

# Harmony in Schools: Exploring the Impact of the Peaceful Schools Program in Building Tolerance and Peace

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## Article Information:

Received October 10, 2024

Revised November 11, 2024

Accepted December 4, 2024

Published December 26, 2024

**Keywords:** *Wahid Foundation, Peace School, Education, Inclusive.*

## Abstract:

*This study examines the implementation and impact of the Peaceful Schools Program managed by the Wahid Foundation in several senior high schools in Indonesia. The issue of promoting tolerance, peace, and inclusion in education is highly significant due to rising social and religious intolerance. Previous studies on tolerance education have yet to explore the practical implementation of peace-building programs in schools extensively. This research fills that gap by focusing on the Peaceful Schools initiative, which seeks to create inclusive educational environments. The study employs a qualitative descriptive case study approach, collecting data through in-depth interviews and observations in selected schools. Data were analyzed through thematic coding to identify critical patterns related to program impact. The results reveal that the program fosters a culture of tolerance and peace among students, teachers, and the broader school community. The Peaceful Schools Program, developed in response to the Wahid Foundation's 2016 survey on socio-religious tolerance, has been implemented in 79 schools across Indonesia, particularly in Java. Collaboration between Indonesia and Australia through AIPJ2 has significantly contributed to the program's success. This research highlights the program's success in shaping inclusive environments and encouraging peaceful interactions in educational settings, offering insights into its broader applicability.*

## How to cite:

Munandar, Siswoyo Aris, and Fahrurrozi. "Harmony in Schools: Exploring the Impact of the Peaceful Schools Program in Building Tolerance and Peace." *International Journal of Islamic and Business Studies* 2, no. 2 (2024): 111–128. <https://doi.org/10.35719/ijbs.v2i2.45>.

## Publisher:

Centre for Research and Community Service (LP2M), Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember

## INTRODUCTION

The rise of religious social intolerance and radicalism demands creative approaches in addressing it. The importance of surveys to identify signs of intolerance and radicalism in society cannot be overlooked, as accurate data can serve as a basis for formulating effective policies and interventions.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, law enforcement against perpetrators of intolerance

<sup>1</sup> Yunus Firdaus M, "Konflik Agama Di Indonesia Problem Dan Solusi Pemecahannya," *Substantia* 16, no. 2 (2014), <https://doi.org/DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.22373/substantia.v16i2.4930>.

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is crucial to prevent similar actions in the future. However, these efforts must also be accompanied by positive initiatives.<sup>2</sup>

It's not only about suppressing negative symptoms, but also fostering the positive traits that are needed. Efforts should not only focus on limiting intolerance but also on promoting tolerance. The Wahid Foundation has designed the *Desa Damai* (Peaceful Village) initiative as an embodiment of this spirit. In this initiative, they involve women from grassroots communities with the goal of strengthening their capacity to build peace and tolerance<sup>3</sup>. This program, known as Women Participation for Inclusive Society (WISE), collaborates with nine villages/urban areas in West Java, Central Java, and East Java. These nine villages/urban areas have committed to creating *Desa/Kelurahan Damai* (Peaceful Villages/Urban Areas), where respect for differences and equality form the foundation of their shared social order<sup>4</sup>.

The *Sekolah Damai* (Peaceful Schools) program is an initiative by the Wahid Institute aimed at promoting the practice of peaceful and tolerant culture in school environments. This program aligns with the Presidential Regulation on the National Action Plan for the Prevention and Countering of Violent Extremism Leading to Terrorism for the years 2020-2024. According to Wahid Foundation's Executive Director, Mujtaba Hamdi, the foundation actively monitors the implementation stages and the prevention of violence-based extremism in educational settings. They also consider it crucial to identify and prevent intolerance and violence early on in educational institutions<sup>5</sup>.

The Wahid Foundation has launched the *Sekolah Damai* (Peaceful Schools) initiative as part of their strategic intervention approach, emphasizing creative and systematic methods. They run this program in collaboration with the Indonesian Association of Islamic Education Teachers (AGPAI), aiming to create a school environment that teaches and encourages students to understand and apply the values of harmony, inclusiveness, unity, and peace. First introduced in 2017, *Sekolah Damai* operates in 60 schools across four provinces: West Java, DKI Jakarta, Central Java, and East Java. This program seeks to shape a school environment that educates students to internalize and implement these positive values.

Additionally, *Sekolah Damai* has developed 20 public high schools on the island of Java as pilot projects. The program involves more than 4,700 students, 60 school principals, and 60 Islamic education teachers. Both of these programs aim to prevent intolerance and violent extremism rooted in communities by strengthening social cohesion. During the program's

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<sup>2</sup> M. Ardini Khaerun Rijal, "Fenomena Intoleransi Antar Umat Beragama Serta Peran Sosial Media Akun Instagram Jaringan Gusdurian Indonesia Dalam Menyampaikan Pesan Toleransi," *Syiar / Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Penyiaran Islam* 1, no. 2 (December 5, 2021): 103–32, <https://doi.org/10.54150/syiar.v1i2.41>.

<sup>3</sup> BATASSYA Ayunur, "Implementasi Kerjasama Wahid Foundation Dan UN Women Dalam Pemberdayaan Perempuan Di Indonesia Melalui Program Peace Village," *Universitas Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Jakarta*, 2020; Susilawati Susilawati, "Pemberdayaan Perempuan Di Kampung Damai: Studi Pendampingan Komunitas Oleh Wahid Foundation Di Gemlegan Klaten," *Jurnal Pemberdayaan Masyarakat: Media Pemikiran Dan Dakwah Pembangunan* 2, no. 2 (2019): 425–46.

