



Transformation model of village legal aid posts in strengthening access to justice and legal awareness of island communities in Maluku Province

Yared Hetharie

Ministry of law, Ambon, Maluku, Indonesia

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Abstract

Access to justice and legal awareness are essential prerequisites for legal development in archipelagic regions with fragmented geographic conditions and limited infrastructure, such as Maluku Province, which faces challenges in ensuring equitable legal services for village communities on small islands. Village Legal Aid Posts are positioned as instruments to bring community-based legal services closer to the people; however, they still encounter institutional design and operational effectiveness issues. This study aims to formulate a transformation model for Village Legal Aid Posts to strengthen access to justice and legal awareness among island communities in Maluku. The research employs a normative-empirical legal method with statutory and sociological approaches, analyzing regulatory frameworks, village-level implementation, and the relationship between local governments and legal aid institutions. The findings indicate that Village Legal Aid Posts have provided consultation, legal education, dispute mediation, and facilitation of legal aid for disadvantaged communities, yet they are not systematically integrated into the national legal aid framework and continue to face constraints such as limited human resources, budget shortages, and low legal literacy. This study proposes a transformation model based on regulatory strengthening, capacity building of village officials, integration of the legal aid system, and community-based legal empowerment in archipelagic areas to achieve sustainable access to justice.

Keywords: Transformation model, village legal aid post, legal awareness

Introduction

Article 1 paragraph (3) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia affirms that Indonesia is a state governed by law. This provision places the rule of law as the primary guideline in the administration of national life. The concept of a state governed by law implies that all actions and conduct of the community must be based on applicable legal norms. Consequently, this principle requires the existence of a society that possesses legal awareness so that legal norms can be effectively implemented.^[2]

Without legal awareness, the concept of a state governed by law cannot be realized substantively, because law would merely become a written set of rules that is not complied with in social life. Furthermore, Article 27 paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia serves as an important foundation for the development of legal awareness. This provision implies that every citizen has equal standing before the law and government and is obliged to uphold the law and the government without exception. This norm contains two principal aspects equality before the law and the obligation to comply with the law.^[2] The obligation to uphold the law implies that legal awareness is not solely the responsibility of the government, but also an obligation of every citizen. Through equality before the law, members of society are encouraged to understand that the law applies equally to all individuals without discrimination.

Law Number 16 of 2011 on Legal Aid explicitly positions the state as the spearhead in fulfilling the right to legal aid for underprivileged citizens. This is affirmed in Article 3, which stipulates that the provision of legal aid aims to ensure and fulfill the rights of legal aid recipients to gain access to justice and to realize the constitutional rights of citizens based on the principle of equality before the law.

Furthermore, Article 5 paragraph (1) emphasizes that recipients of legal aid are individuals or groups of poor people who are unable to independently fulfill their basic rights in a proper manner. Meanwhile, Article 19 provides room for public participation in the implementation of legal aid, thereby enabling the strengthening of community-based legal services at the village level.

The establishment of the Village Legal Aid Post (Posbankumdes) also aligns with the mandate of Law Number 3 of 2024, the second amendment to Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages. Within the framework of the Village Law, Article 18 affirms that villages have the authority to administer government, develop, foster community development, and empower communities based on community initiatives, ancestral rights, and customs.^[3] Furthermore, Article 67 paragraph (2) regulates village obligations to improve the quality of life of village communities, including in terms of legal awareness and compliance. Thus, Posbankumdes can be understood as an implementation of village authority in strengthening access to justice and legal empowerment of communities. The existence of the Village Legal Aid Post not only functions as a partner for accredited legal aid institutions at the regional level, but also plays an important role as a space for legal learning through counseling, consultation, non-litigation advocacy, and conflict mediation at the community level.^[4] From the perspective of community-based legal services, the community is positioned as an active subject in the process of seeking justice.^[5] Therefore, the Village Legal Aid Post is a strategic instrument in building community legal awareness, namely a condition in which residents understand, internalize, and obey legal norms as basic values in community life as well as the foundation for the formation of a participatory and

just legal culture. Public legal awareness is an important indicator in realizing a state based on law as mandated in the constitution.^[6] Normatively, the state, through Law Number 16 of 2011 concerning Legal Aid, provides constitutional guarantees to the poor to obtain legal aid services as an integral part of fulfilling the right to access to justice and the principle of equality before the law. In addition, Law Number 3 of 2024 concerning the Second Amendment to Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages affirms the authority of villages to implement community empowerment efforts and improve the quality of life of rural communities, which includes strengthening legal awareness and expanding community access to public services.

