

Women Survivors' Agency in Promoting Transitional Justice Initiative at the Local Level

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Abstract

This article will describe the contribution of women survivors of human rights violations in promoting transitional justice initiatives at the local or community level in Indonesia. In their marginal position, both as women and victims of human rights violations, the women survivors have the agency to face social, political, cultural, and structural barriers. The initiatives and participation of women survivors in Central Sulawesi, Aceh, and Yogyakarta in this paper have contributed to the emergence of transitional justice models at the local level, such as apologies for victims, health assistance programmes, scholarships, and truth-telling. These transitional justice initiatives at the local level not only fill the accountability gap that should be the responsibility of the state, but also reinforce the implementation of transitional justice mechanisms organised by the state or government, both at the local and national levels.

Keywords: transitional justice, women survivors, transitional justice local initiatives, human rights violations

Introduction

The Nairobi Declaration on Women's and Girls' Right to a Remedy and Reparation states that women and girls often experience violence and face more severe impacts when conflicts and gross human rights violations occur. This Declaration also recognizes the contribution of women and girls to the recovery of families, communities, and societies that have been adversely affected by conflicts and human rights violations. In Indonesia, women similarly experience the impacts of violence because of conflict and gross human rights violations.

In the 1965-1966 case, which was triggered by the 30 September Movement (G30S), many women, especially those who were members of the Indonesian Women's Movement (Gerwani) and organizations associated with the Indonesian Communist Party, experienced various forms of violence and discrimination (Yuniar & Easton 2015). The female victims in the 1965-1966 case experienced various forms of violence such as murder, illegal detention, and sexual violence. Female victims of the 1965-1966 case, especially members of Gerwani, also faced stigma as the accused perpetrators of violence against the military officers who died in the G30S case; they were also accused of performing naked dances (Yuniar & Easton 2015). The stigma of being immoral

women continued to be experienced by female victims of the 1965-1966 case even decades after the incident happened.

Patterns of violence against women were also found in the conflicts and human rights violations that took place in Aceh, especially during the implementation of the Military Operations Area (DOM) from 1989 onwards (Yuniar & Easton 2015). In the conflict in Aceh, cases of rape, detention, torture, and violence against women were also found. In the context of the conflict in Aceh, women also became substitute victims or intermediaries when the military could not find men in their homes or villages. During the 1976-2004 conflict period, women in Aceh were subjected to violence as a strategy to destroy their self-esteem and cause them to be expelled from their community (KKPK 2014).

Komnas Perempuan's report found cases where tens of thousands of women who previously lived normal and honorable lives in their families and communities, were targeted by military violence and public hatred. Patterns of violence such as detention, torture, murder, and sexual crimes in the forms of sexual torture, nudity, forced dancing in the nude, sexual slavery, and torture of pregnant women that resulted in the loss of pregnancy were experienced by many women in cases of human

rights violations that occurred in Indonesia (Komnas Perempuan 2007). These patterns of violence against women also occurred in other conflict areas. As a result of power relations and a patriarchal society, women became more vulnerable to violence (KKPK 2014).

The concept of transitional justice refers to the full set of processes and mechanisms associated with a society's attempts to come to terms with a legacy of large-scale past abuses, in order to secure accountability, serve justice, and achieve reconciliation (UN OHCHR 2014). The transitional justice agenda in Indonesia was strengthened during the country's political transition in 1998—for example, the establishment of ad-hoc Human Rights Courts for cases in Timor-Leste and Tanjung Priok (Jakarta); various investigations into allegations of human rights violations that occurred during the New Order regime, such as the Commissions of Inquiry into Human Rights Violations for May 1998 case, the 1965-1966 case, and the 1997-1998 enforced disappearances case; and the plan to establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which later failed (Sigiro 2018).

More than 20 years after the 1998 democratic transition in Indonesia, the question of whether a transitional justice agenda is still relevant arises. There is a view that concludes that the political transition in Indonesia led to both an acceptance that various incidents of mass violence are normal occurrences, and impunity for the perpetrators,¹ given the strong denial of human rights violations (Robet 2014).

