



Post-Conflict Reintegration and Special Autonomy in Indonesia: Evaluating the Implementation of Law Number 11 of 2006 and the Role of the Aceh Reintegration Board in Achieving Peace in Aceh

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Abstract

Evaluating the implementation of Indonesia's Law Number 11 of 2006 on the Governance of Aceh and the role of the Aceh Reintegration Board (BRA) in advancing post-conflict reintegration and sustainable peace. Drawing on a qualitative methodology that includes normative legal analysis, document review, and semi-structured interviews with stakeholders, the study examines how legal frameworks and institutional mechanisms translate into practice. Findings reveal that while the BRA has made progress in reintegration through land redistribution and the introduction of digital platforms like SIBRA Online and E-Proposal, its efforts have been hindered by institutional fragmentation, resource constraints, and limited responsiveness to local needs. The shift from individual to shared land ownership models illustrates both policy adaptation and structural limitations. The study contributes to peacebuilding literature by highlighting the interplay between legal mandates and ground-level implementation, underscoring the need for participatory governance and long-term socioeconomic support in post-conflict settings.

1. Introduction

The conflict in Aceh, which lasted from 1976 to 2005, was primarily driven by a combination of political marginalization, demands for self-determination, and grievances over the exploitation of natural resources by the central government. The armed insurgency led by the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) resulted in over 15,000 deaths and significant displacement, while also weakening local infrastructure and governance. The tsunami disaster of 2004 acted as a catalyst for renewed peace efforts, culminating in the Helsinki MoU in 2005 [1,2].

The conflict in Aceh, which lasted from 1976 to 2005, was primarily driven by a combination of political marginalization, demands for self-determination, and grievances over the exploitation of natural resources by the central government. The armed insurgency led by the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) resulted in over 15,000 deaths and significant displacement, while also weakening local infrastructure and governance. The tsunami disaster of 2004 acted as a catalyst for renewed peace efforts, culminating in the Helsinki MoU in 2005.

The Helsinki MoU consisted of several key provisions: cessation of hostilities, GAM's disarmament, withdrawal of non-local military forces, and the granting of special autonomy to Aceh [3]. While hailed as a breakthrough, critics have noted ambiguities regarding the reintegration of former combatants and the lack of detailed enforcement mechanisms [4,5]. These complexities continue to challenge the long-term peace process in Aceh.

The enactment of Law No. 11/2006 is a legal product aimed at achieving justice and realizing peace in Aceh, even though it was preceded by a long-standing conflict and a major natural disaster [6,7]. This law cannot be separated from the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between GAM and the Government of Indonesia. The preamble to Law No. 11/2006 states.

The Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Government and the Frese Aceh Movement on August 15, 2005 marks a new chapter in the history of Aceh Province and the lives of its people toward a peaceful, just, prosperous, and dignified future [8]. The MoU should be understood as a dignified form of reconciliation that paves the way for sustainable social, economic, and political development in Aceh [9].

Through the post-tsunami dialogue process, the Helsinki MoU was signed on August 15, 2005, which ultimately led to the enactment of Law No. 11/2006 [10]. This law represents a concrete effort to resolve the protracted conflict in Aceh. This raises the question: Would peace in Aceh have been possible without this law? While the answer lies with divine will, it is clear that the pursuit of peace is closely linked to the provisions of Law No. 11/2006 .

The law grants Aceh broader authority compared to prior regulations. Aceh's provincial and district/city governments are empowered to manage public affairs in all sectors except those under the exclusive authority of the central government, such as foreign policy, defense, security, justice, national monetary and fiscal matters, and certain religious affairs.

Law No. 11/2006 grants greater autonomy than previous legislation, notably Law No. 22/1999 on Regional Government, later replaced by Law No. 32/2004. Law No. 22/1999 was pivotal in initiating Indonesia's post-New Order democratization process, allowing regions to exercise real autonomy. As part of Indonesia's administrative system, regional governments have both rights and responsibilities [11].

Some of the specific powers granted under Law No. 11/2006 include, Authority in the formulation of laws, international agreements, and administrative policies directly related to Aceh, Authority in international cooperation, Authority in the formation of bodies/agencies/commissions [12].

