



## **Descriptive analysis of the implementation of gender responsive policies for poverty alleviation in Aceh**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Women's poverty in Aceh persists due to entrenched gender norms restricting their economic access and social welfare, despite the poverty alleviation efforts. Gender mainstreaming policies (GMP), initiated through Presidential Instruction No. 9/2000, remain ineffective due to weak institutional coordination, inadequate funding, and exclusion of women in planning. This qualitative study analyzes policy implementation via document reviews, observations, and interviews, revealing multidimensional challenges. Institutional fragmentation, short-term program focus, and financial constraints limit women's empowerment. Women's exclusion from policy planning further reduces program ownership and engagement. Field data underscore women's undervalued economic roles in coastal and agricultural sectors. In fishing communities, women contribute to fish processing, while female coffee farmers in Bener Meriah manage harvesting and small businesses. However, restricted access to resources, credit, and decision-making stifles their potential. To address these gaps, the study advocates strengthening institutional collaboration, increasing gender-responsive budgets, and integrating women into planning and evaluation. Sustainable outcomes require prioritizing long-term strategies with robust monitoring. Enhancing resource access, financial support, and decision-making power for women is critical to reducing poverty and advancing gender equity. These reforms aim to transform policy frameworks into actionable, inclusive solutions, ensuring Aceh's poverty alleviation efforts align with the needs and contributions of its women.*

**Keywords:** Gender Poverty; Economic Empowerment; Policy Implementation; Women's Welfare; Gender Equality.

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## ABSTRAK

*Kemiskinan perempuan di Aceh diperparah oleh norma gender yang mengakar, membatasi akses ekonomi dan kesejahteraan sosial. Meski upaya penanggulangan kemiskinan telah dilakukan, pemerintah Aceh masih kesulitan menurunkan angka kemiskinan perempuan. Implementasi Pengarusutamaan Gender (PUG) melalui Inpres No. 9/2000 kurang efektif akibat koordinasi lembaga lemah, anggaran terbatas, dan minimnya perencanaan partisipatif. Penelitian kualitatif ini menggunakan analisis dokumen, observasi non-partisipatif, dan wawancara mendalam untuk menilai kebijakan responsif gender. Temuan menunjukkan kemiskinan perempuan bersifat multidimensi, memerlukan pendekatan holistik. Kelemahan kelembagaan, fragmentasi kebijakan, dan fokus pada program jangka pendek menjadi hambatan utama. Keterbatasan anggaran menyempitkan cakupan pemberdayaan perempuan, sementara minimnya partisipasi mereka dalam perencanaan mengurangi rasa kepemilikan. Data lapangan mengungkap kontribusi ekonomi perempuan di sektor pesisir dan pertanian (pemrosesan ikan, panen kopi di Bener Meriah) yang signifikan namun kurang dihargai. Partisipasi mereka tetap terhambat akses sumber daya, dukungan finansial, dan peran dalam pengambilan keputusan. Untuk meningkatkan efektivitas program, penelitian merekomendasikan: (1) penguatan kolaborasi kelembagaan, (2) peningkatan alokasi anggaran berbasis gender, (3) partisipasi aktif perempuan dalam perencanaan dan evaluasi kebijakan, serta (4) keberlanjutan program melalui pemantauan berkelanjutan dan strategi adaptif. Langkah ini krusial untuk meningkatkan kesejahteraan perempuan dan kesetaraan gender di Aceh.*

**Kata Kunci:** Kemiskinan Gender; Pemberdayaan Ekonomi; Implementasi Kebijakan; Kesejahteraan Perempuan; Kesetaraan Gender.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Poverty remains a significant challenge for development, particularly in developing countries like Indonesia (Hasan, 2021). It encompasses not just material deprivation but also limited access to education, healthcare, and broader economic opportunities (Guio, 2018). Despite various poverty alleviation programs, Aceh Province continues to be one of Indonesia's poorest regions, struggling with persistent poverty rooted in structural challenges (Umar & Putri, 2023). Following the 2004 tsunami and subsequent post-conflict recovery, extensive reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts aimed at rebuilding infrastructure and livelihoods were launched in Aceh (Junaedi et al., 2020). However, these initiatives have not significantly reduced Aceh's poverty rate, which remains disproportionately high relative to the national average, indicating systemic gaps in policy implementation and resource allocation (Setyadi, 2022).