Another view of the political transition in Indonesia argues that Indonesia is currently in the post-transitional justice period. According to Wahyuningroem (2019), this period is marked by the participation of civil society groups that push for agendas and initiatives to substitute for the failure of transitional justice mechanisms that rely on the State (Wahyuningroem 2019). These civil society groups work with victims and the community at the grassroots level to reclaim the dominant narrative about the injustices that befell the victims, and to seek a satisfactory remedy for individuals and groups (Wahyuningroem 2019).

The concept of transitional justice cannot be viewed only as a process that occurs within a certain, limited moment, when a political transition occurs (McEvoy & McGregor 2008). According to Lundy and McGovern (2008), this perspective on transitional justice tends to ignore the fact that human rights violations continue to occur even though the norms of accountability in the context of liberal democracy have been implemented.

In the context of Indonesia, efforts to promote and continue the transitional justice agenda remain relevant for several reasons. Firstly, most of the victims of human rights violations that occurred during the New Order regime are still being denied their rights to truth, justice, and remedies. Of the 15 cases of gross human rights violations that have been investigated by the National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM), only three have been tried by Human Rights Courts² (Komnas HAM 2015). Of these three cases, all of the alleged perpetrators were found not guilty. One consequence of the acquittal of the alleged perpetrator is that there is no court decision regarding the right to remedy for victims, such as compensation or restitution.

Secondly, most victims of human rights violations are still suffering from the ongoing impacts of human rights abuses, including poverty, health problems, stigma, and trauma (Sigiro 2018). When these abuse victims reach old age, the vulnerability they experience becomes even greater.

Thirdly, gender-based violence experienced by female victims of human rights violations is often not fully disclosed, which obstructs access to justice and reparation. In fact, the results of investigations by Komnas HAM into cases of gross human rights violations, such as the May 1998 and the 1965 cases, found numerous human rights violations with gender-based violence or violence against women dimensions (Sigiro 2018).

As recognized by the Nairobi Declaration, women have an important contribution to make in promoting justice initiatives at the local level. In the context of Indonesia, which is facing a situation of impunity and normalization of past experiences of human rights violations, civil society groups—including formal organizations and groups of survivors and victims—are important actors in promoting and continuing transitional justice agendas.

According to Yarwood (2013), in post-conflict and/or post-authoritarian societies, women are not only victims of gender-based crime and passive objects who suffer the impact of human rights violations, but they also have an important role to play in promoting transitional justice. In *Women and Transitional Justice: The Experience of Women as Participants* (2013), Lisa Yarwood describes the experiences and contributions of women in transitional justice mechanisms and initiatives in various countries across the world including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, and Peru.

Meanwhile, the subordination of women as a form of gender-based oppression never stands alone. Feminist

thought developed the concept of intersectionality to view the layers of oppression experienced by women and describe how factors such as identity and social position intersect and overlap. One of the interpretations of intersectional feminism can be seen through the lens of socialist feminism, black feminism, and post-colonialism, and argues for the existence of a layered oppression that works against black women and working-class women (Mota et al. 2011).

However, feminism does not see women as merely passive subjects that are dominated by oppressive structures outside of themselves. Feminism also introduces the concept of agency, which views women not only as constructed identities, but also as subjects who take action (Clegg 2006). Therefore, women's agency also exists in the context of intersectional oppression. This paper views women survivors as an intersection of women's identities as gender conceptions and their identities and/or experiences as victims and survivors of human rights violations.

This paper will describe the agency of women survivors of human rights violations in Central Sulawesi, Aceh, and Yogyakarta in transitional justice initiatives at the local level. This paper will also explain how the agency of women survivors encourages the work of transitional justice at the formal level, which is nearing a dead end. The experiences of several groups of women survivors of human rights violations in Central Sulawesi, Aceh, and Yogyakarta discussed in this paper will reveal that women survivors have the agency to continue to push for justice, not only for themselves, but also for other victims and the wider community.