<sup>4</sup> Nina Karlita, "Wahid Foundation Dan Japan Tobacco International Indonesia Kembangkan Desa Damai Di Banyuwangi," 2023, <https://www.industry.co.id/read/122092/wahid-foundation-dan-japan-tobacco-international-indonesia-kembangkan-desa-damai-di-banyuwangi>; Yenny Zannuba Wahid et al., "Laporan Kebebasan Beragama/Berkeyakinan Dan Toleransi The Wahid Institute Tahun 2010" (The WAHID Institute, n.d.).

<sup>5</sup> Usman Sutisna, "Model Penguatan Pesan Damai Ala Wahid Foundation bagi Pendidikan Karakter Pemuda Muslim Jakarta Pusat," *SAP (Susunan Artikel Pendidikan)* 6, no. 2 (December 5, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.30998/sap.v6i2.9203>.

implementation, there are also efforts for empowerment and mentoring, as well as policy-making involving local governments as part of their strategy. Given this background, research on *Sekolah Damai* becomes highly relevant and important in supporting efforts to build education that fosters tolerance, peace, and inclusion in Indonesia. Therefore, this study focuses on: first, what is the background behind the establishment of *Sekolah Damai*? Second, how has the *Sekolah Damai* program developed in Indonesia? The objective of this research is to provide valuable insights for the development of more effective policies and programs to achieve the goals of *Sekolah Damai*.

## **METHOD**

In this research, the method used is a qualitative descriptive case study. The qualitative approach is employed to provide an in-depth depiction of the state, symptoms, facts, or realities related to a specific topic or title. The case study analyzed focuses on the phenomenon of intolerance in Indonesia, particularly related to religious differences, especially within minority groups<sup>6</sup>. This research involves gathering various sources of information relevant to the research topic, such as literature, books, and other scholarly works<sup>7</sup>. Through the thematic descriptive method, the analysis results from these various sources are presented in the form of an in-depth explanation of the conditions of intolerance in Indonesia, the factors influencing it, and the efforts made to overcome intolerance, with a focus on the *Sekolah Damai* initiative implemented in various schools in Indonesia, particularly in Java.

This study also focuses on the positive impact achieved by the *Sekolah Damai* program in promoting peace, tolerance, and inclusion in Indonesia's educational environment. By involving various stakeholders, including teachers, students, school principals, and local communities, this program creates an environment that supports interfaith and intercultural dialogue and reduces the potential for conflict.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Background of Wahid Foundation in Launching the Sekolah Damai Program**

According to Yenny Wahid, Director of the Wahid Foundation, the *Sekolah Damai* (Peaceful Schools) program was initiated in response to the results of a survey on religious social tolerance trends conducted by the Wahid Foundation in 2016. The results of this survey showed that around 68 percent of high school and vocational students were willing to participate in activities related to jihad in Syria, Afghanistan, and Palestine. Furthermore, 78 percent of them also expressed agreement with the concept of a caliphate state. These findings became the foundation for the Wahid Foundation to design a program that could directly influence school policies and create an environment that promotes the values of tolerance and peace within

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<sup>6</sup> Umar Suryadi Bakry, "Pemanfaatan Metode Etnografi Dan Netnografi Dalam Penelitian Hubungan Internasional," *Jurnal Global & Strategis* 11, no. 1 (2017): 15; Muhammad Farid and M. Sos, *Fenomenologi: Dalam Penelitian Ilmu Sosial* (Prenada Media, 2018).

<sup>7</sup> Engkus Kuswarno, "Tradisi Fenomenologi Pada Penelitian Komunikasi Kualitatif: Sebuah Pengalaman Akademis," *MediaTor (Jurnal Komunikasi)* 7, no. 1 (2006): 47–58; Arief Nuryana, Pawito Pawito, and Prahastiwi Utari, "Pengantar Metode Penelitian Kepada Suatu Pengertian Yang Mendalam Mengenai Konsep Fenomenologi," *Ensains Journal* 2, no. 1 (2019): 19–24.

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schools. Thus, the *Sekolah Damai* program was created as a concrete step in addressing these issues<sup>8</sup>.

The *Sekolah Damai* (Peaceful Schools) program is implemented in several regions of Indonesia, involving 60 schools across four provinces: West Java, DKI Jakarta, Central Java, and East Java. According to Mujtaba, the collaboration between the Wahid Foundation and the Central Java National Unity and Politics Agency (Kesbangpol Jateng) covers two main aspects. First, the dissemination and implementation of the *Sekolah Damai* policy in the Central Java Province. Second, the enhancement of the *Sekolah Damai* curriculum at the high school and vocational school level in the region. Thus, this program has a broad impact and has the potential to influence many schools and students in various areas. The program is supported by the Australian government through the Australia Indonesia Partnership for Justice 2 (AIPJ2). Steve Scott, Deputy Ambassador of Australia, emphasized that Australia values its strong bilateral relationship with Indonesia and the joint efforts in preventing violent extremism and promoting the message of tolerance and peace.

*Sekolah Damai* also serves as both a program and a movement for training new individuals to become peace actors, promoting the values and movement championed by KH Abdurrahman Wahid. This program is carried out through a series of training sessions covering topics such as the values and movement upheld by Gus Dur, current issues in the context of religion and nationality, and advocacy skills. The program also provides participants with the opportunity to engage in various programs organized by the Wahid Foundation<sup>9</sup>. This aligns with the Presidential Regulation on the National Action Plan for the Prevention and Countering of Violent Extremism Leading to Terrorism for the years 2020-2024. Mujtaba Hamdi, Executive Director of the Wahid Foundation, emphasizes the importance of implementing steps to prevent violent extremism in educational settings, as well as identifying and preventing various forms of intolerance and violence that may occur in educational institutions at an early stage.