However, empirically, the fulfillment of rural communities' rights to access legal information and services still faces various structural obstacles. Economic limitations, geographical barriers, low levels of legal understanding and literacy, and the remoteness of judicial institutions significantly hinder communities from obtaining justice. This situation is further exacerbated in Maluku Province, which has the characteristics of an archipelagic region with 1,235 villages spread across 11 districts/cities. Therefore, efforts to equalize access to justice face greater complexity, particularly in the outermost, most disadvantaged, and most remote areas. As a result, communities at the village, sub-district, village, Ohoi, and Finua levels have not fully enjoyed effective, efficient, and affordable legal services as guaranteed by the principles of the rule of law and statutory regulations.

The establishment of Village Legal Aid Posts was essentially designed as a legal service instrument operating at the village level. From a normative perspective, the existence of Village Legal Aid Posts is intended to provide and bring legal services closer to village communities, including legal consultations, legal counseling, mentoring, and facilitation of dispute resolution at the local level. However, at the implementation level, Village Legal Aid Posts have not been fully integrated into the regional legal development policy framework. This condition is reflected in the pattern of village resource allocation, which still places greater emphasis on physical development, while aspects of strengthening access to justice and legal empowerment of village communities have not received proportional priority as they should within the framework of a state based on the rule of law. The gap between normative guarantees of the right to legal aid and the reality of limited access to justice in the Maluku archipelago is the background to the importance of formulating a transformation model for Village Legal Aid Posts in strengthening access to justice and legal awareness among island communities.

Research Method

This study examines the role of village legal aid posts in building legal awareness among communities in Maluku Province. Library materials or secondary data alone can be called normative legal research or library research^[6] by collecting primary, secondary and/or tertiary legal materials. In order to get answers or solutions to problems with four problem-solving approach models, namely: Statute approach,^[7] Conceptual approach, comparative approach,^[8] historical approach.^[9] The nature of the research used in this study is descriptive prescriptive.^[10] In connection with this study of library materials, it is also necessary to know how to write quotations, footnotes, and bibliographies because in

analyzing library materials and writing proposals and research reports, researchers will often encounter these issues^[11] the author uses content analysis.^[12]

The legal materials in this study were processed through the process of organizing, analyzing, and systematizing them into two levels of analysis. First, the technical level, which involves collecting, classifying, and presenting positive legal provisions based on the hierarchy of legal sources. This stage aims to establish a legitimate basis for interpreting positive legal norms through the application of logical reasoning methods, so that all legal regulations are structured into a coherent and coherent system. Second, the teleological level, which involves the process of systematizing legislation based on its legal substance by reorganizing and interpreting the legal material from the perspective of its purpose. This approach is carried out by applying the teleological method. as a basis for internal systematization in order to obtain a more comprehensive and developed understanding of law. Furthermore, the analysis of legal materials in this study uses a descriptive method, namely a method that emphasizes the systematic analysis of legal problems through the activities of presenting, interpreting, and analyzing relevant legal materials, so that it is hoped that it can produce conclusions that are argumentative and can be scientifically justified.

Results and Discussion

1. Structural and Socio-Geographical Challenges in Strengthening Access to Justice and Legal Awareness of Island Communities in Maluku Province

Fostering public legal awareness is a key foundation for national legal development. Legal awareness relates not only to public knowledge of laws and regulations, but also to public attitudes and behaviors in complying with the law.^[13] In the context of Maluku Province, fostering legal awareness faces various challenges influenced by geographic, socio-cultural, economic, and governmental institutional factors. These challenges impact the effectiveness of legal development policies, including legal counseling and legal aid services to the community. Maluku Province is an archipelago characterized by its scattered regions separated by sea.^[14] These geographic conditions are a crucial factor influencing the effectiveness of community legal awareness development. Several villages in Maluku Province are located in remote areas with limited transportation access, both in terms of sea transportation and other infrastructure, making it difficult to optimally implement legal development and service programs.