Research methodology

This paper was written based on data collection conducted in three provinces, namely Aceh, Yogyakarta, and Central Sulawesi. The research was conducted using a qualitative approach, using interview data collection methods, focus group discussions with civil society groups in Aceh on 15 January 2021, as well as literature studies. This research was done through interviews with 10 women survivors in cooperation with the following partner organizations: the Forum for Human Rights Education and Advocacy (FOPPERHAM) in Yogyakarta, KontraS Aceh, the Solidarity for Victims of Human Rights Violations of Central Sulawesi (SKP-HAM Central Sulawesi), and Asia Justice and Rights (AJAR). Survivor, according to the terminology of human rights violations, is a legal concept applied to individuals who have suffered

as a result of human rights violation, and are entitled to protection and compensation for such a violation. From a psychological or sociological perspective, the term 'survivor' is preferred as this concept empowers the individual by emphasizing strength and resilience (UN OHCHR 2011).

Most of the interviews were conducted by telephone because of limited physical mobility during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, for some resource persons who did not have telephone access, interviews were conducted face-to-face in accordance with the Covid-19 pandemic health protocol. Interview data collection took place from September to January 2021.

This paper will describe the experiences of women survivors from three areas in transitional justice initiatives at the local level. The women survivors interviewed had different experiences of human rights violations, namely 1) women who survived the 1965 events in Central Sulawesi and Yogyakarta; and 2) women who survived the military conflict in Aceh.

Participation of Women Survivors in Transitional Justice Initiatives at the Local Level

In the midst of the impasse with official transitional justice mechanisms—such as courts, and truth and reconciliation commissions—survivors of human rights violations in Indonesia continue to make various efforts to push the justice agenda forward. Delays in the follow-up investigations into cases of human rights violations in Aceh and the 1965 cases in Central Sulawesi and Yogyakarta have caused many victims to see the justice process as ineffective. Victims of the 1965 case in Palu, for example, viewed the inquiry process of human rights violations as a tedious process. However, the inquiry process could be considered useful if the results of the investigation are used to obtain, for example, medical and psychosocial assistance services provided by the Witnesses and Victims Protection Agency (LPSK).

This impasse in the justice process—as felt by the victims—can be seen from the following narrative of a woman who survived the 1965 case in Central Sulawesi:

Actually, there was just no follow-up, so we did not get any experience because we were just interviewed and interviewed continuously. (Women Survivor of the 1965 events in Central Sulawesi 2020, interview, November)

The presence of obstacles in the State's formal transitional justice mechanisms is one of the factors that encouraged the women survivors interviewed for this

study to participate in transitional justice initiatives at the local level. Based on the data obtained, each region developed different models of local initiatives.

The women survivors who became resource persons for this research come from different backgrounds. The first group consists of survivors who are direct victims. They have experienced human rights violations against themselves. Some of the forms of violence experienced by these survivors include torture—both while in detention and during interrogation. Some of these women survivors also experienced sexual violence in detention. The second group consists of survivors who are indirect victims; that is, those who are victims because their husbands or a family member suffered human rights violations, such as enforced disappearances and arbitrary detention.

Women Survivors in Aceh: Truth-Telling as a Remedy for the Community

One of the provisions in the 2005 Helsinki peace agreement was for the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission for Aceh (2005 Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement). It was not until 24 October 2016 that the Aceh Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Aceh TRC) began its work. Its duties and functions are to implement Law No. 11 of 2006 on Aceh Government and its implementing regulation, Qanun Aceh No. 17 of 2013 on Aceh TRC. As of August 2021, about 5000 victims and witnesses have had their statements taken (kk.acehprov.go.id 2020). Meanwhile, based on the Decree of the Governor of Aceh No. 330/1269/2020, as many as 245 victims and heirs have been recommended by the Aceh TRC to receive immediate reparations.

