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Religion and Development: The Indonesian Peace Alliance's Role in Mitigating Social Challenges and Fostering Peace

Paridah Napilah
Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Tarbiyah (STIT) Manggala, Bandung, Indonesia
elimhalimatusadyah@gmail.com

Mohammad Taufiq Rahman
UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia
fikrakoe@uinsgd.ac.id

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Abstract:

This study aims to examine the role of Aliansi Indonesia Damai (AIDA) in addressing social problems and promoting peace at the community level. The key concepts include civil society organizations, peacebuilding, social capital, and conflict transformation. This research employs a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach, using in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis as data collection techniques. The object of the study is AIDA's institutional activities and social practices, particularly in dialogue programs, victim assistance, and peace education initiatives. The findings indicate that AIDA operates as an effective non-state actor in producing peace narratives, strengthening cross-identity social networks, and transforming collective trauma into social learning. Major challenges include limited resources, reliance on volunteer networks, and cultural resistance within certain communities. The study recommends strengthening institutional capacity, increasing policy support for local peace organizations, and integrating peace education into broader public spaces. This research contributes to the theoretical understanding of how local organizations can serve as strategic agents of sustainable peacebuilding in plural societies.

Keywords: civil society; community resilience; conflict transformation; peace education; peacebuilding; social capital.

INTRODUCTION

The role of community organizations (CSOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) as the main pillars of civil society in a modern democratic system can no longer be understood merely as supporting actors for the state, but rather as social forces that actively produce meaning, values, and civic practices that are critical of power relations and unfair social structures (Lewis, 2020). From a contemporary perspective, CSOs and NGOs are positioned as intermediary

institutions that bridge the interests of the state and citizens, as well as agents of social transformation that operate through advocacy, empowerment, and social control (Anheier, 2020). In Indonesia, the existence of CSOs and NGOs obtains constitutional legitimacy through Article 28 of the 1945 Constitution which guarantees freedom of association, assembly, and expression, which normatively positions society as an active subject in democratic development, not merely an object of state policy. However, these normative guarantees do not necessarily guarantee the quality of substantive democratic practices at the social level, as civil liberties often face problems of social fragmentation, politicization of identity, horizontal conflict, and weakened social cohesion due to technological disruption and political polarization (Aspinall & Warburton, 2022).

In the post-reform context of Indonesia, mass organizations and NGOs have experienced rapid growth as public space has opened up and state control over civil society activities has weakened. Political reforms have not only given rise to procedural democracy through elections and decentralization, but also triggered an explosion of citizen participation in the form of diverse social, religious, youth, and advocacy organizations. This growth reflects a growing collective awareness of the importance of public engagement in social issues such as poverty, injustice, violence, intolerance, and communal conflict (Hadiz, 2021). However, on the other hand, the quantitative expansion of mass organizations and NGOs has not always been accompanied by a consolidation of the quality of social movements. Many organizations tend to become trapped in symbolic, pragmatic, and even instrumentalist orientations, for example, becoming extensions of particular political or economic interests, thus losing their independent character as representatives of the public interest. This phenomenon demonstrates that the democratization of civil society organizations does not automatically result in social peace but can instead give rise to new contestations of interests that exacerbate latent conflicts in society.

Theoretically, the role of community organizations and NGOs in peacebuilding can be explained through the social capital and conflict transformation approaches. Putnam (2020) emphasizes that community organizations function as producers of social capital that strengthens trust, solidarity, and social networks among citizens (Putnam, 2020a). In fragmented societies, the existence of community organizations has the potential to create spaces for cross-identity dialogue that encourages reconciliation and strengthens social cohesion. Meanwhile, Lederach (2021) positions community organizations as key actors in conflict transformation, namely shifting hostile relations to cooperative ones through processes of dialogue, peace education, and the reconstruction of shared values (Lederach, 2021). Within this framework, community organizations not only pragmatically mitigate conflict but also build a cultural foundation for sustainable peace. However, empirical reality in Indonesia shows that this ideal role is often diminished by weak institutional capacity, a lack of professionalism in organizational management, and low conflict literacy at the grassroots level (Hiariej & Stokke, 2020).

Another increasingly complex problem is the ambiguous position of mass organizations and NGOs in relation to the state. On the one hand, mass organizations are expected to be strategic partners with the government in social development and maintaining order. On the other hand, mass organizations are also required to be critical of state policies that do not favor the interests of the people. This tension gives rise to a structural dilemma: when mass organizations are too close to the state, they risk losing their independence and social control function; conversely, when they are too oppositional, they are vulnerable to delegitimization, repression, or criminalization (Warburton & Power, 2023). In practice, many mass organizations find themselves in an ambiguous position, formally espousing the values of peace and democracy, but practically engaging in local conflicts of interest, mass mobilization, and even symbolic violence in the name of religious or ideological identity (Fealy & White, 2008). This situation demonstrates a gap between the normative role of mass organizations as agents of peace and the empirical reality of mass organizations as political actors not entirely free from the logic of power.