Gender inequality remains a critical barrier to effective development in Aceh, revealing deep-rooted systemic issues in Indonesia's poverty policies (Agusalim et al., 2023). Women in Aceh frequently encounter significant obstacles in accessing education, employment, and healthcare services (Murdawati, 2024). The strong patriarchal culture prevalent in Acehnese society exacerbates gender discrimination, adversely affecting women's participation in poverty alleviation programs (Rasyidah et al., 2016).

Poverty alleviation policies that overlook gender considerations risk being ineffective and may even worsen existing inequalities. Gender-responsive policies specifically address the differing needs of men and women in both policy formulation and implementation, ensuring equitable benefits in poverty alleviation (Moser, 2012; Lukman, 2024). Implementing such policies can combat injustice and social disparities in Aceh, fostering effective poverty alleviation that is sensitive to the region's unique social, cultural, and historical contexts. Many social and economic assistance programs in Aceh often overlook gender aspects, leading to unequal benefits for men and women (Miralisa & Permana, 2020). Women are often in a more vulnerable position to poverty due to limited access to resources (Arifianti, Nasution, & Atika, 2024).

This study aims to evaluate the implementation of gender-responsive poverty alleviation policies in Aceh, focusing on their effectiveness in integrating gender considerations during both formulation and execution. Specifically, it assesses the impact of these policies on poverty reduction for both women and men while highlighting the necessity of policies that extend beyond mere income generation to promote equitable resource distribution. Given that women in Aceh often face limited access to poverty alleviation programs, this research identifies critical factors influencing policy success and challenges. By employing a qualitative methodology that includes document analysis, interviews, and field observations, this study provides actionable recommendations to enhance gender-responsive strategies, ultimately promoting more inclusive and effective poverty reduction efforts in Aceh.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### *2.1. Gender and Theoretical Perspectives on Poverty Alleviation Policies*

In gender and development studies, gender issues are often conflated with women's issues, a perspective rooted in the dominant Women in Development (WID) discourse, which historically emphasizes women's roles (Moser, 2014). Many societies perceive women as inferior, leading to structural barriers that restrict their access to resources and opportunities (Connell, 1985). This study employs gender analysis to link standardization with femininity, masculinity, and the impoverishment of women.

Gender, as a social structure, influences access to resources and opportunities via prescribed roles, which helps analyze the power dynamics between men and women. According to Friedl (2009), gender hierarchies enable men to exert control over women, a situation perpetuated by societal institutions. A gender perspective illuminates how poverty among women results from social constructs that confine them to domestic roles and limit their participation in the labor market (Kabeer, 2003).

Poverty alleviation policies aim to reduce economic disparities and improve welfare through economic growth and social protection. The World Bank (World Bank, 2001) classifies them into opportunity enhancement, capability development, and security provision, focusing on access, education, healthcare, and safety nets.

Sen's Capability Approach posits that poverty extends beyond mere income deprivation; it encompasses the lack of essential capabilities necessary for individuals to thrive (SEN, 1999). Therefore, poverty alleviation must strive to expand freedoms and

opportunities, particularly for marginalized groups like women, by addressing systemic inequalities beyond financial assistance (NUSSBAUM, 2000).

Gender-responsive poverty alleviation policies can be categorized as gender-neutral, gender-specific, or transformative. Gender-neutral policies disregard disparities, assuming equal impacts across genders. In contrast, gender-specific policies address gaps through targeted interventions such as microfinance and vocational training, while transformative policies challenge structural barriers, promote equitable resource distribution, and reshape gender power dynamics.

## *2.2. Gender and Economic Empowerment*

Naila Kabeer's analysis of gender-sensitive development policies critiques the distribution of resources, responsibilities, and power across institutions, emphasizing the need to address structural inequalities that restrict women's economic participation (Kabeer, 2003). She defines empowerment as the capacity to make choices, standing in stark contrast to disempowerment, where individuals lack decision-making authority (Kabeer, 1999). Understanding this dynamic is crucial for assessing the impact of poverty policies on women's agency.