The Aceh TRC cannot be separated from the community's continued efforts to push for this transitional justice mechanism to be established and be widely supported. In Aceh, women survivors played an important role in establishing the TRC. Women were involved in demonstrations—not only in Aceh, but also in Jakarta—calling for a Aceh TRC to be immediately established (Women Survivors in Aceh 2020, interview, November 2021).

During the Aceh TRC process, women survivors collaborated with civil society organizations to support truth-telling and remedy work. Activities carried out by the CSOs and survivors included victims' assistance activities, including for female victims of conflict, and

participatory documentation of female victims. The results of the assistance and documentation programs were then submitted to the Aceh TRC (Acehkita.com 2019).

Women survivors in Aceh also collected data on human rights violations that occurred during the conflict. In collecting the data, women survivors organized themselves into victims' rights groups. Data collection was carried out through visits to remote areas of Aceh. In an interview, one women survivor described the conditions of victims:

Since 2007, I have been a member of the Solidarity for Families of Victims of Human Rights Violations (SPKP), and was elected Chair of the Ureung Gadoh (Kagundah) Family—an organization of families of missing persons in Nagan Raya, Aceh. I took part in collecting data from the coast to Beutong Banggalang, without any financial support from the Government. In Nagan Raya, there were many victims who were physically handicapped, widows, orphans, and families of victims of missing persons and those who died during the conflict. The Government should provide remedy or reparation, that is compensation by the State for the occurrence of human rights violations that have caused suffering for the victims and the victims' families. (Women survivor in Aceh 2020, interview, November)

The participation of women survivors in the Aceh TRC process is important in ensuring the TRC runs effectively and inclusively. The issue of inclusiveness was raised by the community after the establishment of the Aceh TRC because it was felt the expectations of victims were not being met. According to the women survivors interviewed, they had little involvement in the establishment of the TRC in Aceh.

Several resource persons also mentioned the lack of sensitivity by Aceh TRC staff to the victims while taking statements. Four women survivors from Aceh who were interviewed for this paper spoke at a public hearing held by the Aceh TRC and explained the risks involved (kk.acehprov.go.id 2019). The following is a testimony from a women survivor in Aceh.

What happens is that today victims are afraid, afraid of telling the story because they are afraid it will happen again, afraid that today's condition is not good. (Women survivors in Aceh 2020, interview, November)

During focus group discussions in Aceh (15 January 2021), one of the female activists stressed the importance of involving women in every stage of the process, not only as participants, but also as leaders of victims' organizations. The involvement of women survivors

is important to ensure that women's experiences of violence are included in both the narrative and ongoing recovery efforts.

Women Survivors in Central Sulawesi: Apology as a Remedy for the Community

In the Open Dialogue event—to commemorate the Rights of Victims of Human Rights Violations to Truth and Justice, which was initiated by the Solidarity for Victims of Human Rights Violations (SKP-HAM)—in 2012, the mayor of Palu, Rusdi Mastura, apologized to the victims of human rights violations, especially the victims of the 1965 case (Lamasituju 2016). In subsequent developments, the Palu local government implemented a number of programs, such as health services and educational scholarships for victims and their families. Although Mastura resigned as mayor of Palu in 2015, SKP-HAM and the 1965 survivors continue to work closely with the new mayor on the reparations policy.

Before the apology from the mayor of Palu, a number of survivors of the 1965 case—together with SKP-HAM—had worked to document the data and experiences of the victims of the 1965 case in Palu. Of the 485 victims whose cases had been verified, 166 were women (SKP-HAM 2015). These findings have been used as an advocacy tool by survivors' groups to encourage State recognition at the local level.

The stalling of inquiries carried out by official State institutions, such as Komnas HAM, into human rights violations made the victims of the 1965 case in Central Sulawesi feel frustrated with formal mechanisms. The impasse in this mechanism of formal justice also prevented some victims and their families from pursuing a formal justice process.