This is where the main research gap in the study of mass organizations and NGOs in Indonesia lies. Most previous studies have focused more on macro-level aspects, such as the relationship

between the state and civil society, legal regulations, or the role of mass organizations in political democratization in general (Hadiz, 2021). These studies have relatively little in-depth exploration of the concrete practices of organizations at the micro level—especially community-based organizations—in building social peace, managing conflict, and transforming values of violence into a culture of dialogue. Furthermore, existing research tends to be descriptive-institutional in nature, failing to adequately highlight the ideological and cultural practical dimensions of mass organization movements, such as how peace narratives are produced, distributed, and internalized by members and the wider community (Ardhy & Fauziah, 2025). In other words, there is an analytical gap in understanding mass organizations not merely as organizational structures, but as arenas for the production of social and moral meaning in the context of conflict and peace.

The research gap is also evident in the lack of studies that specifically examine local peace organizations like the Indonesian Peace Alliance from the perspective of peace studies and organizational sociology. Most international literature on peacebuilding focuses on international organizations, donor agencies, or state actors, while local organizations are often positioned merely as program implementers, rather than as autonomous producers of knowledge and peace practices (Paffenholz, 2020). Yet, in Indonesia's pluralistic context, rife with identity-based conflicts, local organizations possess structural advantages in the form of cultural proximity, social legitimacy, and contextual understanding of conflict dynamics at the community level (O. P. Richmond & Mac Ginty, 2021). This gap highlights the importance of research that begins from a local perspective (local peacebuilding), positioning organizations like the Indonesian Peace Alliance as the primary subject of analysis, rather than merely objects of state policy or donor projects.

Based on this framework, the main objective of this study is to critically analyze the role of the Indonesian Peace Alliance organization in addressing social issues and building peace at the community level, by highlighting three main dimensions: first, the structural dimension, namely how this organization manages institutions, networks, and relations with other actors (government, community, and other civil organizations); second, the cultural dimension, namely how peace values are produced through narratives, symbols, and educational practices in the organization's activities; and third, the practical dimension, namely how the organization's concrete strategies in responding to social conflict, intolerance, and symbolic violence in the public sphere (Anheier, 2020). This objective is in line with the critical approach in civil society studies that emphasizes the importance of understanding organizations as dialectical arenas between structure, agency, and ideology (Lewis, 2020).

More specifically, this study aims to fill a gap in the literature by providing an empirical contribution to the study of peace-based community organizations in Indonesia, while simultaneously expanding the theoretical framework on the role of local organizations in peacebuilding. This study seeks not only to answer the question of "what does the Indonesian Peace Alliance do?" but also to answer "how" and "why" these practices are carried out within a specific socio-political context. Thus, this research is expected to yield a deeper understanding of the organization's internal dynamics, the structural challenges it faces, and the potential for social transformation that can be generated through community-based peace movements. Normatively, this study also aims to provide a critical reflection on the role of community organizations in Indonesian democracy, particularly in building a more inclusive, dialogical, and violence-free social order, as idealized in the concept of contemporary civil society (Putnam, 2020b)

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of the role of civil society organizations in peacebuilding has become a major focus in contemporary social science literature, particularly in the disciplines of peace studies, organizational sociology, and development studies. In general, civil society organizations—which include Community Organizations (CSOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)—are

understood as non-state actors that function as intermediary institutions between the state and citizens, with the capacity to mediate conflict, strengthen social cohesion, and produce normative values about justice and peace (Mignon & Bastås, 2025). From this perspective, civil society is positioned not only as a space for political participation, but also as an arena for the production of social and moral meaning that influences the long-term stability of a society.

Within the theoretical framework of peace studies, the role of local organizations in peacebuilding is explained through the concept of positive peace proposed by Galtung (2020), namely peace as a condition of social justice, equal relations, and freedom from structural and cultural violence (Galtung, 2020). This approach emphasizes that peace is not simply understood as the absence of open conflict (negative peace), but rather as a process of transforming unequal social relations. In line with this, Lederach (2021) developed the concept of conflict transformation, which positions community organizations as key actors in shifting hostile relations toward cooperative relations through dialogue, reconciliation, and the reconstruction of shared values (Lederach, 2021). From this perspective, peace organizations function not as short-term conflict extinguishers, but as agents of long-term cultural change.

Several international studies have shown that civil society organizations have a structural advantage over states in peacebuilding, primarily due to their cultural proximity to local communities and flexibility in designing social interventions (O. P. Richmond & Mac Ginty, 2021). These studies highlight the emergence of a local turn in peacebuilding, a shift from a top-down model based on states and international institutions to a bottom-up approach rooted in local experiences (Levorato & Sguazzini, 2024). In this context, local organizations are no longer positioned as mere implementers of donor programs, but rather as autonomous producers of peacemaking knowledge and practices.

In Indonesia, studies on civil society and mass organizations are still largely dominated by macro-political approaches that emphasize state-civil society relations, legal regulations, and the role of mass organizations in electoral democratization (Aspinall & Warburton, 2022). These studies are important in explaining the structural dynamics of civil society, but relatively little explores the micro-dimensions of how concrete organizations build peace in everyday life. Several studies show that the quantitative expansion of mass organizations post-reform does not always correspond to the quality of their contribution to social cohesion, as many organizations are trapped in the politicization of identity and the instrumental logic of power (Makruf & Jahroni, 2024).

Another study highlighted the role of religious organizations in building tolerance and moderation, particularly through the concept of religious moderation promoted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Ministry of Religious Affairs Drafting Team, 2019). Meanwhile, Mietzner and Muhtadi (2020) found a gap between the pluralism narratives of religious organizations' elites and intolerant attitudes at the grassroots level, indicating that the production of a discourse of tolerance does not automatically result in changes in social practice (Mietzner & Muhtadi, 2020b).