Limited regional accessibility has implications for the less than optimal implementation of legal counseling and legal aid services. Government officials and legal counselors often face obstacles in reaching remote villages, particularly those on small islands. This situation creates disparities in access to legal information between urban and rural communities. Furthermore, the high operational costs of providing legal counseling in island regions compared to mainland regions also limit the intensity of legal development activities that the government can implement. Consequently, this situation results in relatively low levels of legal knowledge and understanding among communities living in remote areas.^[15]

Another challenge facing efforts to foster legal awareness among the public in Maluku Province is the low level of education and legal literacy. Some rural residents lack an

adequate understanding of their legal rights and obligations as citizens, often failing to recognize the legal implications of the issues they face. This situation contributes to a lack of public awareness of formal legal dispute resolution procedures. Consequently, people tend to choose informal conflict resolution without considering the legal protections that should be guaranteed by law. This phenomenon is often seen in land disputes, family conflicts, and various other social issues. Furthermore, limited access to legal information sources further exacerbates the low level of legal literacy in the region. Penyebaran informasi hukum melalui media massa dan teknologi informasi belum sepenuhnya menjangkau seluruh masyarakat, terutama di daerah terpencil yang memiliki keterbatasan jaringan komunikasi.^[16] The people of Maluku Province have a vibrant customary legal system that plays a significant role in regulating social life. Customary law is often used as the primary mechanism for resolving various disputes because it is seen as better able to represent locally developed values of justice and maintain balance and harmony in social relations within the community.

Although customary law plays a positive role in maintaining order and social cohesion, its existence in practice often raises issues in the context of fostering national legal awareness. In a number of cases, customary-based dispute resolution mechanisms are not fully aligned with applicable national legal norms, particularly regarding guarantees of human rights protection and the principle of legal certainty. This situation indicates a potential tension between local legal values and national legal standards, which demands harmonization within the national legal system.^[17] Furthermore, communities tend to trust traditional leaders more than government officials or formal legal institutions. This situation demands a legal development approach that integrates traditional values with national law for more effective public acceptance. The effectiveness of legal awareness development depends heavily on the quality of the human resources of the apparatus tasked with providing legal education and services.

In Maluku Province, the availability of legal counselors and paralegals remains disproportionate to the area and number of villages covered by the service. Overly normative and technical legal materials often make it difficult for the public to understand the substance of the law. Furthermore, the lack of ongoing training and capacity-building programs for village officials and paralegals has resulted in their low ability to provide legal education to the public. Yet, village officials play a strategic role as the frontline in providing legal services at the local level. Therefore, efforts to foster legal awareness require the support of all stakeholders to address the challenges of implementing counseling, training, and developing legal service facilities and infrastructure on a sustainable basis.^[18] However, in practice, budget allocation for legal development activities at the regional level remains relatively limited. Priorities for village budget use are often focused on physical development and community economic empowerment.

Village legal development programs have not been prioritized due to budget constraints and unclear regulations. Consequently, implementation is sporadic, and community participation remains low due to economic factors, a lack of legal understanding, and an inappropriate outreach approach. Some communities still view law as repressive and solely related to the judicial process.^[19] The low level of public interest in legal counseling requires innovation in

more participatory and contextual methods, especially to increase capacity to deal with the complexity of new legal issues in Maluku, including violence, protection of women and children, and information technology-based crimes.

According to Wignjosoebroto, legal awareness is the overall attitude and readiness of citizens to act in accordance with the demands and obligations established by law. This legal awareness serves as an internal driver that fosters the public's willingness to voluntarily align their behavior and actions with the provisions of positive law and the laws and regulations applicable to national life.^[20] Based on this definition, it can be understood that legal awareness reflects society's perspective on the law, including an understanding of appropriate and inappropriate behavior within the legal framework, as well as recognition of the rights of others. Thus, legal awareness inherently embodies an attitude of tolerance in social life. Public legal awareness is essentially a set of values that live and develop within society related to the law, encompassing aspects of knowledge, understanding, appreciation, and compliance with applicable legal norms.^[21] Legal awareness is a primary factor for the application of law in society, and is proof that law as a system has been well accepted by society. Without adequate and sustainable legal awareness-building efforts, the public is left vulnerable, both as those harmed by legal violations and as those who commit them. Therefore, fostering legal awareness is a multidimensional process and requires the involvement of various stakeholders, including local governments, legal aid institutions, law enforcement officials, and educational institutions, in order to create a law-abiding and just society.^[22] However, coordination between these institutions still faces various obstacles, including differences in work programs, limited communication, and a lack of data and information integration. This lack of coordination can lead to overlapping legal development programs or even the absence of sustainable programs. Therefore, an integrated coordination mechanism is needed to ensure the effectiveness of fostering public legal awareness. Based on the above description, it can be analyzed that the challenges of fostering legal awareness in Maluku Province are multidimensional.