Empowerment necessitates systemic change, ensuring that women have access to vital assets, credit, education, and employment opportunities. Strategies such as microfinance, vocational training, and affirmative action can significantly enhance women's economic independence. However, if deep-seated social norms remain unaddressed, the potential impact of these interventions is limited (Mayoux, 2002). Thus, effective gender-responsive policies must integrate legal, social, and economic frameworks to dismantle the structural barriers perpetuating gender inequality.

## *2.3. Institutional Analysis and Policy Implementation*

March et al. (1999) assert that institutions fundamentally shape gender relations and economic outcomes, but policy biases frequently reinforce existing disparities. For instance, development programs may prioritize male-dominated industries, hindering women's access to the benefits of poverty alleviation (March, 1999).

This study employs a multi-level institutional analysis to evaluate gender-responsive poverty policies. First, a Gender Policy Review assesses whether policies are gender-neutral, specific, or transformative. Second, the analysis examines institutional structures, including labor markets and governmental mechanisms, for inherent gender biases. Finally, the assessment evaluates the long-term impact of policy interventions on achieving gender equality (March, 1999).

This literature review highlights the intersection of gender and poverty alleviation, advocating for gender-sensitive approaches in economic development. The Capability Approach and Social Relations Perspective provide essential frameworks for understanding the role of gender in economic empowerment. Beyond targeted interventions, comprehensive structural reforms are crucial for addressing gender disparities in resource allocation and decision-making.

### 3. METHOD

This qualitative study is grounded in a feminist gender perspective and employs an analytical descriptive method to explore women's experiences of poverty. Recognizing poverty's structural and gendered dimensions, the study examines how inequalities shape access to resources and opportunities. This approach aims to identify patterns, barriers, and pathways for transformative change in poverty alleviation by capturing women's lived realities and analyzing systemic gender disparities (Tech, 2020).

The research was conducted over six months in the regions of Pidie, Pidie Jaya, and Bener Meriah, targeting a diverse group of ten participants. The selection process utilized purposive sampling to ensure the inclusion of women who have experienced poverty in various contexts.

Participants were chosen to represent a range of ages, educational backgrounds, and socioeconomic statuses to reflect the varied experiences of women within the community. Specifically, Bener Meriah was identified as a mountainous area, while Pidie Jaya is characterized as a coastal region. This geographical diversity allows for a comprehensive understanding of how environmental and socio-economic factors influence women's experiences of poverty.

Women were selected based on their firsthand experiences with poverty and their interactions with poverty alleviation programs. This criterion ensured that the data collected would provide insights into the effectiveness of these programs from a gendered perspective. Recruitment was facilitated through local NGOs and community networks, which helped establish trust and rapport with potential participants. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and the assurance of anonymity, were prioritized throughout the selection process.

Data analysis was conducted through an iterative qualitative process aligned with a feminist perspective, employing thematic analysis. The researcher began by familiarizing herself with interview transcripts and field notes. Initial coding identified significant phrases and themes, evolving through constant comparison. These codes were grouped into larger themes reflecting women's experiences of poverty and the effectiveness of alleviation policies. Thematic findings were analyzed alongside feminist and intersectional theories to understand how gender stratification and systemic barriers perpetuate poverty. To enhance reliability, data from interviews were triangulated with non-participant observations, ensuring corroboration across different data sources and reinforcing the study's credibility.

### 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1. *Context of Poverty in Aceh*

This research was conducted in Sigli (Pidie Regency), Meureudu (Pidie Jaya), and Bener Meriah, two of Aceh's poorest regions, with poverty rates of 19.46% and 17.68%, respectively, in 2019, both exceeding Aceh's average of 15.01% (BPS Aceh, 2019). Aceh's uniqueness arises from its implementation of Islamic law and a long history of conflict with the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), which has profoundly affected the society—socially, economically, and psychologically—leading to significant poverty, particularly in rural areas (Zainal, 2022; Tjhin, 2005). International involvement led to increased focus on women's empowerment as communities faced heightened vulnerabilities during the conflict.