In the realm of education and culture, Rohman and Muhtamiroh (2022) demonstrated that Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) are able to shape inclusive attitudes among students through curriculum and dialogical methods, while Sulthon et al. (2024) found that public traditions such as the Haul Gus Dur memorial service serve as a social medium for normalizing inclusive discourse (Aida et al., 2024). These studies emphasize the importance of cultural and pedagogical dimensions in building peace, but most still focus on educational institutions or symbolic rituals, rather than on peace organizations as the primary actors.

Methodologically, most previous research has been descriptive-institutional or normative, focusing on policies, discourse, and the symbolic role of organizations. Relatively little research has examined peace organizations as complex arenas of social practice, where values, identities, and power relations are dynamically produced in everyday interactions. In other words, there is a research gap in understanding how local organizations concretely operationalize peace as a social practice, not simply as a normative idea or slogan.

It is within this context that this research positions itself. Unlike previous studies that emphasized the state, policies, or educational institutions, this research specifically focuses its analysis on the Indonesian Peace Alliance (AIDA) as a peace-based civil society organization. This research not only asks "what is the organization's role" but also "how is that role carried out," "what values are produced," and "what social relations are transformed." By combining the perspectives of organizational sociology, peace studies, and social capital theory, this research seeks to fill the gap in the literature on community-based peacebuilding in Indonesia, while also offering an analytical framework that views local organizations as cultural, pedagogical, and moral actors in sustainable peace projects.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical type of research, which aims to understand in depth the role of the Indonesian Peace Alliance organization in addressing social issues and building peace within the community. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study is not oriented towards statistical measurements, but rather on social meaning, interaction processes, and the construction of reality formed by actors within the organization (Sugiono, 2008). Thus, this study departs from an interpretive paradigm that views social reality as something subjective, contextual, and formed through symbolic interactions between individuals and social structures.

Epistemologically, this research is grounded in the perspectives of organizational sociology and peace studies, which position community organizations as arenas of social practice where values, ideologies, and power relations are produced and reproduced. Within this framework, the Indonesian Peace Alliance is understood not merely as an administrative entity, but as a social actor with normative and cultural capacities to transform conflict into peace (Lindlof & Taylor, 2019). This approach allows researchers to delve deeply into the meaning, strategies, and internal dynamics of the organization in responding to social issues faced by the community.

The research location was determined in the main operational area of the Indonesian Peace Alliance, specifically in communities where this organization actively implements peace programs, both in formal institutions (schools, campuses, government agencies) and non-formal (youth communities, religious groups, and local communities). The location selection was carried out purposively with the consideration that the area represents the organization's concrete practices in building social peace. The research subjects included the organization's core administrators, volunteers, community leaders, and participants in peace activities, who were selected using a purposive sampling technique, namely based on the relevance of informants to the research objectives and their capacity to provide mandala information.

Data collection techniques used three main methods: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies. In-depth interviews were used to explore the perceptions, experiences, and subjective reflections of organizational actors regarding their roles, strategies, and challenges in building peace. Participatory observation was conducted by researchers directly engaging in organizational activities, such as public discussions, peace campaigns, and peace training, to understand social practices contextually and naturally (Guest et al., 2021). Meanwhile, documentation studies included analysis of internal organizational documents, activity reports, social media, official publications, and media archives, which were used to trace institutional narratives and public representations of the organization.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis techniques, which identify patterns of meaning, key themes, and relationships between categories emerging from the field data (Braun et al., 2021). The analysis process began with transcription of interview data, followed by open coding to group meaning units, then organize them into broad themes such as: the construction of the meaning of peace, social intervention strategies, organizational relations with the state, and

structural and cultural challenges. This analysis was conducted iteratively and reflectively, allowing researchers to critically interpret the observed social dynamics, rather than simply provide surface descriptions.

To ensure data validity (trustworthiness), this study employed four primary criteria in qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 2020). Credibility was maintained through source and method triangulation techniques, comparing data from interviews, observations, and documents. Transferability was achieved by providing a thick contextual description of the research's social setting, allowing readers to assess the relevance of the findings to other contexts. Dependability was achieved through an audit trail, which systematically recorded the entire research process. Confirmability was maintained by minimizing the researcher's subjective bias through critical reflection and the use of direct quotes from informants as a basis for interpretation.

Ethically, this research upholds the principles of informed consent, anonymity, and data confidentiality. Each informant was provided with an explanation of the research objectives, their right to withdraw, and assurance that their personal identity would not be published without permission. This is crucial given that issues of peace and conflict often intersect with political sensitivities and specific social identities, making the protection of research subjects a primary prerequisite for maintaining academic integrity (Tracy, 2020).

With this methodological design, the research is expected to be able to produce a comprehensive and reflective understanding of the role of the Peaceful Indonesia Alliance as a civil society actor in building social peace, while also providing theoretical and practical contributions to the development of organizational studies, the sociology of peace, and community-based public policy.