In principle, Mujtaba Hamdi explains that *Sekolah Damai* (Peaceful Schools) does not mean establishing new schools but rather strengthening existing schools by developing a culture of peace within them. The policies implemented in this program aim to encourage tolerance practices by involving all members of the school community in a participatory, collaborative, and creative manner. The plan is for the implementation of the *Sekolah Damai* program to involve 70 high schools and vocational schools in Central Java, with two schools represented from each district or city. Hamdi explains that this program has three main pillars.

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<sup>8</sup> Mursalat, "Nahdlatul Ulama (Nu) Female Figures In The Modern Era: Yenny Wahid's Gait As A Woman Warrior In Humanity And Peace," *Mimikiri* 9, no. 1 (2023); Usman Sutisna, "Model Penguatan Pesan Damai Ala Wahid Foundation Bagi Pendidikan Karakter Pemuda Muslim Jakarta Pusat," *SAP (Susunan Artikel Pendidikan)* 6, no. 2 (2021).

<sup>9</sup> Muhammad Aqil, "Nilai-Nilai Humanisme Dalam Dialog Antar Agama Perspektif Gus Dur," *Al-Adyan: Journal of Religious Studies* 1, no. 1 (2020): 52–66; Abdul Gaffar, "Potret Pemikiran Kh. Abdurrahman Wahid (Studi Terhadap Buku Biografi Gus Dur: The Authorized Biography Of Abdurrahman Wahid Karya Greg Barton Dan Buku Ijtihad Politik Gus Dur Karya Munawar Ahmad)" (Uin Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2011); Khaerun Rijal, "Fenomena Intoleransi Antar Umat Beragama Serta Peran Sosial Media Akun Instagram Jaringan Gusdurian Indonesia Dalam Menyampaikan Pesan Toleransi"; Ahmad Suaedy, *Gus Dur: Islam Nusantara & Kewarganegaraan Bineka* (Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2018).

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The first pillar is policy, which includes developing an early warning system in schools to prevent the emergence of signs of intolerance so that undesirable incidents can be identified sooner. The second pillar, as explained by Hamdi, is the pillar of tolerance and peace, which focuses on managing relationships among students and school members. This includes the establishment of inclusive public spaces in schools and the development of proactive tolerance practices that not only acknowledge differences but also encourage positive interactions among school members from diverse backgrounds, thus viewing differences as a source of strength. The third pillar is the management of student organizations. This is important to strengthen the role of student organizations in promoting peace and inclusive values. By involving students in organizational activities based on these values, it is hoped they will become leaders who practice these values in the future.

*Sekolah Damai* has also launched the Riyanto Scholarship program, which benefits hundreds of secondary school students across Indonesia. This program is named the Riyanto Scholarship in honor of a tragic member of the Banser NU who fell while trying to secure the area from the threat of Christmas bombings in 2000 in Mojokerto. The program aims to shape a generation of young people in Indonesia who not only receive a good education but also base their personalities on the values of peace, tolerance, and diversity as essential components. Currently, the Riyanto Scholarship includes 263 students in several regions of Indonesia, including Java, South Sulawesi, and Southeast Sulawesi. This scholarship program is designed not only to help students pursue formal education but also to strengthen their awareness of the values of tolerance, openness, and human rights. In this way, the program contributes to the formation of young people who are broad-minded and committed to peace and harmony in Indonesia.

### **Wahid Foundation's *Sekolah Damai* Program**

The *Sekolah Damai* (Peaceful Schools) program selected 15 public and private high schools in each province, running throughout the years 2017-2018. This program involved various stakeholders, including 60 school principals, 60 educators, 60 school management staff, 150 students, and 49 other stakeholders. Additionally, the program also engaged the local Education Office and the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

The *Sekolah Damai* program focuses on developing indicators that can be used to measure the extent to which a school has implemented the concept of Peaceful Schools. This forum also determines the measurement methods to be used. Teams from the Wahid Foundation (WF) and the Indonesian Association of Islamic Education Teachers (AGPAII) will involve accompanying teams in their respective school regions to provide support, monitoring, and evaluation related to the level of implementation of the Peaceful Schools concept in those schools. The biggest challenge in implementing *Sekolah Damai* lies in the consistency and seriousness in applying this concept. Although the concept may sound good, it will only have meaning if it is genuinely implemented and carried out at every planned stage. It is essential to understand that the application of *Sekolah Damai* is not just about creating a slogan or concept, but about earnestly executing every phase.

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**Figure 1: 3 Indicators of Peaceful Schools**

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) is an approach used to measure and evaluate the progress and impact of a program or activity. MEL consists of three main components: *First*, Monitoring involves the regular oversight of the implementation of programs or activities to ensure that each planned stage is carried out as intended in the short term. This helps to understand how the program progresses over time. *Second*, Evaluation is a more in-depth assessment process that evaluates the extent to which the program's implementation achieves certain outcomes in the medium term. Evaluation involves assessing the program's impact on the established objectives. This helps determine the program's effectiveness and whether the expected results have been achieved.

*Third*, Learning is the process of deriving lessons from the program's achievements, both strengths and weaknesses. It involves reflecting on what has been learned from the program's implementation and what needs to be done next to improve future outcomes. MEL plays a crucial role in measuring the program's progress over time based on strategic planning. It also assists organizations in reviewing the effectiveness of the strategies used and provides opportunities to make necessary changes to strategies or actions to meet the indicators and program objectives.