The conflict has significantly increased poverty in Aceh, particularly in rural areas (Abd. Majid, 2014; Alfiatunnur, 2024). Widespread destruction of agricultural land and infrastructure led to job losses, forcing many to migrate for safety and survival. Limited access to resources and basic services further deepened economic hardship, especially in remote, conflict-affected areas (Bustamam-Ahmad, 2002; Cibro, 2018).

Amid ongoing conflict, Aceh faced another catastrophe—the 2004 tsunami, one of Indonesia's deadliest disasters. It claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and devastated coastal infrastructure, worsening poverty. The loss of homes, jobs, and loved ones left communities highly vulnerable, further escalating poverty in an already struggling region (Bustamam-Ahmad, 2017).

The post-tsunami rehabilitation and reconstruction marked a crucial period in Aceh's history. International organizations played a vital role in addressing the humanitarian crisis, launching programs in economic empowerment, healthcare, and reintegration of former GAM combatants. Their support significantly contributed to Aceh's recovery, fostering progress across multiple sectors (Tjhin, 2005; Bustamam-Ahmad, 2017).

The success of rehabilitation and reconstruction was closely tied to the 2005 Helsinki Peace Agreement between the Indonesian government and GAM. This agreement not only ended the conflict but also paved the way for inclusive, sustainable development. The resulting Aceh Governance Law (UUPA) granted special autonomy, strengthening regional recovery efforts (Zainal, 2022).

Post-tsunami, Aceh became more open to global interactions after years of isolation due to conflict. International involvement in rehabilitation fostered a cosmopolitan environment, influencing regional development (Ramli, 2022). The increase in international participation has also encouraged the emergence of development initiatives that are more focused on social justice, including gender equality.

The rehabilitation phase heightened attention to women's issues in Aceh, leading to programs that enhanced their participation in the economy, health, and decision-making. Given their heightened vulnerability during conflict and disaster—facing gender-based violence, health risks, and exclusion—many donors prioritized women's empowerment as a key development strategy (Bustamam-Ahmad, 2017).

After the 2009 rehabilitation phase, Aceh's government was expected to sustain development independently. Despite progress, challenges persist, including poverty and underdevelopment. Rural areas still struggle with limited access to education, healthcare, and jobs. The following research findings highlight these ongoing issues based on the study's results.

#### *4.2. Gendered Realities of Poverty: Economic Roles and Social Barriers*

This study reveals that poverty in Aceh is intricately linked to gender disparities. Women in Bener Meriah experience systemic barriers in accessing resources and opportunities, which increases their vulnerability. Ernani, a 36-year-old coffee farmer, illustrates the double burden carried by women, managing both agricultural work and household responsibilities. She describes how they work as coffee farmers while handling childcare and household needs, illustrating their double burden. Structural issues like gender discrimination, the expectation to manage both domestic and economic roles, and limited

access to education and formal jobs worsen their financial instability. Despite development programs, women bear extra workloads, while men benefit from financial incentives, making it even harder for women to escape poverty.

As Ernani (36 years old) stated on August 28, 2019, women in Bener Meriah face a double burden. Not only do they work as coffee farmers, but they are also responsible for taking their children to school and ensuring their household's basic needs are met:

*“...Just imagine, mothers have to take care of everything, from taking their children to school to worrying about having enough rice at home—it all falls on women. Unless a woman is officially listed as the head of the household on the family registration card, then maybe she has that recognition. But otherwise, household responsibilities that should be handled by the head of the family still fall on women.*

*And then, even when it comes to village programs, women are still burdened. Many programs reach the villages, but when they become the responsibility of women, the men are happy. Why? Because when women are invited to meetings, they are given money in envelopes as transport allowances. So now, when people are invited to meetings, they ask, ‘Is there a transport allowance?’ They already know the system, right?”*

This study highlights that poverty in Aceh extends beyond mere economic deprivation; it is deeply entangled with gender disparities. Women face systemic barriers in accessing resources, economic opportunities, and fundamental rights, leaving them more vulnerable to financial instability. Structural challenges—including gender discrimination, the dual burden of domestic and economic responsibilities, and limited access to education and formal employment—further hinder their empowerment.