DISCUSSION

The Concept of Community Organizations or Non-Governmental Organizations

In the realm of contemporary social and political discourse, community organizations—both known as Community Organizations (CBOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)—have emerged as concrete forms of autonomous, independent, and voluntary civil society power. The existence of these two forms of organizations not only reflects collective social dynamics but also serves as an arena where citizens consciously and organizedly participate in collective destiny determination, bridging the gap between the state, the market, and local communities that are often vulnerable to marginalization (Hanafiah et al., 2024). Etymologically, the term "organization" comes from the Greek organon and Latin organum, meaning tool or body, a medium that unites individuals in a structure to achieve common goals; in this context, goals that are social, humanitarian, and collective (Mämmelä, 2025). The term NGO that we use everyday comes from the translation of the term Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), which in global studies is defined as an independent entity that stands outside the control of the state and the market, is non-profit based and is formed by citizens voluntarily with an orientation towards improving the social conditions of the community (Xin & Huang, 2022).

In sharper and more analytical terms, community organizations (NGOs) are structured manifestations of collective aspirations born from social needs that cannot be fully met by the state or the private sector. NGOs possess fundamental characteristics: their operations are voluntary, not profit-driven; they are independent from both state political control and market dominance; and they are oriented toward the public interest, namely community empowerment, human rights advocacy, and responses to social injustice (Wardani, 2024). This concept emphasizes that NGOs and mass organizations were not born as bureaucracies or part of government structures, but rather as autonomous spaces where citizens become active "social actors" in social transformation. A recent study on the role of CSOs/NGOs in Indonesia found that these organizations play a strategic role in promoting openness, accountability, and citizen participation in governance at various levels, both local and national. They are not simply

administrative organizations, but networks of social practices that respond to concrete societal problems such as poverty, discrimination, and social conflict.

The fundamental distinction between mass organizations and NGOs often becomes a crucial semantic point in academic studies and legal regulations. Mass organizations in Indonesia have a strong constitutional basis through the Law on Mass Organizations, which defines them as organizations formed voluntarily by citizens based on shared activities, professions, or functions to participate in national development based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution (Aisy et al., 2024). Meanwhile, the term NGO more specifically refers to non-profit organizations that focus on social services and advocacy for community welfare, which focus not only on cultural dynamics but also on responding to structural issues such as marginalization, economic injustice, and disparities in civil rights (Bircan & Özbilgin, 2025). In other words, NGOs can be part of mass organizations, but not all mass organizations fulfill the characteristics of NGOs because their objectives and organizational structures can vary greatly.

In modern organizational theory, community organizations (NGOs) are viewed not simply as collections of individuals, but as institutions imbued with social capital, enabling coordination, solidarity, and collective cooperation for the purpose of strengthening community cohesion (Heggebø et al., 2022). This concept of social capital encompasses networks of relationships between citizens, social norms that support cooperation, and the level of public trust built through ongoing interactions within the organization. This social capital serves as the foundation for NGOs to accelerate social change, whether through policy advocacy, community empowerment, or direct services to priority groups such as women, children, and minority groups. A recent national survey in Indonesia showed that institutional capacity and organizational governance are key indicators for assessing the existence and sustainability of NGOs in 35 provinces, involving hundreds of organizations in measuring the quality of their management, accountability, and program sustainability (Shahib & Abbas, 2025). These data demonstrate how the concept of community organizations has evolved from a theoretical concept to a measurable and systematically analyzed empirical reality.

From a conceptual evolutionary perspective, civil society—which serves as a distinguishing umbrella for community organizations—is described as a social space outside the state and the market where citizens gather to fight for common interests and create autonomous social solidarity (Wardani, 2024). Community organizations and NGOs are concrete manifestations of this civil society; they act as intermediary institutions that not only voice aspirations but also address community needs not accommodated by public policy or market mechanisms (Bora, 2023). Therefore, understanding community organizations or NGOs as merely informal associations would deviate from their essence as social institutions that have developed historically, structurally, and functionally in contemporary democratic life.

Legal and policy language also provides a strong foundation for this interpretation. In Indonesia, the regulation of mass organizations through the Law on Mass Organizations affirms the principle of Pancasila as the sole foundation of mass organizations, demonstrating that such organizations operate not only in the social sphere but also normatively must align with fundamental national values (Najamudin, 2024). This regulation signifies that every social entity born from citizen initiatives has a social and moral responsibility to uphold democratic order, public welfare, and respect for human rights. At the global level, a similar conception can be seen in the meaning of civil society organizations, which emphasize independence from the state and a commitment to the interests of the wider community, including policy advocacy, community empowerment, and public participation in social life (Lee, 2025).

However, contemporary dynamics present complex challenges to the existence of community organizations and NGOs. The shrinking civic space in some countries, the dependence on foreign donors for financial resources, and strict political and regulatory pressures have pushed organizations to continually reformulate their strategies and concepts of existence.

This demonstrates that the concept of community organization is not static; it continues to transform in response to global social, technological, and political changes that demand adaptation and innovation in how they organize and contribute to society (Buonocore et al., 2024). For example, diversifying funding sources, strengthening institutional capacity, and utilizing information technology are concrete examples of how NGOs strive to maintain their relevance and operational sustainability amidst the challenges of the times.

Thus, it can be said that the concept of community organizations (NGOs) is a synthesis of modern social theory, participatory democratic practices, and normative institutional structures developing at the national and global levels. These organizations are not merely formal structures with constitutions and bylaws, but rather a practical social space that enables citizens to unite in collective solidarity, advocate for the common good, and respond to complex social problems (Bianchi & Costa, 2024). This understanding is essential for any academic study, public policy, or civil society practice that seeks to appreciate the diverse roles, challenges, and transformational potential of community organizations and NGOs within the ever-evolving dynamics of social life.