Additionally, MEL functions as an accountability instrument that reflects the organization's performance against the commitments made in the program and the established budget. It helps present the achievements obtained with the available resources and identifies lessons that can be used for performance improvement in the future. It is not surprising that MEL is often referred to as a measurement tool. MEL serves to assess the extent to which achievements align with the initial planning and provides insights into the meaning behind those results. Next, the process of designing, implementing, and improving MEL in the context of the *Sekolah Damai* (Peaceful Schools) Program within school environments will be explained. The following guide will outline the steps for developing MEL for *Sekolah Damai*, which includes several key indicators such as school policies, tolerance practices, and student organization management.

### **1. Planning the MEL Stages According to Current Conditions**

After establishing the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) framework, it will be managed by a specific function. The next stage is the preparation of the MEL itself. The process of developing MEL is fundamentally straightforward but requires a high level of precision. This simplicity stems from the fact that MEL aims to measure the extent to which the established plans have been achieved. It includes evaluating the implementation of the

program, the achievement of predetermined targets, and the impacts generated by the *Sekolah Damai* (Peaceful Schools) Program. This evaluation will help assess the program's effectiveness and identify areas needing improvement or enhancement in the future. The results of this evaluation will serve as a basis for further decision-making in the development of the *Sekolah Damai* Program to maximize its objectives.

For example, regarding policy indicators, when a school seeks to create a *Sekolah Damai*, they may start by establishing new policies, such as addressing cases of bullying within the school environment. The process of developing MEL involves determining performance indicators and what documentation is needed to prove that the new policy has been implemented according to the established schedule. This process of determining performance indicators and supporting documentation requires a high degree of caution<sup>10</sup>.

The MEL (Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning) team must be very meticulous in determining indicators and evidence to facilitate implementation. Therefore, even though the preparation of MEL can be carried out by one or two individuals, it is essential to discuss it with leadership and other staff members. This aims to ensure that the indicators and supporting documents are aligned with the established needs and objectives. Once again, while the process of preparing MEL may appear straightforward, it requires a high level of precision.

Planning in this context consists of two aspects: the preparation of activity plans and the preparation of the MEL plan. These two aspects have differences but are closely related. The activity plan pertains to the steps and activities that need to be undertaken to achieve the ultimate goal of creating a *Sekolah Damai* (Peaceful School). Meanwhile, the MEL plan focuses on how to demonstrate that the processes and final results align with the established plans. In an analogy of building a house, the activity plan is like the building design, which outlines how the house will be constructed and what needs to be done. In contrast, the MEL plan serves as a measuring tool used to assess the extent to which the construction process and its final outcome conform to the predetermined design. Therefore, the preparation of the MEL plan heavily relies on the completed activity plan.

The interconnection between the activity plan and the MEL plan is crucial. The initial stage in preparing the work program plan involves developing a logical framework, often referred to as a "program logical framework." This logical framework can only be created after all leadership parties agree and commit to developing *Sekolah Damai* within their institution. Similar to a building design, the program's logical framework must detail how the final outcomes will materialize, how long it will take, initial stages, implementation, who will be involved, and who will oversee the program's execution. However, there is a fundamental difference between the building design and the logical framework of *Sekolah Damai*. While the final outcome of a building design can be physically seen, the final outcome of the *Sekolah Damai* program's logical framework is not only observable but also comprehensible, as this program will continue to evolve.

Therefore, the preparation of the work plan or program plan for *Sekolah Damai* differs from the architectural design of a building. The design of *Sekolah Damai* in this context is typically referred to as the "program logical framework." The objectives represent the achievements intended to be reached within a specific period, such as over 10 years. Impacts,

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<sup>10</sup> Marbawi et al.

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on the other hand, refer to the expected outcomes that will be evident in the medium term, such as within five years, calculated backward from 10 years, for both participants and non-participants in the *Sekolah Damai* Program activities. These impacts will manifest through changes occurring in the participating individuals or through systemic changes generated each year. These changes will become apparent when activities are executed according to their stages, and the outcomes of these activities can be observed as visible results.

In efforts to develop the logical framework plan, important steps to take include: *First*, understanding the current conditions related to the *Sekolah Damai* agenda within the school environment. In terms of policy, schools need to have a deep understanding of policies that can support or hinder the development of *Sekolah Damai*. This knowledge will serve as the foundation for initial and subsequent steps in planning changes towards realizing *Sekolah Damai*. *Second*, in terms of tolerance practices, the MEL team should conduct surveys with students, teachers, and other staff in the school to evaluate attitudes and behaviors related to tolerance within the school environment. Data from this survey will provide the initial basis for the MEL team to formulate steps to strengthen tolerance practices. For instance, if the survey results indicate that the percentage of student tolerance from one religion towards students from another religion is currently around 75 percent, various measures should be taken to increase it to 85 or 90 percent in the coming years.

*Third*, the management of student organizations oriented towards *Sekolah Damai* also needs to be evaluated. To understand the current state of the school, observations can be conducted both inside and outside the school environment. The three pillars of *Sekolah Damai*, namely school policy, tolerance and peace practices, and student organization management, can serve as observation focal points. With these steps, the MEL preparation team can gather the necessary data to plan and measure progress toward achieving the objectives of *Sekolah Damai*<sup>11</sup>.