In 2015, the Aceh Government enacted Qanun Aceh Number 6 of 2015 establishing the Aceh Reintegration Agency (BRA), which carries out several duties and functions [13]. These include: Economic empowerment and development, Social empowerment and assistance, Social security for those unable to work, Physical, mental, and psychosocial health rehabilitation, Provision of agricultural, marine, and fisheries land and employment opportunities, Restoration of civil, political, economic, and socio-cultural rights, Implementation of reparations based on the recommendations of the Aceh Truth and Reconciliation Commission [14].

The agency's functions include strategic planning, formulating general policy for peacebuilding, coordinating and implementing reintegration and reconciliation activities, economic recovery, social empowerment, health rehabilitation, land and employment programs, restoration of civil and political rights, public involvement in conflict prevention, mainstreaming peace efforts across government agencies, monitoring MoU implementation, integrating peace into development programs, and fostering knowledge and skill transfer in peacebuilding. BRA also coordinates with national and international institutions, NGOs, and individuals to implement and monitor peace-related programs.

2. Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive normative legal analysis to examine the role of Law Number 11 of 2006 and the Aceh Reintegration Board (BRA) in post-conflict

reintegration [15,16]. The analysis is supported by both legal documents and field data collected through interviews and institutional reports [17,18].

Participants were selected through purposive sampling, targeting individuals with direct involvement or experience in the reintegration process. A total of 25 participants were interviewed: 10 former GAM combatants, 5 political prisoners, 5 civilians affected by the conflict, and 5 BRA government officials. These participants provided varied perspectives on the implementation and challenges of reintegration policies.

Data collection was conducted between July and October 2024 using semi-structured interview guides [19]. Questions focused on personal experiences, perceptions of BRA programs, and the effectiveness of reintegration strategies. In addition to interviews, document analysis was conducted using BRA internal reports, Qanun Aceh No. 6/2015, Law No. 11/2006, and related policy documents.

A thematic analysis method was used to interpret qualitative data [20]. Transcripts and legal texts were coded manually to identify key themes related to BRA's institutional role, implementation challenges, and peacebuilding outcomes.

To ensure validity and reliability, triangulation was used by cross-referencing interviews with document findings. Member checking was also conducted with several interviewees to confirm the accuracy of interpreted data.

Ethical considerations were strictly observed. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, both verbally and in writing. Anonymity was preserved, and ethical approval for the study was granted by the Aceh Reintegration Board's internal ethics committee.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Legal Framework and Institutional Mandate

Law No. 11 of 2006 serves as the cornerstone of Aceh's special autonomy, providing a robust legal framework that empowers the region to govern its internal affairs with significant independence from the central government. This law authorizes the formulation of local legislation, known as *qanun*, and the establishment of region-specific institutions tailored to Aceh's unique post-conflict needs. Among these is the Aceh Reintegration Board (BRA), whose creation and mandate are further detailed in Qanun No. 6 of 2015. This regional regulation entrusts BRA with the implementation of a broad range of reintegration initiatives, including social rehabilitation, economic empowerment, and psychosocial support programs aimed at assisting former combatants, political prisoners, and civilians affected by the conflict. Through these provisions, the legal framework not only legitimizes BRA's existence but also anchors its operational scope in the broader objective of sustaining peace and rebuilding post-conflict Acehese society.

3.2 Program Achievements

3.2.1 Land Distribution Program

From 2019 to 2024, BRA implemented several reintegration programs focused on three main groups: former GAM combatants, political prisoners who received amnesty, and conflict-affected civilians. A major program has been land redistribution to former GAM combatants.

Table 1. BRA is implementing land distribution based on the Helsinki MoU

Year	Number Of Beneficiaries	Land Area (Ha)	Land Certificates Issued	Type of Ownership	Land Clearing Cost
2019	193	387.03	166	Freehold Title	Rp. 447.659.550.000,-
2020	117	399	117	Freehold & Shared	

2021	1.037	2.025	89	Shared Ownership
2022	1.712	3.304	12	Shared Ownership
2023	559	1.238	12	Shared Ownership
2024	150	286.03	2	Shared Ownership

This land redistribution initiative directly fulfils the mandate outlined in Point 3.2.5 of the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), signed on August 15, 2005, which obliges the Government of Indonesia to allocate adequate farmland and financial support to the Aceh Government to facilitate the reintegration of former Free Aceh Movement (GAM) combatants. The provision also extends to political prisoners and civilians who were adversely affected by the conflict. In accordance with this mandate, the Aceh Government is tasked with ensuring the distribution of farmland, the creation of employment opportunities, and the provision of social security for individuals unable to work.