Dynamics of the Sharh Tradition and Implications of Meaning

The concept of peace in contemporary social science is no longer understood simply as a sterile silence, free from the sound of gunfire or the cessation of open conflict, but rather as a historical, cultural, and moral process that continues to move, pulsate, and demands the active involvement of humans as ethical subjects and social actors. In its most elementary sense, the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language defines peace as the cessation of hostility or conflict, a state of peace that allows humans to live side by side without hatred and violence (Agustin et al., 2025). However, this lexical definition actually only touches the surface of reality, because in social practice, peace never appears as an end point, but rather as a long, winding road, full of tugs of interest, power structures, and historical wounds that often have not fully healed (O. P. Richmond & Mac Ginty, 2021).

From a modern theoretical perspective, peace is understood as a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing structural, cultural, and symbolic dimensions. Johan Galtung, a central figure in peace studies, distinguishes between negative peace, which simply means the absence of direct violence, and positive peace, which refers to the existence of social justice, equality, and human freedom from structural and cultural oppression (Galtung, 2020). Negative peace is like the surface of water that appears calm, but harbors a strong current beneath; while positive peace is a clear ocean, where not only are the waves calmed but the foundations of social inequality are also dismantled and transformed. Galtung's thinking remains relevant today and even finds its urgency in a world that is paradoxically increasingly connected, yet also increasingly fragmented by identity conflicts, political polarization, and global economic inequality (Paffenholz, 2020).

In the Islamic context, the concept of peace has a spiritual depth that goes far beyond mere political or sociological dimensions. Peace is not simply the absence of war, but an expression of harmony between humanity, nature, and God. The word "salam," the root of the word "Islam," itself connotes safety, tranquility, and well-being, signifying that peace is the ontological foundation of human life. Islam places justice ('adl), compassion (rahmah), and social solidarity (ukhuwwah insaniyyah) as the main pillars of true peace. Therefore, peace is impossible without defending the vulnerable, eliminating structural injustice, and recognizing the dignity of every human being (Hassan, 2021). Thus, peace in Islam is not a passive state, but rather an active ethic that demands human involvement in building a just and dignified social order (Yusuf & Rahman, 2022).

The modern Western perspective and the Islamic view essentially converge on a common epistemological point: that peace is an ideal state that never occurs automatically but must be fought for through collective work, cross-identity dialogue, and the transformation of unequal

social structures (Spalding, 2016). Ma'arief emphasized from the outset that peace is a civilizational project that requires cooperation between people and nations, not simply the product of political policy or the result of elite diplomacy (Mania, 2019). This idea is further strengthened in recent literature, which positions peace as a processual reality, a reality continuously shaped by social interactions, power relations, and the construction of meaning that lives in the collective consciousness of society.

However, the social reality in many developing countries, including Indonesia, shows that efforts to achieve peace often become trapped in a reactive and coercive approach. Conflicts are only addressed once they have erupted into open violence, and the solutions offered tend to be short-term, such as deploying security forces, arresting conflict actors, or declaring a state of emergency. This management model reflects the dominance of a narrow security paradigm, which views peace solely as a matter of political stability, rather than as a long-term cultural and pedagogical project (Mardhiah & Afrizal, 2021). As a result, conflicts may subside on the surface, but root causes such as economic injustice, social discrimination, and identity polarization persist, waiting for new momentum to erupt (Barash et al., 2021)

In situations like these, the role of education becomes highly strategic, even crucial. Education can no longer be positioned as a neutral institution merely transmitting technical knowledge, but rather must become an ethical and political space that fosters peace awareness, social empathy, and the capacity for dialogue in the younger generation (Page, 2008). In contemporary literature, peace education is understood as a pedagogical process that instills the values of nonviolence, social justice, tolerance, and global responsibility (Bajaj & Hantzopoulos, 2021). Peace education is not simply an additional subject, but a paradigm that animates all educational practices, from the curriculum and teaching methods to the relationship between teachers and students.

Tilaar emphasized from the outset that peace-oriented education plays a central role in transforming a culture of peace, namely shifting values from violence to values of dialogue, solidarity, and respect for differences (Tilaar, 2009). This view is increasingly relevant in the contemporary context, where the digital space accelerates the spread of hate speech, hoaxes, and narratives of intolerance that have the potential to undermine social cohesion (Bajaj & Hantzopoulos, 2021). Without peace-conscious educational interventions, society will continue to be trapped in a cycle of symbolic conflict that is not always bloody but slowly erodes the foundations of social trust.

Furthermore, peace education aims not only to create morally "good" individuals, but also agents of social change who are able to read structures of injustice and dare to take ethical positions in public life. Page states that ideal learners in peace education are those who not only understand the concept of peace but also have the moral courage to fight for it in social practice, whether through advocacy, cross-cultural dialogue, or active involvement in the community (Page, 2008). Within this framework, peace becomes a collective project that begins in the classroom but extends beyond the school walls to the broader public sphere.