### 2. Peace Literacy as a Free Curriculum

In general, the widespread phenomenon of intolerance and radicalism has become a serious concern in our country. Ideas and behaviors that do not support tolerance towards other religious groups are spreading across various segments of society, including in educational institutions. Even state schools operated by the government and funded by the public through taxes are vulnerable to the spread of intolerance and radicalism. Research conducted by the Wahid Foundation in 2016 presents a worrying picture. The study shows that approximately 60 percent of 1,626 members of Islamic Spiritual Activists (Rohis) surveyed expressed their willingness to embark on jihad to conflict areas like Syria if given the opportunity. These findings indicate that tolerance and an understanding that supports peace among diverse religious beliefs need to be emphasized more in educational institutions, including state schools<sup>12</sup>.

This challenge requires an innovative and structured response. A strategic approach to youth needs to create engaging ways to build confidence in ideas and practices that support tolerance towards other religious beliefs and promote a moderate approach to faith.

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<sup>11</sup> Marbawi et al.

<sup>12</sup> Wahid et al., "Laporan Kebebasan Beragama/Berkeyakinan Dan Toleransi The Wahid Institute Tahun 2010."



Additionally, this approach must be well-organized to ensure that the changes that occur are sustainable and create models that can be adopted in other locations<sup>13</sup>.

This Peace School guidebook is the result of synthesizing various experiences from implementing the Peace School program in several schools during the period of 2017-2019. In addition to documenting the lessons learned during the implementation of the Peace School, this guidebook details the principles and steps that serve as a guideline for those who wish to adopt the Peace School Program in their schools, particularly at the high school and vocational levels across Indonesia. This guidebook is also expected to serve as a reference source for policymakers and civil society activists who want to prioritize the values of peace and tolerance in school environments.

Through this guidebook, Wahid Foundation and UN Women hope that villages and urban neighborhoods will begin to gradually adopt a human security approach in planning and implementing their programs. The programs developed are expected to reflect the three main principles of human security, namely: First, Freedom from fear; Second, Freedom from want; and Third, Freedom to live with dignity. This human security approach will assist stakeholders in working together to meet the basic needs of communities and create a safe and just environment.



**Image 2: Peace School Guidebook**

This guidebook is not a static document that cannot be changed. As time goes on and it is used, the concepts contained in this book will continue to evolve. The systems and tools that were initially considered relevant may become less so as the needs and demands at the local level change. At such times, it is important to recognize that the mechanisms and tools in this guidebook need to be continuously updated to remain aligned with the dynamics of society. The integration of various important concepts in peacekeeping work, including the principle of gender equality, is unique and challenging in this guidebook. The aim is to facilitate the understanding of these concepts by grassroots communities. This guidebook is expected to assist villages and neighborhoods in applying the principles of good and inclusive governance.

<sup>13</sup> Achsin et al., “The Role of Non-Governmental Organization in Preventing Violent Extremism in Indonesia”; Nurhadi, “MEMBANGUN BUDAYA DAMAI DI SEKOLAH: ANALISIS PROGRAM SEKOLAH DAMAI WAHID FOUNDATION.”

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Thus, peaceful villages and neighborhoods can serve as positive examples for other areas in Indonesia in building an environment that values diversity, has high social solidarity, and implements good governance.

Wahid Foundation (WF) has made various efforts to promote the Peace School Program. One of the activities that has been conducted is a book review discussing innovations in the implementation of the Peace School Program, particularly regarding the instillation of character values through enjoyable learning activities. This book is the work of Mokhammad Samsu, the Principal of State Senior High School (SMA) 1 Sugihwaras Bojonegoro, which is a partner school of the Peace School program by Wahid Foundation. A statement from the Executive Director of Wahid Foundation (WF), Mujtaba Hamdi, emphasizes that the tangible evidence of WF's success in nurturing the Peace School program in schools is the commitment from the school itself to implement the WF Peace School in their environment. One example is SMA 1 Sugihwaras, where the principal is directly involved in creating and publishing a book about the Peace School. This action is concrete evidence of the school's commitment to implementing the values of the Peace School.

Additionally, Alamsyah M Djafar, a Senior Researcher at WF, also highlights the importance of books like this as a source of inspiration for other principals to create works based on their experiences. Such books can serve as good examples for literacy and student learning, as well as encourage other schools to engage in efforts to create a peaceful and tolerant school environment. Alamsyah also hopes that through this book, more teachers and principals will be inspired to publish their own works. This is an important step in literacy in schools, as it provides a real example to students that teachers, principals, and school alumni are also active in writing. This is crucial so that literacy does not just become a slogan but becomes an active part of the school culture <sup>14</sup>.

Additionally, Alamsyah appreciates this book for its ability to clearly explain the complexities of the policy approach programs in schools related to the Peace School initiative. This will be a valuable resource for educators and school administrators in integrating these programs with the implementation of the independent curriculum. The workshops to be organized by the Wahid Foundation are expected to strengthen the existing curriculum and provide practical contributions to integrating it with the concepts of independent curriculum implementation. This is seen as a potential way to enhance the overall achievement and implementation of the independent curriculum <sup>15</sup>.

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum requires a crucial role from teachers in understanding and applying the values of tolerance, as stipulated in the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation (Permendikbud) No. 22 of 2022. Teachers must have a good understanding of the Pancasila Student Profile in order to teach it effectively to students. The Peace School Project also emphasizes the importance of strong reading and writing literacy, particularly at the lower grade levels. Therefore, the quality of Human Resources (HR), especially teachers, plays a central role in the success of the Peace School Project. Given the

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<sup>14</sup> Gunawan Santoso et al., "Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Melalui Literasi Proyek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila. *Jurnal Pendidikan Transformatif*, 2, no. 1 (2023).