Field observations in Pidie Jaya reveal that women in coastal communities play a crucial role in household economies through fishing-related activities—cleaning, drying, and selling fish—yet their labor remains undervalued and unrecognized as formal economic work. Similarly, in Bener Meriah, female coffee farmers are instrumental in plantation management and production but have minimal control over financial resources and decision-making. Traditional gender norms continue to confine women to unpaid domestic labor, despite their significant economic contributions. Those engaged in informal sectors, such as home-based businesses or market vending, also lack legal protection and social security, leaving them especially vulnerable during economic crises.

Interviews with local women further underscore these challenges. While various development programs have been introduced in villages, they often place additional burdens on women rather than alleviating economic hardships. Many of these programs require women's active participation, offering financial incentives such as transportation allowances, which men often benefit from indirectly. This dynamic reinforces existing gender imbalances, as women are expected to manage both domestic responsibilities and community-based economic activities without equitable support. Furthermore, policies designed to enhance economic opportunities frequently lack gender-sensitive implementation, failing to address the structural barriers that restrict women's access to resources.

These findings align with broader trends in Aceh, where poverty is not merely a matter of economic deprivation but is deeply intertwined with gender disparities. Women face

systemic obstacles in accessing education, financial resources, and economic opportunities, rendering them more vulnerable to financial instability. Structural barriers—including gender discrimination, the dual burden of domestic and economic roles, and restricted access to formal employment—further hinder their empowerment.

Addressing these challenges requires a gender-responsive approach to poverty alleviation. Policies must go beyond income-generation programs to dismantle structural inequalities that limit women's participation in decision-making and economic growth. A comprehensive, gender-inclusive strategy is essential to breaking the cycle of poverty and fostering sustainable economic development in Aceh.

#### *4.3. Women's Economic Roles in Coastal and Agricultural Communities*

In an interview on August 20, 2019, Kasmin (50 years old) identified a significant challenge in the field: understanding the definition and indicators of poverty. He noted that the poverty indicators provided by the Central Statistics Agency encompass not only income but also conditions related to clothing, food, and shelter. However, he expressed that these indicators do not accurately reflect the realities on the ground:

*“... questioning the BPS survey: According to BPS, poverty is measured based on daily expenditures, particularly in rural districts where many residents do not spend money on rice because they have their rice fields. They can also obtain vegetables from their yards and fish from nearby waters. Therefore, the poverty indicators used by BPS may not be entirely accurate. A key weakness of the BPS survey is that a household is classified as poor if its expenditures fall below a certain threshold. However, this should be adjusted by converting their actual consumption—such as homegrown food and self-caught fish—into monetary value, even if no cash transactions are involved.*

In an interview on August 20, 2019, Ayu (30 years old) highlighted that poverty in the Pidie Jaya district predominantly affects families living along the coastline, where most residents work as fishermen, shrimp farmers, or operate kiosks. From a gender perspective, women play a crucial role in supporting their husbands so they can meet their family's financial needs. Many women have adopted the practice of working to contribute to household expenses, including purchasing children's uniforms, providing pocket money, and buying kitchen essentials.

Additionally, according to Nilawati (35), interviewed on August 20, 2019, the people of Pidie Jaya once earned income from cocoa farming. However, due to plant diseases, they can no longer rely on it and have turned to daily wage labor in rice fields or plantations. Most households only own enough land for a house and a few coconut or banana trees.

*“...both men and women in Pidie Jaya traditionally engage in fishing and oyster gathering. In the past, cocoa farming provided some income, but now those with farmland grow corn for livestock feed. Women are primarily employed as laborers in these fields, earning IDR 60,000 per day, while men receive IDR 80,000 for the same work—likely due to perceived differences in physical strength. Their working hours are from 08:00 to 12:00 and 14:00 to 17:00.*

*Women also take on roles such as clearing farmland, working in rice fields, and planting paddy, though men operate the rice threshing machines. Those without*



*farmland or rice fields often travel to other areas like Sigli or Meureudu to find agricultural work”.*

Coastal communities in Aceh embody a form of local wisdom that is deeply rooted in their livelihoods, with coastal women playing a central role in shaping this culture (Muksal et al., 2020). Unlike in other regions, these women are recognized as productive individuals who significantly contribute to their families' economic growth (Djunaidah & Nurmalia, 2019).