Conceptually, modern peace is increasingly understood as part of the sustainable development agenda. The United Nations, through its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 16, places peace, justice, and strong institutions as the foundation for sustainable human development (Dineen & Dolan, 2024). This demonstrates that peace cannot be separated from issues of poverty, inequality, education, and health (Agarwal & Gupta, 2024). Without social justice, peace remains an empty slogan; without peace, development only produces fragile growth that is easily destroyed by conflict.

Thus, the concept of peace in contemporary academic discourse is a living concept, not frozen in definition, but continually reinterpreted according to social, political, and cultural dynamics. Peace is not simply the absence of war, but an ethical order in which humans live in just, equal, and dignified relationships; free not only from physical violence, but also from

symbolic, structural, and epistemic violence (Dexter, 2023). It demands the active involvement of individuals, educational institutions, community organizations, and the state to build inclusive spaces for dialogue and social structures that enable every human being to grow without fear and oppression. In this sense, peace is not merely a moral ideal, but a civilizational project that determines the future direction of humanity.

Profile of the Indonesian Peace Alliance (AIDA)

The profile of the Peaceful Indonesia Alliance (AIDA) can be read not merely as an institutional narrative, but as a representation of the ethos of the times born from the social need for dialogue spaces amidst an Indonesian landscape vulnerable to ideological polarization, extremism, and the residual trauma of collective violence. Located at the Siaga Baru Complex No. D6 RT/RW 09/05, Pejaten Barat Village, Pasar Minggu District, South Jakarta, AIDA stands at the symbolic heart between the center of power and the pulse of a pluralistic urban society. This geographical presence symbolically reflects AIDA's position as a node between the state, civil society, and individuals directly affected by social conflict and terrorism. With a management structure consisting of Hasibullah Satrawi as Chair of the Foundation, Laode Arham as Deputy Director, Nurul Rachmawati as Secretary, Intan Ryzky Dewi as Treasurer, and Akhwani Subkhi as Project Officer, AIDA has built a relatively lean yet functional organizational governance, reflecting the character of contemporary civil society organizations that emphasize flexibility, responsiveness, and closeness to the community base (Paffenholz, 2020).

In the context of modern peacebuilding, organizations like AIDA play a strategic role as non-state actors capable of filling gaps often unreachable by formal bureaucracies. Recent literature demonstrates that civil society has a unique capacity to build sustainable peace due to its closeness to social realities, its ability to bridge conflicting narratives, and its flexibility in designing interventions based on local needs (O. P. Richmond & Mac Ginty, 2021). AIDA concretely implements this principle through various programs to empower and support victims of terrorism, educational assistance, merit scholarships, and commemorations of terrorist acts that are not only symbolic but also therapeutic in social and psychological terms. These programs position victims not as objects of pity but as active subjects in the process of reconstructing the meaning of life and agents of social change, in line with the participatory peacebuilding paradigm that emphasizes transformation from within the community (Barash et al., 2021).

AIDA's vision of building a peaceful Indonesia based on the values of mutual respect, trust, and brotherhood represents a synthesis of universal values of peace and local Indonesian wisdom rooted in the spirit of mutual cooperation and pluralism. Mutual respect serves as an ethical foundation in addressing increasingly entrenched differences in religious identity, culture, and political views in the digital public sphere. Mutual trust serves as crucial social capital in maintaining societal cohesion, while brotherhood embodies the transcendent meaning that humans are bound by a humanity that transcends ideological boundaries (Siddiqui, 2025). From a theoretical perspective, this vision resonates with the concept of positive peace, which emphasizes the presence of social justice, reconciliation, and meaningful relationships between individuals, rather than simply the absence of physical violence (Oyeyipo et al., 2024).

AIDA's first mission, focused on empowering victims of terrorism to become ambassadors of peace, represents a radical departure from the logic of contemporary peace studies. Victims are no longer positioned as symbols of passive suffering, but as primary narrators conveying a moral message about the absurdity of violence and the importance of empathy across identities. This approach aligns with recent findings showing that victim involvement in peace campaigns increases the legitimacy of the message and the effectiveness of transforming societal attitudes (Brett, 2022). When victims speak, what is presented is not merely rational argument, but rather existential testimony that awakens collective moral consciousness. In this context, AIDA operates an affective, rather than merely cognitive, peace pedagogy, relying on the power of lived narratives as a medium for social learning.

AIDA's second mission, fostering relationships between victims and former perpetrators of terrorism, is the most complex and transformative dimension of peacemaking. This is where AIDA transcends conventional moral boundaries that often divide the world into sanctimonious victims and utterly evil perpetrators. Peacebuilding literature demonstrates that true reconciliation is only possible when dialogue is opened even with those who were once at the side of the violence, as long as the process is conducted with principles of restorative justice and moral responsibility (Paffenholz, 2020). The relationship between victims and former perpetrators is not aimed at erasing past mistakes, but rather at transforming trauma into ethical energy to prevent the reproduction of violence in the future. Within this framework, AIDA operates as a social laboratory that practices reconciliation as an existential process, not simply a normative slogan.

AIDA's involvement in Bandung City through collaboration with 40 high schools throughout the Greater Bandung area demonstrates a strategic orientation toward the younger generation as the primary arena of ideological contestation. Young people are seen as the group most vulnerable to the infiltration of extremist narratives, but also have the greatest potential to become agents of peace if equipped with critical literacy, social empathy, and multicultural awareness. Recent research confirms that peace education at the secondary school level contributes significantly to reducing intolerant attitudes and improving conflict resolution skills among adolescents (Blackmer & Athanasius Akila, 2025). AIDA's peace campaign programs, peace team training, and teacher training reflect a systemic approach that targets not only individual students but also the educational ecosystem as a whole.