Geographical factors are a structural obstacle that influences the implementation of legal development programs.^[23] Socio cultural factors and the level of community education serve as cultural determinants that significantly influence the level of community acceptance of national law. Furthermore, limited institutional capacity and the quality of human resources reflect institutional constraints in the implementation of legal awareness development. These conditions indicate that efforts to foster legal awareness cannot be carried out sectorally but must be designed through a comprehensive, integrated, and collaborative approach. In the Maluku context, legal development needs to accommodate the integration of national legal norms and local wisdom values that exist and develop within the community. The involvement of traditional and community leaders in legal outreach activities is a strategic strategy to strengthen the social legitimacy of law and increase the effectiveness of its implementation at the local level.

2. Village Legal Aid Posts as an Instrument for Strengthening Access to Justice and Legal Awareness of Island Communities in Maluku Province

Village Legal Aid Posts are a strategic tool for expanding access to justice for communities, particularly in island regions like Maluku Province, which are geographically dispersed and have limited access to formal legal services. The presence of Posbankum Desa is not only seen as an extension of legal aid services, but also as a medium for education and strengthening legal awareness at the

grassroots level.^[24] In the context of legal development oriented toward equality and social justice, the establishment of Village Legal Aid Posts (Posbankum Desa) serves as a concrete indicator of the commitment of local governments and stakeholders to bringing legal services closer to rural communities. To provide an empirical overview of the extent to which this policy has been implemented, the following is a summary of the establishment of Village Legal Aid Posts (Posbankum Desa) in Maluku Province.

Table 1: Recapitulation of the Establishment of Posbankum in Maluku Province

No	Regency/City	Amount				Posbankum which has been formed	Presentation (%)
		Village/Ohoi/Finua	Village District	Negeri	Total		
1	Tual City	27	3	-	30	30	100.0%
2	Maluku Tengah Regency	-	6	186	192	192	100.0%
3	Buru Regency	82	-	-	82	82	100.0%
4	Buru Selatan Regency	81	-	-	81	81	100.0%
5	Ambon City	8	20	22	50	50	100.0%
6	Kepulauan Tanimbar Regency	80	2	-	82	82	100.0%
7	Seram Bagian Timur Regency	198	-	-	198	198	100.0%
8	Kepulauan Aru Regency	117	2	-	119	119	100.0%
9	Maluku Tenggara Regency	190	1	-	191	191	100.0%
10	Seram Bagian Barat Regency	92	-	-	92	92	100.0%
11	Maluku Barat Daya Regency	117	1	-	118	118	100.0%
	TOTAL	992	35	208	1235	1235	100.0%

Sumber: www.kanwilkemenkummaluku.go.id

Maluku Province, which consists of 11 (eleven) regencies/cities, has established Legal Aid Posts (Posbankum) in all villages, villages, sub-districts, Ohoi, and Finua. Legal Aid Posts (Posbankum) are a strategic instrument in expanding access to justice for the community, particularly the poor and vulnerable groups.^[24] The main requirement for establishing a village legal aid post is the existence of a Decree (SK) from the Head of the Village, State, Ohoi, Finua, Sub-district which issues a Decree on the Legally Aware Family Group (Kadarkum) of at least 15 (fifteen) people and a Decree on the Assignment of Paralegals to the legal aid post of at least 2 (two) paralegals. Based on these 2 (two) Decrees, the prospective paralegals whose names are listed in the attachment to the Decree on the Paralegal Assignment to the village legal aid post are then given the opportunity to participate in paralegal training organized by the Ministry of Law.^[25] The Maluku Regional Office of the Ministry of Law has conducted three batches of paralegal training involving all paralegals working at legal aid posts in all villages, districts, Ohoi, and sub-districts in Maluku Province. The training speakers were from the Faculty of Law, Pattimura University, and Legal Aid Organizations (OBH) accredited by the Ministry of Law. During the training, the participants (paralegals) received training materials including Human Rights, Introduction to Law and Democracy, Gender and Minorities, the Criminal Justice System, Communication Techniques for Paralegals, and Complaint and Report Document Preparation Techniques. The paralegal training was conducted for four days online via the Zoom Meeting application.