<sup>15</sup> Nuri Farikhatin, "Wahid Foundation Luncurkan Sekolah Damai Di Jawa Tengah," 2023, <https://www.nu.or.id/nasional/wahid-foundation-luncurkan-sekolah-damai-di-jawa-tengah-jlDxV>.

new Independent Curriculum, teachers need to adapt to implement the Strengthening Project of the Peace School Profile and also enhance their understanding of the values of tolerance and peace.

Positive actions are evident from school principals and teachers who actively participate in seminars and training organized by the Ministry of Education and Culture. This is a significant step in improving their understanding of the new curriculum and the concept of the Peace School. Thus, they will be better prepared to fulfill their roles as responsible educators in shaping a younger generation with tolerant and peaceful attitudes. As for the event held at the Novotel Hotel in Semarang, it has two important objectives: to launch the Q&A book on the Peace School and the Stories of the Peace School. Both books are the works of Ceprudin and Siti Rofi'ah <sup>16</sup>.



**Figure 3: Q&A Book on the Peace School and Stories of the Peace School**

The Peace School Program initially involved 35 schools, but later selected 5 high schools that have been consistent in participating in the program from 2017 to 2021. At the start of the program, they selected the teachers invited to participate based on their ideological backgrounds, particularly concerning tolerance. In this selection, they ensured that the teachers involved had ideological views that supported the concept of tolerance. The book written by Siti Rofi'ah and Cepruddin aims to serve as a guide for other schools in developing similar programs. Thus, this book can assist schools in implementing the Peace School program in a structured and sustainable manner within their own environments. When the mentoring period from the Wahid Foundation eventually ends, the hope is that the schools involved in this program can continue to manage it independently. This book takes the form of a question-and-answer format, discussing various aspects of religious phenomena, tolerance, and the Peace School program itself.

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<sup>16</sup> Santoso et al., "Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Melalui Literasi Proyek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila. *Jurnal Pendidikan Transformatif*"; Gunawan Santoso and Mamun Murod, "Comparison of the Contents Pancasila Education and Citizenship From 1975-2013 Curriculum in Indonesian at The 21st Century," *Jurnal Ekonomi* 21, no. 2 (December 31, 2021): 65–71, <https://doi.org/10.29138/je.v21i2.148>.

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The question-and-answer format chosen for this book reflects the inquiries often posed by the community. The book attempts to provide clear and structured answers to these questions. The content includes various topics related to the Peace School, such as what the Peace School is, how to implement it in schools, and its fundamental principles. Additionally, this book contains experiences from five schools in Central Java that have participated in the Peace School program. One story included in this book is the experience of SMA 1 Cepiring Kendal. The religious teacher at this school, named Aliyah, has been committed to supporting the existence of the Peace School since the program's inception in 2017. She shares her experience of how she successfully disbanded the Islamic Spiritual Extracurricular (Rohis), which had an extremist ideology and even planned to go to Syria.

The experiences from various schools described in this book provide concrete examples of real efforts to promote tolerance, peace, and interfaith dialogue within school environments. School principals, teachers, and students from these schools have actively participated in realizing the Peace School. For instance, at SMA 13 Semarang, Principal Endah endeavored to reconcile students chosen as the OSIS (Student Organization) Chair who came from a Christian background. This demonstrates a commitment to building harmonious relationships among students from diverse religious backgrounds.

At SMA 13 Semarang, they even recruited a church vocalist to participate in a rebana competition, showcasing inclusivity and diversity within the school. The story from SMA 10 Semarang is also noteworthy, where an Islamic Education (PAI) teacher, Ahmad Fadhol, successfully raised awareness in a student who was exposed to extremist ideology. Although the student initially hesitated to join the congregational prayers at the school mosque due to differing Islamic beliefs, Fadhol's efforts to provide broader understanding of tolerance and peace ultimately changed the student's perspective. The story from the Principal of SMAN 7 Semarang, who succeeded in transforming the school's image from being notorious for brawls to being active in religious activities, is inspirational. This shows that strong leadership and sincere commitment can bring about positive change in the school environment<sup>17</sup>.

Additionally, the story about the anti-flag campaign by the minority Christian group, Jehovah's Witnesses, illustrates the complex challenges schools face in managing religious diversity. This underscores the importance of a local approach that considers the context and realities of the community in fostering tolerance and peace. Research from the Wahid Foundation, as explained by Alamsyah M. Dja'far, emphasizes that tolerance and peace are not concessions, but rather fundamental principles that arise from knowledge, awareness, and acceptance of differences. Strengthening tolerance must begin by acknowledging the existing issues and striving to address them. A local approach is also regarded as an essential asset in building tolerance, as it can accommodate the diverse cultural and social contexts<sup>18</sup>.

### **Development of the Peace School Program by Wahid Foundation in Indonesia**

The Peace School Program has been active since 2017. This program has collaborated with 20 schools in four provinces, namely DKI Jakarta, West Java, Central Java, and East Java.

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<sup>17</sup> Farikhatin, "Wahid Foundation Luncurkan Sekolah Damai Di Jawa Tengah."

<sup>18</sup> Faisal Affan, "Wahid Foundation Perkenalkan Buku Sekolah Damai Untuk Mengajarkan Siswa Bertoleransi," 2023, <https://jateng.tribunnews.com/2022/02/25/wahid-foundation-perkenalkan-buku-sekolah-damai-untuk-mengajarkan-siswa-bertoleransi?page=2>.

