic resources. Therefore, barriers are multidimensional, including implicit bias and a lack of social networks, which exacerbate marginalization in various aspects.

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