The existence of Posbankum does not only function as a place to provide legal consultation services,^[26] also plays a crucial role in building public legal awareness through educational, preventive, and solution-oriented approaches. In the context of Maluku Province, Posbankum plays a particularly relevant role, given the region's archipelagic

nature, socio-cultural diversity, and limited public access to formal legal services. Empirically, the presence of Posbankum in several districts/cities in Maluku Province demonstrates a significant contribution to improving public understanding of the law. Posbankum not only serves as a legal consultation center but also serves as a space for interaction between the community and law enforcement officials and legal aid institutions. Through communicative and locally-focused legal outreach activities, the Legal Aid Post has proven effective in increasing the understanding of village communities in Maluku Province regarding legal rights and obligations and dispute resolution mechanisms, particularly those related to land issues, domestic violence, child protection, and population administration. This increased understanding has implications for the growth of active community participation in the legal awareness development process. In this context, the community is no longer positioned solely as an object of outreach, but rather as a subject who actively raises and discusses the legal issues they face.^[27] Through the dialogue process that took place during these activities, the community gained a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of legal norms and the urgency of resolving disputes through legally valid mechanisms. Furthermore, legal counseling provided through the Legal Aid Post also serves a preventative function in suppressing legal violations. Increasing community legal literacy has implications for reducing the potential for social conflict and legal violations at the local level. Empirically, several aspects need to be comprehensively emphasized in efforts to build legal awareness, including: ^[28] First, awareness of what law is means an awareness that law protects human interests. Because, in principle, law is a rule whose function is to protect human interests. Because there are many, the interests are also numerous and diverse and dynamic. Second, awareness of our legal obligations to others means that in exercising our legal rights, we are limited by the

rights of others to those laws. Therefore, legal awareness embraces an attitude of *tepo seliro* (tolerance), meaning that one must remember, pay attention to, and respect the interests of others, and especially not harm others or abuse their rights.

Awareness of legal obligations is not only related to compliance with norms contained in written laws and regulations, but also includes respect for unwritten legal norms that exist and develop in society. Furthermore, awareness of the existence or occurrence of legal acts (*onrecht*) shows that the issue of legal awareness generally only becomes a matter of public attention when a violation of the law occurs, which then surfaces and receives attention through print and electronic media. This confirms that legal awareness is essentially an awareness of the existence of the law itself, but in practice it is more often interpreted as an awareness of the occurrence of legal actions, especially those that are unlawful. Another significant role of the Legal Aid Post is its function as a means of easily accessible and free legal consultation. Empirical findings in several villages in Maluku Province indicate that the Legal Aid Post is often used as a first point of reference by the community in seeking solutions to their legal problems. Legal consultation services provided through the Legal Aid Post contribute to increasing public understanding of their legal position and interests in a case. People who previously had limited

knowledge of legal procedures now have a better understanding of the stages and mechanisms necessary to resolve their problems legally. This demonstrates the strategic role of the Legal Aid Post in increasing public legal awareness, particularly in the area of legal understanding.^[29] In general, legal awareness is associated with legal compliance or legal effectiveness.^[30] In other words, legal awareness indicates whether or not certain legal provisions are truly functioning in relation to problems within society. To achieve professional harmony between the laws applied and the legal awareness of the public, the regulations themselves must be rational and implemented according to orderly and fair procedures. Legal awareness is a mental and moral interdependence, each of which is very dependent on how big a person's ego is.^[31] In this regard, Widjaya stated that legal awareness is a state in which there are no clashes in life within society. Society lives in balance, harmony, and harmony. Legal awareness is accepted as awareness, not as coercion, even though there are external restraints from within individuals or society itself in the form of legislation.^[32] A person is considered to have a high level of legal awareness if their actual behavior aligns with applicable law. Therefore, a high level of legal awareness is largely based on the level of legal compliance, which indicates the extent to which a person's actual behavior aligns with the law. This cannot be separated from legal compliance.