## **Siswoyo Aris Munandar, Fahrurrozi**

Specifically in Central Java, the Wahid Foundation has partnered with several schools, including SMAN 1, 7, 11, 13, and SMAN 1 Cepiring, Kendal. The Kick-Off Meeting for the Peace School Program was held in a hybrid format and attended by representatives from the Wahid Foundation, the Central Java Kesbangpol, and representatives from the Peace Working Group (Pokja Damai). The event was also attended by school principals from approximately 70 high schools/vocational schools across Central Java that will implement the principles and pillars of the Peace School Program introduced by the Wahid Foundation<sup>19</sup>.

Since 2018, the Wahid Foundation has implemented the Peace School Program in four high schools and vocational schools located in Semarang and Kendal, Central Java. This initiative is the result of collaboration with eLSA (Institute for Social and Religious Studies) as a local partner in the project. The survey results conducted by the Wahid Foundation regarding social and religious aspects in schools indicate that approximately 68 percent of students involved in the Islamic Spiritual Group (Rohis) agree with the concept of Islamic caliphate. This finding serves as an important background that encourages the Wahid Foundation and other communities to conduct further surveys in high schools and vocational schools. This age group is considered vulnerable to the influence of religious beliefs and is in a transitional phase of belief development. Ubbadul Adzkiya, a researcher from the Wahid Foundation, explained that based on these survey results and findings, the Wahid Foundation has developed strategic national policy recommendations for the prevention of intolerance and radicalism in schools<sup>20</sup>.

One of the main focuses is to address intolerance and violence that may occur in schools, with the aim of ensuring that students have a more inclusive perspective when they move on to higher education or advanced schools. In a discussion themed "The Importance of Policies for Preventing Intolerance and Violence in Schools," Ubed also presented findings from the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) in 2018, which included a national action plan to tackle extremism and intolerance. The report includes intervention programs in schools as part of the prevention strategy. The Peace School program is based on the framework developed by BNPT. A few years prior, we witnessed several incidents such as the chants of kindergarten children or even parades in outfits resembling terrorists, which raised concerns as these issues continued to be discussed and politicized.

In 2018, the Wahid Foundation reported that the Peace School program had been implemented in several high schools and vocational schools in provinces such as DKI Jakarta, West Java, East Java, and Central Java. In Central Java, five schools have already adopted the Peace School program: SMAN 7 Semarang, SMAN 10 Semarang, SMAN 11 Semarang, SMAN 13 Semarang, and SMAN 1 Cepiring Kendal. Meanwhile, three other schools that will implement the Peace School program in Central Java are SMAN 12 Semarang, SMA Negeri 5 Semarang, and SMA Negeri 2 Kendal<sup>21</sup>.

On October 1, 2019, Mujtaba Hamdi, Executive Director of the Wahid Foundation, and Siti Kholisoh, Senior Media and Campaign Officer at the Wahid Institute, met with the Governor of Central Java, Ganjar Pranowo, at the Central Java Governor's office. The Wahid Foundation, an organization established to promote the ideas and struggle of KH Abdurrahman

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<sup>19</sup> Marbawi et al., "MENCRIPTA GENERASI PENJAGA KEBHINEKAAN "Panduan Sekolah Damai, Konsep Dan Indikator,"

<sup>20</sup> Wahid et al., "Laporan Kebebasan Beragama/Berkeyakinan Dan Toleransi The Wahid Institute Tahun 2010."

<sup>21</sup> Farikhatin, "Wahid Foundation Luncurkan Sekolah Damai Di Jawa Tengah."

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Wahid (Gus Dur) in advocating for Islam that upholds peace, democracy, and multiculturalism, was at that time focusing on efforts to combat intolerance and radicalism through the implementation of the Peace School Program.

Mujtaba Hamdi explained to Governor Ganjar that the Peace School Program had been implemented for five years in Central Java. In the city of Semarang, the program has been run in several schools, including SMAN 7, SMAN 10, SMAN 11, SMAN 13, and also in Kendal Regency, specifically at SMAN 1 Cepiring. The goal of this program is to promote values of tolerance, diversity, and better understanding among students and the community in the region.

Siti Kholisoh emphasized the urgent role of schools as educational institutions in building awareness and implementing values of tolerance among the younger generation. Therefore, schools must become more inclusive places where students are encouraged to respond to important issues that are currently debated, such as freedom and equality rights. Several concrete steps have been taken in schools to promote a perspective of tolerance. For example, students receive lessons from educators representing various religious backgrounds, and a diversity garden has been established as a venue for students to discuss various relevant issues.

Governor Ganjar also acknowledged that the programs implemented by the Wahid Foundation align with initiatives currently run by the Provincial Government, namely the Happy School Movement. The primary aim of this movement is to prepare high-quality human resources. According to him, schools should be pleasant environments and places that students look forward to, rather than creating stress for them.

In 2022, the Wahid Foundation collaborated with the Central Java National Unity and Political Agency (Bakesbangpol) to implement the Peace School Program in 70 high schools/vocational schools throughout Central Java. This collaboration includes expanding the Peace School Program policy in Central Java and enhancing the Peace School curriculum at the high school/vocational level. Positive results from the Peace School Program in pilot schools have encouraged the Central Java Provincial Government to strengthen its partnership with the Wahid Foundation to continue this program throughout the province. This step marks the beginning of the implementation of the Peace School Program in all high schools/vocational schools in Central Java. During the kick-off meeting in September, two selected outstanding public schools represented 35 regencies/cities in Central Java as examples of the Peace School Program's implementation.