In fact, some of the women survivors interviewed felt that informal transitional justice initiatives, which were initiated by civil society groups, opened up more opportunities, and could encourage the Government to continue with formal justice mechanisms. According to a research resource person, organizing initiatives at the community level was an important strategy for continuing justice efforts, as explained by one women survivor:

There are no other words but to gather, so come together and gather to consolidate ourselves and hold the State accountable and ensure that this group is protected. (Women survivor of 1965 case in Central Sulawesi 2020, interview, November)

One of the initiatives undertaken by women survivors of the 1965 case in South Sulawesi was to push for the excavation of their husbands' bodies, which were allegedly buried at one of the military posts. In addition, women survivors in Central Sulawesi, working with SKP-HAM Palu, documented nearly 500 victims of the 1965 incident. This truth-telling initiative aims to get recognition from the State and society for the fate of the 1965 victims.

To find the graves of their husbands who disappeared in the 1965 incident, women survivors tried to meet with the Military Resort Commander in Palu. Advocacy and dialogue with the local government and military agencies were conducted by the survivors to obtain permission to excavate the alleged graves of their husbands. Although the excavation has not yet been carried out, the Central Sulawesi provincial government has provided support so military agencies can start to excavate the graves.

For 1965 women survivors from Central Sulawesi, the apology from the mayor of Palu was a small victory amid their feelings of pessimism because of the absence of truth and a lack of acknowledgment of the victims' experiences of violence. This situation was explained by a women survivor as follows:

Like I said earlier... I am a bit relieved because it is clearer now, my testimony will be heard again... yesterday, many people were present, but there is no follow-up from the Government. There is contentment but no legal certainty... that is all we are waiting for, in what form. For example, you are found not guilty and acquitted, so there is some kind of legal certainty. We are still waiting for the court. (Women survivor of 1965 case in Central Sulawesi 2020, interview, November)

A formal apology from State officials, such as the mayor of Palu, is an important acknowledgment for victims of human rights violations in the 1965 case, who still often suffer the stigma of this experience. The apology from the mayor of Palu was one of the results of the efforts of the community, including women survivors, in promoting justice initiatives at the local level.

Women Survivors in Yogyakarta: Documenting Victims' Access to Health Services

Kiprah Perempuan (KIPPER) is an organization that was established in Yogyakarta in 2006 to support women survivors of the 1965 incident. At KIPPER, women survivors carry out various activities, such as documenting data of victims, performing theatre and

music, and advocating for the fulfillment of the rights of victims of human rights violations. Some of KIPPER's advocacy achievements include the issuance of a Certificate of Victim of Human Rights Violations (SKKP HAM) from Komnas HAM for victims of the 1965 case in Yogyakarta, and the development of a program provided by the Witnesses and Victims Protection Agency (LPSK) to assist victims with health and psychosocial services.

The 1965 women survivors in Yogyakarta formed KIPPER in 2006. Since its founding, KIPPER's members have held regular meetings to discuss various issues, ranging from sharing news, seeking information about the conditions of their friends, and planning economic development programs for members, to performing health check-ups. Women survivors also work with young artists in their towns to create theatrical performances, as well as songs and dances. Community-based dialogue and art are used as a form of community remedy and reconciliation.

When survivors of 1965–1966 were released from prisons across Indonesia, many of them were given national identity cards marked with the ET (ex-political prisoner) code. For some 1965 survivors in Yogyakarta, reparation means the right to live free from stigma and enjoy a better standard of living with access to basic rights. Acceptance by the community is one of the hopes expressed by one of the survivors in Yogyakarta:

Now, I still have hope. If later the Government has made it official that the victims are being humanized, their families should be informed. (Women survivor of 1965 case in Yogyakarta 2020, interview, November)

For victims of the 1965 case, the stigma of 'communism' is a persistent problem. Based on the experiences of women survivors at KIPPER, this kind of stigma is a factor that prevents victims from accessing remedy services. Some of the victims documented by KIPPER were worried that the data collected would be used to arrest them, as explained by the following women survivor:

Other victims that I have interviewed, they were pessimistic and afraid. "Why was it recorded like this? I will be arrested again." They were afraid of it. (Women survivor of 1965 case in Yogyakarta, interview, November)

Therefore, reconciliation within the community is an important initiative carried out by KIPPER. Within the KIPPER community, efforts are made to encourage community-based dialogue and reconciliation. This activity is carried out by involving religious leaders, civil society actors, and various stakeholders, who work

closely on human rights advocacy, as well as academics who conduct studies on reconciliation.