When the fishermen's boat docks at the harbor or the beach, they immediately assist their husbands. They immediately help their husbands unload the fish and clean it so it can be dried and turned into salted fish after the other fish are sold. They do this activity every day, from morning until noon. Thereafter, they return home, prepare lunch, and clean the house (Interview with Sri, 30 years old, August 8, 2019).

Occasionally, these productive women earn a weekly wage of 200-300 thousand by drying fish, which they then sell at the markets. Similarly, other members of the community view drying fish as a customary practice. They consider this activity to be mutual assistance between husband and wife. If the husband goes to the sea to catch fish, the wife at home prepares food for the children, and then after the husband returns from the sea, the wife cleans the fish and dries them on the beach (Ayu, 30 Years Interview, August 20, 2019). In addition, there are other activities they engage in besides their livelihood at sea. They are coffee farmers in the Gayo highlands.

According to Wenxuan Li and Maria I. Marshall, there is no difference in the level of satisfaction in doing business for a woman, whether she is doing her work or running a business. This also has implications for female coffee farmers in Bener Meriah, who themselves manage the coffee business, from controlling seed harvesting to shipping the coffee results outside the region. For the farmers who collect the seeds, this has become a local wisdom, where the majority of coffee bean collectors are women, and some men transport the harvest to the coffee mill (Li & Marshall, 2019).

Then Wenxuan Li and Maria I. Marshall revealed that women's participation in management and the number of family members in management are positively related to women's role satisfaction, while tension from resource competition is negatively related to role satisfaction. On the other hand, men's role satisfaction increases through high family business functions and profits (Li & Marshall, 2019).

Bener Meriah, for example, is a new district that was formed from the expansion of Aceh Tengah, and the majority of the residents here are coffee farmers. Coffee plantations are a heritage and a source of livelihood for the majority of the community there. Each resident has at least 2 hectares of coffee plantation. Producing coffee often generates more income than meeting daily needs.

From an educational perspective, the school participation rate in Bener Meriah is high, with the majority of boys and girls completing up to high school. Many parents send their children to school outside of Central Aceh-even outside of Aceh. Similarly, Pidie Jaya emerged as a separate district from Pidie Regency. The main source of livelihood for the people in this area is agriculture, particularly rice fields and plantations. The government is developing chocolate as a plantation variety. The government's approach involves empowering the community through the support and funding of business groups.

Not only that, several community empowerment programs have also been implemented by various relevant government agencies to improve community welfare and reduce poverty rates. However, these efforts continue to face significant challenges (Interview with Ernani, 36 Years Old, on August 28, 2019).

#### *4.4. Government Policies in Women's Empowerment*

The poverty alleviation program has become a national priority in Indonesia. To coordinate efforts, the government established the National Poverty Alleviation Coordination Team (TKPK) under the president, operating from national to district levels. At the provincial level, TKPK is accountable to the governor, with regents/mayors responsible for its formation (Djonet, 2017).

TKPK coordinates policies aimed at alleviating poverty and overseeing their implementation. It includes all ministers, with the Minister for Women's Empowerment and Child Protection participating, demonstrating the government's gender-sensitive approach to poverty alleviation policies.

The focus on reducing gender injustice is reinforced by gender mainstreaming policies from Presidential Instruction Number 9 of 2000, integrating gender into regional policy planning, implementation, and evaluation. Over twenty years, Gender Mainstreaming (PUG) has evolved through significant regulatory advancements. Law Number 25 of 2004 integrated gender-responsive principles into development planning, followed by Law Number 17 of 2007, which established gender as a core principle in the National Long-Term Development Plan (RPJPN) 2005-2025. Gender became a priority in the 2004-2009 and 2010-2014 National Medium-Term Development Plans (RPJMN).

Minister of Home Affairs Regulations from 2008 and its 2011 update provided guidelines for local governments to implement gender mainstreaming, encouraging the creation of Gender Mainstreaming Working Groups to ensure that regional planning documents are equitable. Additionally, Presidential Regulation Number 2 of 2015 recognized gender as a core issue in strategic plans, promoting inclusivity.