On October 24, 2022, the Australian Deputy Ambassador to Indonesia, Steve Scott, attended the inauguration of the Peace School in Solo. The Peace School is a partnership between the Wahid Foundation and the Australian and Indonesian governments aimed at supporting teacher capacity development and engaging youth in issues of peace, tolerance, inclusion, and preventing violent extremism. This initiative has been implemented in 60 high schools on the island of Java, including eight high schools in Central Java. Australia considers bilateral cooperation with Indonesia to be very important, particularly in efforts to prevent violent extremism and promote messages of tolerance and peace. The integration of the Peace School as a program in Central Java is seen to have achieved significant success. During the inauguration of the Peace School, teachers and students from various religious backgrounds shared their experiences in fostering mutual respect and understanding. This event was also

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attended by Central Java Governor Ganjar Pranowo, Solo Mayor Gibran Rakabuming Raka, and Yenny Wahid from the Wahid Foundation.

Ganjar Pranowo also linked this program to the implementation of Presidential Regulation No. 7 of 2021 concerning the Action Plan for Preventing Violent Extremism Leading to Terrorism (RAN PE). The Peace School Program and related deradicalization programs have become the focus of the National Unity and Politics Agency (Bakesbangpol) in its efforts to prevent the rise of intolerance and extremism in Central Java. Ganjar Pranowo hopes that the culture of peace introduced through this program will not only be applied in high schools and vocational schools but also at all levels of schools in Central Java. In fact, if necessary, all relevant departments in the Central Java Provincial Government can adopt this culture of peace in appropriate contexts to prevent the rise of intolerance and extremism in the provincial government environment (Sutisna, 2021).

On August 22, 2023, Tim Watts MP, serving as the Australian Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Steve Scott, the Australian Deputy Ambassador to Indonesia, visited the Peace School managed by the Wahid Foundation at SMAN 11 Semarang. This visit was part of cooperative efforts between the Wahid Foundation, the Australian Government, and Indonesia, aimed at supporting the improvement of teacher competencies and involving the younger generation in issues such as peace, tolerance, inclusion, and preventing extremism. The Peace School Program has been implemented in around 60 high schools on the island of Java, including eight high schools in Central Java.

During the visit, Deputy Foreign Minister Tim Watts stated that his arrival aimed to see and hear positive stories about tolerance and appreciation for diversity in schools. He emphasized that both Australia and Indonesia are countries that are religiously and culturally diverse. Tim Watts asserted that Australia has various religious communities, including large Muslim, Buddhist, Sikh, and Christian communities, and that his experiences interacting with diverse religious communities have provided valuable insights.

Tim Watts also expressed his appreciation for the Peace School's efforts to promote peace, tolerance, and diversity. He stated that these efforts align with the ideals of building harmony, understanding, and unity in Australia. Mujtaba Hamdi, Executive Director of the Wahid Foundation, also appreciated the visit from the Australian Deputy Minister and the support from the Australian Government through the Australia Indonesia Partnership for Justice (AIPJ2) in developing the Peace School in Indonesia. The Peace School, which initially started in Central Java as a pilot project, has now expanded widely. The Central Java Provincial Government has assisted in implementing the Peace School program in 79 High Schools and Vocational Schools (SMA/SMK) in the region. The good cooperation between Indonesia and Australia, through AIPJ2, has contributed to the success of the Peace School initiative in promoting tolerance and peace in the educational context in Indonesia.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study's results demonstrate that the "Peace School" program, developed by the Wahid Foundation, has worked very well in creating a school environment based on tolerance, peace, and inclusion. One of the most important results of this program is that it directly addresses the worrying levels of extremist feelings among high school and vocational students in Indonesia, pointed out by the 2016 survey done by the Wahid Foundation. The program has

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taken clear steps to address problems like students wanting to join jihad and their support for a caliphate state. Evidence of the program's success can be observed in how it rapidly grew from a tiny pilot in five schools across Central Java to almost 79 high schools and vocational schools across Java. This growth indicates that the program helps students have better attitudes about peace and tolerance. Thus, it is an integral part of education in Indonesia.

This is a critical study, as it contributes to the more extensive conversation about peace education, especially in areas with social and religious conflicts. The "Peace School" program is one avenue to incorporate the ideals of tolerance and peace into the school's curriculum. It demonstrates how school curricula can be used to further social cohesion. This research is an excellent example of how collaboration between the Wahid Foundation, government agencies, and international cooperating partners like Australia can help with significant social endeavors. The initiative also uses education to battle extremist ideas by teaching inclusive values to children at a young age, which is essential for peace education and solving conflicts.

However, the study has some limitations that future research should consider. A significant limitation is the geographic scope of the program, which at present only covers schools in Central and East Java. A replication of this program in other provinces, specifically those with more religious intolerance or conflict, will help us understand how the initiative can be applied differently according to the place. Also, future studies could look more closely at the program's long-term effects on student's attitudes and behaviors after they graduate from school to see whether these values of tolerance and inclusion continue after school. More research could finally focus on the experiences of teachers and administrators. They play an essential role in using the program's values. This would provide us with information to understand their challenges better and improve the program to make it even more effective.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to all those who have supported and contributed to this research, particularly the Wahid Foundation for its initiative in implementing the Peace School Program, which is the focus of this study. The foundation's commitment to promoting tolerance, peace, and inclusion within educational settings has been truly inspiring. Based on our research findings, we propose several recommendations for further action. First, the Wahid Foundation could enhance its efforts in disseminating the survey results and key findings that underpin the Peace School Program, involving the government, educational institutions, and the public to raise awareness about the challenges of socio-religious tolerance among students. Second, the development of specialized educational materials, such as lesson modules, guides, and extracurricular activities, would strengthen the program's implementation in schools. These steps aim to ensure the Peace School Program becomes an even more effective solution for fostering tolerance and peace among students, ultimately creating a more harmonious learning environment.

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