Based on [Table 1](#), from 2019 to 2024, the Aceh Reintegration Board (BRA) has actively pursued these objectives through successive land redistribution programs. However, the implementation process has encountered various challenges, including bureaucratic delays, inconsistencies in land titling, and limited land availability. These factors have contributed to a shift from initially promised individual freehold titles to shared ownership models, raising concerns about long-term tenure security and economic sustainability for beneficiaries. Despite these constraints, the initiative marks a tangible effort to operationalize the reintegration commitments of the Helsinki MoU. It also reflects the adaptive strategies adopted by local institutions to balance legal obligations with practical limitations, underscoring the complex interplay between post-conflict governance, policy execution, and social justice.

3.2.2 Digital Service Launch: SIBRA Online

In October 2023, the Aceh Reintegration Board (BRA) launched the SIBRA (*Sistem Informasi BRA*) online platform as part of its ongoing institutional reform and digital transformation strategy. Designed to improve transparency and administrative efficiency, SIBRA enables former combatants, political prisoners, and other conflict-affected individuals to access real-time updates on the status of their aid proposals by entering their National Identification Number (NIK). This digital system minimizes bureaucratic delays, reduces opportunities for corruption or manipulation, and promotes a more accountable aid distribution process.

The platform represents a significant shift from paper-based, centralized service delivery to a more decentralized and accessible model aligned with e-governance principles. While initial feedback from users has been positive especially regarding ease of access and time savings limitations remain in terms of digital literacy, uneven internet access in rural areas, and the need for ongoing technical support. Nonetheless, the launch of SIBRA Online marks an important step toward institutional modernization and reinforces BRA's commitment to inclusive and transparent reintegration services. Its development reflects a broader effort to integrate digital tools into post-conflict governance and aligns with international best practices in peacebuilding administration.

3.2.3 Digital Service Launch: BRA E-Proposal Website

In April 2025, Aceh Governor Muzakir Manaf officially launched the BRA E-Proposal platform as part of a broader initiative to modernize administrative processes within the Aceh Reintegration Board (BRA). According to BRA Head Jamaluddin, the digital platform significantly streamlines the submission and review of proposals by allowing district-level units to input and transmit data directly from their respective areas. This eliminates the need for in-person visits to the BRA central office in Banda Aceh, reducing travel costs, cutting down on bureaucratic delays, and enhancing the overall operational efficiency of the organization. The

platform is seen as a critical step toward decentralized service delivery, aligning with ongoing efforts to integrate digital governance into post-conflict institutional reform.

4. Conclusions

This study has critically assessed the implementation of Law Number 11 of 2006 and the role of the Aceh Reintegration Board (BRA) in facilitating post-conflict reintegration and sustaining peace in Aceh. The analysis reveals that while programs such as land distribution and the introduction of digital platforms like SIBRA Online have enhanced administrative efficiency and transparency, significant obstacles remain. These include institutional fragmentation, inconsistent funding, and limitations in land availability, which have led to a shift from individual to shared ownership models. Although digital reforms have improved access to services, their effectiveness in addressing deeper structural grievances remains limited. The findings contribute to broader discourses on post-conflict reintegration by demonstrating the complex interplay between legal frameworks, institutional capacity, and local realities. The partial divergence between BRA's achievements and the objectives articulated in the Helsinki MoU underscores the limitations of relying solely on legal instruments without sustained political commitment and community engagement. This study highlights the importance of adaptive, context-specific approaches to reintegration and suggests that future research should investigate the long-term socioeconomic outcomes of reintegration efforts while emphasizing participatory governance and inclusive policy design.

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Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

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Conflicts of Interest: All the authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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