The 2012 Circular from the Four Ministers outlines strategies for accelerating gender-responsive planning and budgeting (GRPB). The commitment reflects Indonesia's dedication to an inclusive, gender-equitable society while pursuing fair national development. Despite these efforts over twenty years, challenges persist in implementation. The execution of PPRG remains formalistic and reliant on individual personnel, complicating continuity during leadership changes. Echelon 1 and 2 officials often lack a comprehensive understanding of gender-responsive planning at the ministry or institutional level. Consequently, they may not prioritize budgeting initiatives outlined in Gender Responsive Budgeting (ARG) sheets. Additionally, human resources responsible for gender analysis in program planning frequently do not fully comprehend gender concepts, leading to ineffective use of gender analysis tools. As a result, development programs in Aceh province struggle to reflect gender responsiveness, undermining the country's commitment to gender equality in development.

#### *4.5. Implementation of Women's Empowerment Policies in Aceh*

The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, along with related organizations, ends up solely responsible for empowering women. This has adverse effects on

the annual program budget for PP-PA offices, which are often minimal. Some offices receive only enough funding for operations and travel expenses related to violence and sexual harassment issues, while economic empowerment initiatives receive inadequate financial support. As per another interview with Tia on August 27, 2019, in cases where PP-PA agencies have larger budgets, funding tends to be diverted to the Family Planning (KB) sector instead of the PP-PA sector.

The province faces significant challenges due to insufficient budget allocations for women's empowerment programs. As a result, district PP-PA sectors can only conduct women's empowerment activities if the Aceh provincial DPP-PA identifies them as targets for initiatives like the Prima Madani village program and the Household Industry Program.

Furthermore, community empowerment programs often prioritize budget absorption over meaningful outcomes. This focus undermines a clear understanding of empowerment, treating beneficiaries as mere tasks rather than active participants in the process. The researcher observed that successful programs involve beneficiaries from the onset, fostering engagement and ownership. Additionally, many community empowerment and women's programs lack sustainability. Often, initiatives conclude after training sessions without follow-up support or supervision. For example, skills training in areas like tofu-making and sewing frequently lacks a clear pathway for continued engagement, resulting in skill acquisition without practical application or ongoing mentoring.

Consequently, many empowerment activities fall short of effectively reducing poverty due to their fragmented nature and lack of thorough evaluation. Women's empowerment programs can successfully decrease poverty if they adopt a participatory approach from the beginning, promoting accountability among beneficiaries.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Poverty affects men and women differently, with women often bearing a heavier burden due to traditional gender roles and labor division. However, government poverty indicators frequently fail to capture these realities, as they are not fully adapted to local contexts. This misalignment obscures the specific impact of poverty on women Indonesia's efforts to reduce women's poverty began with Presidential Instruction No. 9 of 2000 on Gender Mainstreaming in Development. While a crucial step, implementation faces challenges, including fragmented programs, lack of inter-agency coordination, frequent job rotations, and weak monitoring mechanisms, limiting direct community benefits.

Gender mainstreaming in Aceh challenges deeply ingrained patriarchal norms and conservative religious interpretations, thereby limiting women's access to education, employment, and decision-making. Limited vocational training and healthcare—especially reproductive health services—exacerbate women's vulnerability. The region's history of conflict and the 2004 tsunami further disadvantaged female-headed households. Addressing these issues requires collaboration between government, society, and international organizations to design inclusive programs that balance local values with women's empowerment.

Findings from this study highlight the gendered dynamics of poverty in Aceh, emphasizing the need for targeted policies. Coastal communities in Pidie Jaya exemplify strong household support networks, which government programs should leverage to enhance

community-driven resilience. To improve poverty alleviation, the government must refine policies for better institutional synergy, reduce redundancy, and increase efficiency. Implementing gender-responsive budgets is also essential to ensure equitable resource distribution. By prioritizing gender-sensitive economic initiatives and strengthening community collaboration, the government can foster sustainable development and reduce women's economic vulnerability.

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