Laode Arham's statement that the peacekeeping activities in Bandung aimed to prevent exposure to radicalism among young people confirms that AIDA understands radicalism not merely as a security issue, but as a social and cultural problem (Suarni & Syukrinur, 2024). This perspective aligns with the soft power approach to peacebuilding, which emphasizes narrative change, strengthening inclusive identities, and creating safe spaces for dialogue. In a multicultural urban context like Bandung, radicalism often grows not solely due to ideology, but due to a crisis of meaning, social alienation, and the failure of the education system to provide a space for existential reflection for the younger generation (O. P. Richmond & Mac Ginty, 2021). AIDA exists as a symbolic mediator, bridging the gap between adolescents' existential anxieties and universal human values.

Abdilah's statement as a peace campaign facilitator emphasizing Bandung's multicultural character reinforces the argument that peace must be built not by eliminating differences, but by celebrating diversity as a source of social wealth (Satiadharmanto et al., 2024). From a critical education perspective, diversity is not a threat, but rather a living laboratory for fostering empathy, tolerance, and global awareness. The peace education implemented by AIDA in Bandung schools serves as a practical space where students learn not only about peace as an abstract concept, but as a lived experience realized through dialogue, open discussion, and collective reflection. This approach aligns with the idea that effective peace education must be participatory, dialogical, and rooted in the social realities of students.

The positive response from students and principals to the AIDA program demonstrates a latent need within the formal education system for a more humanistic and reflective approach to addressing intolerance. Education has often been trapped in a cognitive-instrumental logic that emphasizes academic achievement while neglecting the ethical and emotional dimensions of students. AIDA fills this void by presenting peace education as a cultural practice that fosters self-awareness, social empathy, and moral responsibility. In this context, AIDA is not merely a program provider but a cultural actor that helps shape the social imagination of the younger generation about the meaning of living together in diversity.

More broadly, AIDA's profile reflects a paradigm shift in peacebuilding in Indonesia, moving from a state-centric approach to a more participatory civil society approach. States tend to

address conflict at the level of security and political stability, while organizations like AIDA work at the level of meaning, identity, and social relations. Contemporary peace studies literature emphasizes that sustainable peace cannot be achieved solely through regulation and law enforcement but requires a cultural transformation that touches on how people interpret themselves, others, and their social world (Galtung, 2020). Within this framework, AIDA can be understood as an agent of cultural transformation that seeks to instill an ethos of peace in the collective consciousness of Indonesian society.

In Indonesia's increasingly complex social landscape fraught with identity tensions, the presence of civil society organizations such as the Peaceful Indonesia Alliance (AIDA) can be read not merely as technocratic institutions implementing programs, but as historical subjects actively involved in the production of new meanings, awareness, and social relations. AIDA operates in a fragile landscape, where symbolic violence, ideological radicalism, and social fragmentation often arise from structural injustice and the failure of intergroup dialogue. Therefore, the organization's role as a social mediator operating in both the cultural and pedagogical realms becomes significant. From the perspective of contemporary civil society theory, organizations like AIDA function as intermediary spaces between the state and citizens, not only voicing public interests but also shaping new social ethics based on the values of empathy, reconciliation, and restorative justice (Paffenholz, 2020). This is where AIDA exists not merely as an implementer of activities, but as an agent of social transformation working at the level of consciousness, intervening in ways of thinking, feeling, and interpreting conflict in everyday life.

Judging from AIDA's concrete practices, particularly through peace campaigns in schools, universities, religious communities, and groups of victims of terrorism, it is clear that the organization adopts a dialogical approach as its primary method for building peace. Open dialogue is not understood as ordinary communication, but rather as an emancipatory space where subjects who have been marginalized, silenced, or stereotyped gain legitimacy to speak and are recognized as equal moral actors. This approach aligns with the idea of critical education developed by Paulo Freire, who places dialogue at the heart of the liberation process, because through dialogue, humans are no longer positioned as objects of power structures, but rather as conscious, reflective subjects capable of critically interpreting their own realities (Freire, 2021). In AIDA's context, peace dialogue conducted in educational spaces not only transfers knowledge about tolerance but also fosters a reflective awareness that violence is not a social destiny, but rather a product of power relations that can be negotiated, resisted, and transformed through collective praxis.

This dialogical approach also aligns with Johan Galtung's theory of positive peace, which asserts that true peace does not stop at the absence of direct violence, but requires the presence of social justice, recognition of identity, and equal distribution of opportunities (Galtung, 2020). DA, through its program to empower victims and former perpetrators of terrorism, moves beyond the logic of repressive security to the logic of transformative reconciliation. By bringing victims and perpetrators together in a dialogue, AIDA not only dismantles the black-and-white dichotomy of good and evil but also reveals the complexity of humans as beings capable of change, regret, and redemption through constructive social action. From a contemporary restorative justice perspective, this model is seen as effective because it prioritizes the restoration of social relations, rather than mere formal punishment, as its primary goal (Zubok et al., 2021).