Women survivors of the 1965 case, who are members of KIPPER, initiated a data collection of the victims of the 1965 incident who lived in Yogyakarta and its surrounding areas. Through collaboration with various groups, such as students, academics, and human rights activists, the women survivors tried to document and identify the health conditions of KIPPER members and the community of victims of the 1965 incident in Yogyakarta and its surrounding areas.

Using the data collected, KIPPER advocates for victims' access to the Certificate of Victim of Human Rights Violations (SKKP HAM) issued by Komnas HAM. Although minimal, SKKP HAM is a form of recognition from the State, which can be used to access remedies, such as medical assistance from LPSK. These women survivors are actively involved in providing guidance and accompanying volunteers to collect data on victims of the 1965 case. In her advanced age, one women survivor shared her struggles to invite young people to become volunteers to help them in the data collection process:

I used to struggle. I was with [volunteer's name], looking for 10 people. He was in college. I would adjust and follow his time as he has either afternoon or evening class. We would coordinate our time to get to the locations. We looked for survivor(s) in Sleman then [name of another women survivor] in Bantul... [name of another women survivor] in Kulon Progo... Each area already has its own coordinator. (Women survivor of 1965 case in Yogyakarta 2020, interview, November)

SKKP HAM is then used to apply for health and psychosocial services from the local government and the Witnesses and Victims Protection Agency (LPSK). At the local government level, special services for victims cannot be provided, but the local government can provide health assistance services for the elderly. Incidentally, most of the women survivors who are KIPPER members are elderly.

According to the Law on the Protection of Witnesses and Victims (Law No. 13 of 2006, and Law No. 31 of 2014), LPSK cannot provide reparations for victims of human rights violations without a court decision. Since the 1965 human rights violations have never been tried in a court, there is no court decision on reparations for the victims. However, thanks to the documentation of data and health conditions carried out by KIPPER, the victims of the 1965 incident in Yogyakarta and its surrounding areas were able to access medical and psychosocial assistance from LPSK.

The Intersectionality of Women Survivors' Agency as the Basis for Transitional Justice

Women's rights and gender justice have become part of the discourse on transitional justice mechanisms in post-conflict and post-authoritarian societies. According to Moyo and Lahai (2018), this development arose from criticisms by civil society actors and feminist movements of the neglect of women in the peace process, as well as criticisms of transitional justice paradigms and practices that ignored the diversity of gender dimensions and the impact of conflict or authoritarianism on women's rights.

The stories of women survivors in several countries, including Indonesia, show how women's participation in the justice process has succeeded in exposing the problem that women's situations and experiences during conflict and violence have been ignored. Not only that, but women's participation in transitional justice has contributed to identifying appropriate mechanisms that directly respond to the needs of the community.

After the Guatemalan Civil War, for example, women there participated in the signing of peace agreements, and the establishment of a national reparations program, both individually and collectively (Bailey 2008).

During this time, many of the women who fought for transitional justice measures were considered insane when they argued that rape was a violation of human rights. However, according to Bailey (2008), the women who participated in the Historical Clarification Commission (*Comission para el Esclarecimiento Historico, CEH*) made an important contribution to ensuring reparations were made and effective measures were implemented to reveal the truth and bring justice to the victims, which were crucial for the reconciliation process in Guatemala at that time.

Similar to the experiences of women in other countries, the experiences of women survivors in transitional justice initiatives in Yogyakarta, Aceh, and Central Sulawesi, show the importance of the concept of agency in women's participation in and contribution to various transitional justice processes and mechanisms.