Table 2. Recapitulation of Postal and Public Service in Maluku Province

No	Regency/City	Posbankum Services				All Services
		Legal Consultation and Information Services	Legal Aid and Advocacy Services	Mediation Services	Advocate Referral Service	
1	Tual City	-	3	-	-	3
2	Maluku Tengah Regency	8	2	2	-	12
3	Buru Regency	10	5	5	-	20
4	Buru Selatan Regency	-	-	-	-	-
5	Ambon City	5	4	4	1	14
6	Kepulauan Tanimbar Regency	2	-	6	-	8
7	Seram Bagian Timur Regency	1	-	-	-	1
8	Kepulauan Aru Regency	-	-	-	-	-
9	Maluku Tenggara Regency	4	-	2	-	6
10	Seram Bagian Barat Regency	5	-	5	-	10
11	Maluku Barat Daya Regency	1	-	-	-	1
	Total	36	14	24	1	75

Sumner: app.posbankum.bphn.go.id

Legal information and consultation services dominate the legal aid post's services in Maluku Province. Through these services, the public gains access to simple, easy-to-understand legal information relevant to the legal issues they face. In addition to serving as a consultative tool, these services also serve as a comprehensive legal education platform, increasing public legal awareness and reducing fear or reluctance to face the law. Furthermore, mediation, or peaceful dispute resolution between parties, is one of the most frequently used services at the Legal Aid Post in Maluku Province. Legal issues frequently resolved through mediation include land disputes, theft, defamation, and assault.^[33] The aim of this service is to empower the community to be able to protect themselves and fight for their rights through direct legal consultations, legal counseling, and empowerment that increases general legal understanding.

Legal awareness is ideally instilled early in the family environment by encouraging each member to understand their rights and obligations and fostering mutual respect.

This process forms the foundation for developing a legal awareness that is then actualized in social and national life, reinforced through efforts to disseminate knowledge and understanding of legal regulations widely. In this context, violations of social norms cannot necessarily be interpreted as violations of the law. Furthermore, Paul Scholten explains that legal awareness is an inherent awareness in every individual regarding the nature of law and how it should be implemented. This awareness is part of the human psychological dimension that enables a person to distinguish between law and non-law, as well as between actions that are appropriate and those that should be avoided.^[34] Based on the above opinion, legal awareness is essentially a human's awareness of applicable laws, which manifests itself in compliance or disobedience. Through psychological processes, humans distinguish between permissible and prohibited behaviors.

This could be due to a lack of public understanding and knowledge about legal awareness and the regulations that apply to the law itself. Cultivating this habit of legal

awareness is a challenge and responsibility for all parties. A culture of legal awareness and obedience must be instilled from an early age.^[35] Therefore, education is the spearhead in instilling attitudes and habits of complying with existing regulations. Educational institutions are the primary means of socialization that significantly influence the formation of human character in the future.^[36] If law-abiding attitudes and behaviors are instilled from an early age, then in the future, respect for and compliance with the rules will become ingrained and become part of the culture. This is achieved by providing accurate knowledge about what is and is not permissible. A high level of legal awareness in a region will foster a civilized society.^[37]

Developing legal awareness from an early age does not require waiting for a legal violation to occur, followed by law enforcement action. Preventive efforts play a crucial role and can begin within the family, the smallest social unit in society. Therefore, fostering legal awareness needs to be fundamentally established within the family as the initial foundation for the formation of individual legal attitudes and behavior. By fostering this legal awareness, it is hoped that the potential for legal violations can be minimized, thereby creating an orderly and ideal social life. Furthermore, formal, informal, and non-formal educational institutions need to be synergistically involved in developing legal awareness and intelligence from an early age. Legal education is not limited to formal learning processes in educational institutions but can also occur outside of the school environment. Therefore, early introduction to and learning about law is essential for children as part of the process of character building and legal responsibility.^[38] So that a sense of the need for legal regulations will be instilled in them. This will foster legal awareness from an early age.^[39]