From the perspective of social movement theory, AIDA can be positioned as part of a proactive social movement that seeks to prevent violence before it erupts into open conflict. Proactive social movements, as described in recent literature, not only respond to crises but also build community capacity to peacefully manage differences through education, advocacy, and symbolic mobilization (Della Porta, 2013). AIDA fulfills this role by cultivating alternative narratives about identity, diversity, and nationalism, built not on fear of the other, but on the recognition of plurality as a source of social wealth. In the Indonesian context, often

overshadowed by identity politics and ideological polarization, this practice is crucial as an effort to counter the normalization of symbolic violence often reproduced through social media, exclusive sermons, and discourses of religious populism (Mietzner & Muhtadi, 2020a).

Furthermore, AIDA's role can also be understood through social capital theory, which emphasizes the importance of trust, networks, and norms of reciprocity in building conflict-resilient societies. Social capital is not only expressed in interpersonal relationships but also in institutions capable of bridging groups differing in identity, class, and historical experience (Putnam, 2020b). AIDA, by connecting victims of terrorism, former perpetrators, students, teachers, religious leaders, and journalists, indirectly builds social bridges that broaden the horizon of empathy and reduce the symbolic distance between groups. In the context of contemporary peacebuilding, such practices are seen as crucial because modern conflicts are rarely purely physical, but rather rooted in prejudice, misinformation, and collective fears that exist in discursive spaces (J. C. Richmond, 2021).

Upon closer analysis, AIDA's approach also reflects what the literature calls the local turn in peacebuilding, a shift from a top-down peace model driven by the state or international institutions to a bottom-up model rooted in local experiences and community knowledge (Mac Ginty, 2022). AIDA does not offer a universal solution, but rather works through a contextual process that adapts methods to local social realities, such as in Bandung, which has a multicultural character and a history of identity-based social conflict. By involving students and teachers as key actors, AIDA positions young people not as objects of deradicalization, but as subjects of peacebuilding with reflective capacity and social creativity. This approach aligns with recent research findings showing that effective peace education must be participatory, reflective, and experience-based, not simply value indoctrination (Bajaj & Hantzopoulos, 2021).

Within the framework of critical education, AIDA's role can also be read as an effort to build structural awareness about the roots of violence, rather than simply teaching individual ethics. Violence, from a critical sociological perspective, does not arise from the evil nature of individuals alone, but from social inequality, economic marginalization, and the state's failure to provide equitable spaces for participation (Collins-Kreiner, 2020). By opening up discussions about current issues such as intolerance, discrimination, and extremism, AIDA helps students understand that conflict is a social phenomenon with political, economic, and cultural dimensions. This awareness is crucial because without a structural understanding, peace education risks becoming trapped in a shallow morality that blames individuals without changing the conditions that give rise to violence.

From the perspective of Gramscian hegemony theory, updated in contemporary studies, AIDA can be seen as a counter-hegemonic actor seeking to build a new common sense of peace amidst the dominance of discourses of violence and security. Hegemony does not operate through coercion alone, but through symbolic consent that makes injustice seem normal and inevitable (Hamilton & Ramcilovic-Suominen, 2023). In this context, AIDA's peace campaign functions as a discursive practice that challenges the normalization of violence by producing alternative narratives emphasizing dialogue, reconciliation, and social solidarity. Through these narratives, AIDA not only changes individual behavior but also influences how society interprets conflict, from something that must be confronted with force to something that can be managed through understanding and empathy.

This analysis demonstrates that AIDA's role cannot be reduced to a purely technical activity, but must be understood as a social practice operating simultaneously at the structural, cultural, and symbolic levels. In Indonesia's pluralistic context, which is vulnerable to identity fragmentation, AIDA serves as a social laboratory where the values of Pancasila are translated into concrete practices, not merely normative jargon. By integrating critical dialogue, victim empowerment, reconciliation of former perpetrators, and participatory education, AIDA represents a form of contemporary peacebuilding that relies not on the logic of state control but

on the power of civil society as a historical subject. From a recent theoretical perspective, this is the essence of transformative peace, namely a long-term process that not only stops violence but also builds new social structures that enable people to live in more just, equal, and dignified relationships (Boulding, 2000).

CONCLUSION

This research theoretically and empirically confirms that the Indonesian Peace Alliance (AIDA) functions not merely as a civil society organization in the administrative sense, but as a normative-cultural actor that plays a strategic role in conflict transformation and social peacebuilding at the community level. The research question regarding AIDA's role in addressing social issues is answered through the main finding that AIDA developed a community-based peacebuilding model that combines structural dimensions (strengthening social networks), cultural dimensions (production of peace narratives and public education), and practical dimensions (victim assistance, cross-identity dialogue, and non-violent advocacy).

Theoretically, these findings enrich the peace studies literature by demonstrating that local organizations can act as effective intermediary institutions in transforming symbolic and structural conflicts into spaces for productive dialogue. Practical implications: AIDA's work model can be replicated by other mass organizations and NGOs as a strategy to strengthen social cohesion, particularly in communities vulnerable to identity polarization and radicalism.

However, this research is limited by its focus on a single organization, so generalizations of the findings should be made with caution. Furthermore, limited access to quantitative data on the long-term impact of the AIDA program also limits a comprehensive evaluation of its effectiveness. Therefore, further research is recommended to develop comparative studies across peace organizations, combine qualitative and quantitative approaches, and examine the long-term structural impacts on changing social attitudes.

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