There are several factors that appear to influence the agency of the women survivors featured in this research. Firstly, the background of the women survivors interviewed clarifies why they have agency. Although these women survivors have been marginalized as a result of human rights violations, they have a background as female fighters and/or activists. For example, one of the women survivors from Aceh was formerly a member of Inong Balee—a women's organization within the

Free Aceh Movement (GAM). Meanwhile, one of the women who survived the 1965 incident was a member of Gerwani—a women's organization that worked on women's rights and community issues before 1965. Secondly, the existence of civil society organizations—such as women's organizations, victims' organizations, and human rights organizations at the local level—also became a supporting factor for the agency of these women survivors.

This agency is exemplified by the initiatives launched by women survivors to develop transitional justice efforts at the local level. Local initiatives carried out by women survivors, such as self-care, documentation, research, and advocacy, have contributed to strengthening the voices and capacities of victims in their communities.

Women survivors experience layered marginalization, both as women and as victims of abuse. Despite being in a marginalized position, the women survivors featured in this research displayed an agency to demand recognition for the experiences of women and victims of human rights violations from the community and the State.

Closing

When impunity persists and civic space shrinks, Indonesia's women survivors of human rights violations generally experience boredom and pessimism about the development of a justice agenda for victims. Victims also face various obstacles to accessing the official transitional justice mechanisms administered by the State. This paper discussed a range of transitional justice initiatives carried out by women survivors at the local level that aimed to resist impunity and overcome challenges to obtaining justice.

Transitional justice initiatives carried out by women survivors at the local level not only promote the existence of transitional justice processes at the local level, but also encourage the existence of official transitional justice mechanisms administered by State administrative institutions. Transitional justice initiatives have inspired truth-telling and reconciliation at the community level. These informal local justice initiatives subsequently led to the restoration of formal transitional justice mechanisms, such as the issuance of SKKP HAM by Komnas HAM, the provision of medical and psychosocial assistance by LPSK, the expansion of the effectiveness of the Aceh TRC, and an apology from the Mayor of Palu. We can see that the initiatives of women survivors at the local level has helped to fill the accountability gap left by the State.

Decades after the occurrence of human rights violations, the victims of both the events of 1965–1966 and the conflict in Aceh still live with the traumas and stigmas. Even now, when this research was conducted, they are concerned about the possibility of repeated violence and discrimination. Not only that, the victims' advanced age exacerbates their vulnerability and adds another obstacle in their fight for justice. For example, all of the women survivors of the 1965–1966 incident who were interviewed for this research were over the age of 60. The women survivors in this research were also vulnerable to being retraumatized when participating in the formal transitional justice mechanisms.

In addition to the violence and human rights violations experienced by themselves and/or their families, women survivors also face gender bias when participating in justice initiatives in their communities. Women survivors in Aceh, for example, still face opposition from their families when they want to actively participate in provincial and national level advocacy. This situation cannot be separated from the gendered role of women survivors as the main caregiver in the family.

The results of this research show that women survivors are not passive objects, whose actions are solely determined by the structures that have marginalized them. This research shows that women survivors have agency to face social and structural barriers, both as women and as victims of human rights violations.

Through their participation in transitional justice, both in informal initiatives at the local level and in formal mechanisms, women survivors can develop more realistic expectations of the transitional justice process. In addition, the initiatives carried out by women survivors have also contributed to producing a remedy for the community and building solidarity between survivors/victims, civil society organizations, and younger generations.

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Final Notes

- ¹ Impunity means the impossibility, de jure or de facto, of bringing the perpetrators of violations to account—whether in criminal, civil, administrative, or disciplinary proceedings—since they are not subject to any inquiry that might lead to them being accused, arrested, tried and, if found guilty, sentenced to appropriate penalties, and to making reparations to their victims (UN 2005).
- ² Ad Hoc Human Rights Court for East Timor, Ad Hoc Human Rights Court for Tanjung Priok, and Human Rights Court for Abepura.