Legal counseling is an educational process aimed at the community, either upon request or based on written recommendations, implemented through participatory lectures, discussions, and material evaluation methods to ensure participants' level of understanding. Although the potential for violations of norms remains, adequately conducted legal counseling plays a strategic role in fostering legal awareness and creating order in community life. Therefore, it can be emphasized that only through effective and sustainable legal counseling can the community adapt its behavior and actions to the provisions of applicable laws and regulations.^[40]

Legal counseling is a strategic instrument in community empowerment efforts aimed at increasing awareness and understanding of rights, obligations, and applicable legal norms through a preventative, educational approach. This approach is aimed at building a more constructive legal culture while simultaneously reducing the potential for legal violations. Empirically, legal counseling has proven effective in preventing criminal acts, particularly among vulnerable groups such as adolescents and families, because it instills an understanding from an early age about the importance of complying with regulations and social norms. Through the implementation of planned and systematic legal counseling programs, the community is encouraged to increase legal knowledge, change their perspectives, and develop more law-abiding behavior. The continuity of legal counseling is a fundamental factor in fostering a culture of legal awareness, which in turn is expected to create a more orderly, safe, and harmonious social order. Community empowerment is aimed at increasing legal understanding

and skills so that individuals and community groups have the capacity to resolve legal problems independently, fight for their rights, and prevent legal violations. These efforts are carried out through various forms of training that equip the community with the skills to handle and monitor cases, prepare applications and lawsuits, and develop case reporting mechanisms. In legal consultation services, paralegals play a role in exploring facts and evidence, providing opinions and written recommendations for legal action, while simultaneously fostering public confidence so that they have the courage to take legal action when facing injustice. Meanwhile, legal aid and advocacy services are aimed at people facing legal problems and requiring assistance, both outside the judicial process and in efforts to fight for their rights through public policy mechanisms.^[41] Paralegals' role in providing legal assistance includes tracing and investigating cases, conducting negotiations, assisting in dispute resolution outside the courts, preparing legal documents, and policy advocacy. All of these stages are carried out through the collection of valid data and evidence to ensure that each step in resolving legal problems is carried out appropriately, effectively, and fairly. The information gathering process is carried out by prioritizing the use of primary sources and selecting relevant documents for analysis, so that verified legal facts and a strong case position are constructed. The results of this process are then presented in the form of a written investigation report prepared in accordance with the provisions of applicable ministerial regulations. Negotiation is a bargaining process between the provider or recipient of legal aid and the opposing party to reach an agreement in resolving legal problems.^[42] In the negotiation process and assistance in resolving cases outside the courts, paralegals play a role in advocating for clients' interests by considering legal arguments and alternative solutions that do not cause losses. Furthermore, paralegals assist the public in interacting with government agencies and law enforcement officials to ensure the protection of their rights and ensure that the entire process is carried out in accordance with applicable laws. Paralegals also coordinate, both verbally and in writing, with relevant authorized agencies. Furthermore, paralegals provide explanations to witnesses or victims regarding the substance of the legal case they are facing and the progress of the case, so that they receive adequate and continuous information.

In Maluku Province, the Legal Aid Post facilitates non-litigation dispute resolution through mediation and deliberation mechanisms aligned with family values and local wisdom. This approach allows for a faster and simpler case resolution process, while maintaining social harmony and bridging the fair and sustainable application of customary and national law. It is important to recognize that indigenous communities have long practiced dispute resolution mechanisms based on customary law long before the Legal Aid Post existed. Therefore, the presence of the Village Legal Aid Post essentially strengthens the existence of customary law, rather than negating or limiting the role of customary law, which has been recognized and used for generations as a means of resolving legal problems at the village level. Furthermore, the Legal Aid Post also plays a strategic role as a liaison between the community and accredited legal aid institutions, ensuring access to more comprehensive and sustainable legal assistance.^[43] Many people in Maluku Province do not know the procedures for obtaining legal aid from the state.^[44] Through Posbankum,

the public obtains information regarding the requirements and mechanisms for applying for legal aid. Posbankum assists the public in preparing administrative documents and provides initial assistance before a case is submitted to a legal aid institution or the courts.^[45] This role is very important in ensuring that underprivileged communities continue to receive fair legal protection.^[46] The existence of Posbankum also helps reduce the gap in access to justice between urban and rural communities.^[47] With the existence of Posbankum at the village level, people do not need to travel long distances to get legal services.^[48]

Legal Aid Posts not only serve as legal service providers but also play a role in community empowerment through village paralegal training, which has proven effective in increasing community understanding of legal rights and obligations, encouraging active participation, and strengthening dispute resolution mechanisms, thereby reducing the potential for social conflict. However, the implementation of this role still faces several obstacles, including limited human resources, limited budget support, and the geographical challenges of the archipelago. Therefore, the existence of Village Legal Aid Posts is fundamentally inseparable from the strategic role of paralegals as key actors in bridging community access to justice and legal services at the local level.^[49] Paralegals at the legal aid post are given training to improve their competence when carrying out their duties of assisting people who are in conflict with the law.^[50] In Maluku Province, the existence of paralegals is becoming increasingly important considering the characteristics of the archipelago, limited transportation facilities, and the still diverse level of legal literacy among the community.^[51] Therefore, competency improvement training for paralegals is a basic need so that they are able to carry out their assistance duties professionally, effectively, and oriented towards protecting the rights of the community.^[52] Paralegal training at the Legal Aid Post is generally designed to strengthen basic understanding of the national legal system, human rights, and procedures for handling both litigation and non-litigation cases.^[53] In this training, participants are equipped with knowledge regarding the structure of judicial institutions, the types of cases that the public often faces, as well as alternative dispute resolution mechanisms such as mediation and negotiation.^[54] This is important because in practice, many of society's legal problems can be resolved through a non-litigation approach which is faster, simpler and less costly.^[55]

Paralegal training not only provides legal knowledge and technical skills such as interviewing, fact analysis, document preparation, and empathetic communication, but also adapts to the socio-cultural characteristics of the archipelago region to ensure that assistance aligns with local wisdom, customary mechanisms, and respects national law and human rights. The training also includes learning about paralegal professional ethics. Paralegals must understand the limits of their authority, maintain the confidentiality of client information, and avoid conflicts of interest in carrying out their duties.^[56] Professional ethics are an important foundation for maintaining the credibility of the Legal Aid Post as an institution trusted by the public.^[57] With clear ethical standards, people will feel safer and more comfortable in conveying the legal problems they face.^[58] Paralegal training is also aimed at strengthening advocacy and empowerment skills, so that they not only assist in cases but also become agents of change through legal counseling

and outreach to increase public awareness and independence in protecting their rights.

Village Legal Aid Posts must be connected with legal aid institutions, local governments, law enforcement officials, and civil society organizations.^[59] However, in practice, this coordination is not yet synergistic and systematic.^[60] The lack of a structured communication mechanism means that legal aid services often operate independently without strong network support.^[61] This situation can hamper the effectiveness of legal assistance, which requires cross-sector collaboration. Strengthening the Village Legal Aid Post's institutional capacity is also related to the organization's management and governance systems, which are not yet fully professional.^[62] Several Village Legal Aid Posts still do not have clear standard operating procedures, structured administrative mechanisms, or a good case handling documentation system.^[63] The absence of a structured management system can affect the accountability and transparency of legal aid services to the community.^[64] Despite facing various limitations, Village Legal Aid Posts have significant potential to build public legal awareness and expand access to justice. This potential can be optimized through strengthening the regulatory framework, increasing human resource capacity, providing adequate funding, and strengthening synergies between stakeholders. With these steps, Village Legal Aid Posts are expected to function more optimally in providing legal protection while fostering legal awareness at the village level.

Conclusion

The transformation model of Village Legal Aid Posts in Maluku Province demonstrates that Village Legal Aid Posts (Posbankum Desa) are a strategic instrument in fostering legal awareness in island communities and strengthening access to justice. This transformation positions Posbankum not only as a center for legal consultation services but also as a space for village-based legal education, mediation, and empowerment. Through contextual counseling, consultative services, and non-litigation dispute resolution aligned with local wisdom, Posbankum Desa is able to increase community understanding of legal rights and obligations while encouraging orderly and equitable problem resolution. However, the effectiveness of this model still faces obstacles such as limited human resources, budget, legal literacy, and the geographical challenges of the island region.

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