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The Work of Religious Extension Workers in Strengthening Religious Moderation in North Tapanuli

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Abstract

The recent rise in cases of intolerance in Indonesia has encouraged the government to make various efforts to maintain religious harmony for the integrity of the Indonesian nation. One of them is through strengthening religious moderation. Religious extension workers are at the forefront of realizing a program to strengthen religious moderation in all work units within the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, including religious extension workers in North Tapanuli district. The focus of this research is the strategic role of Religious Extension Workers in implementing the strengthening of the religious orientation in the assisted communities, and what efforts have been made by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of North Tapanuli in preparing and empowering religious extension workers as agents or mobilizers religious moderation. This research was conducted by qualitative method. From the research it was found that the presence of religious extension workers in the community is very important to provide counseling and community guidance in caring for plurality and play its role as a driver of strengthening religious moderation.

Keywords: Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic Indonesia; North Tapanuli; religious extension workers; religious moderation; tolerance

INTRODUCTION

Indonesian society consists of various ethnic groups, races, ethnicities, cultures and religions. The reality of this diversity is the wealth and grace owned by the Indonesian nation. The reality of Indonesia's plurality has privileges that must be treated and fought for, because if this diversity is not managed properly, this situation is very potential and even vulnerable to conflict. Pancasila as the basis of our country strongly emphasizes the realization of tolerance and harmony of religious people. It is undeniable that in some parts of Indonesia there are still conflicts and social frictions in the name of religion.¹ The rise of cases of intolerance presented to our nation has recently become a concern in Indonesian society. Based on the results of the Wahid Institut survey in January in 2020, there was an increase in cases of intolerance and radicalism in Indonesia.² The increase in intolerance increased from 46 percent to 54 percent. The high intolerance rate is a threat to the integrity and sustainability of the Indonesian state.

The government has made various efforts to maintain religious harmony for the integrity of the Indonesian nation. One

of the efforts to realize tolerance between religious people is through strengthening religious moderation. The government has turned the religious moderation movement into a national program. The legal basis for the implementation of the religious moderation program is through Presidential Regulation Number 18 of 2020 concerning the National Medium-Term Development Plan for 2020-2024 where one of the programs in HR development is through the Religious Moderation program. As a follow-up to this National Medium-Term Development Plan, the Minister of Religious Affairs issued a Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs Number 720 of 2020 which was updated with the Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs No. 529 of 2021 concerning the Working Group on Strengthening the Religious Moderation Program at the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Efforts to strengthen religious moderation are carried out systematically and continuously, at least through 3 (three) strategies, namely: a) socialization and dissemination of the idea of religious moderation; b) institutionalization of religious moderation into binding programs and policies; and c) integrating the perspective of religious moderation into the Natio-

¹ Dorlan Naibaho et al., "Fostering Fraternity in Humanity: The Church's Efforts to Bring Compassion within the Framework of Religious Moderation," *KURIOS (Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen)* 8, no. 1 (April 30,

2022): 94–104, <https://doi.org/10.30995/KUR.V8I1.537>.

² Institut Wahid, "Survei Wahid Institute: Intoleransi-Radikalisme Cenderung Naik," 2020.

nal Medium-Term Development Plan 2020-2024.³

Religious moderation is used as a way of looking at (perspective) in the practice of life making it a common necessity for religious people. Religious moderation is our way of looking at religion in a moderate way, that is, understanding and practicing religious teachings without extremes, both extreme right and extreme left.⁴ In practical terms, religious moderation is the attitude of religious people who refrain from violence and or intolerant expressions, both towards their own circles and towards those of other religions.⁵ Restraint in their differences in order to respect others is part of the moderation.⁶

The Ministry of Religious Affairs sets out four indicators of religious moderation, namely: national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and being accommodating to local culture.⁷ These four predictors of religious moderation can be used as a benchmark to see how people implement moderate living practices, and at the same time see the potential for tensions in rela-

tions between religious people.⁸ To realize a moderate life attitude, awareness and understanding of the reality of Indonesian pluralism are needed, as well as a commitment to maintain the integrity of the nation. To implement these indicators of religious moderation requires trained human resources to instill the values of religious moderation as a mutually acceptable perspective and basis for thinking. Human resources involved in religious moderation programs are religious leaders, community leaders, educators (academics) and religious extension workers. In carrying out a religious moderation program, all human resources must be prepared to have and expertise in accordance with the needs of the religious moderation program. In order to prepare these HR skills, socialization and training are needed in accordance with the road map for religious moderation that has been prepared by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Every training activity, of course, requires a competent trainer so that the main goal of training can be achieved.

³ Tim Penyusun Kementerian Agama RI, *Moderasi Beragama* (Jakarta: Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kemenag RI, 2019).

⁴ *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*, n.d.

⁵ Sandy Ariawan and Jungjungan Simorangkir, "Understanding the Pattern of Sowing-Reaping in Christianity: Efforts to Redesign the Model of Christian Education in Schools Facing the Aftermath of the Covid-19 Pandemic," *IJETH: International Journal of Education, Theology, and Humanities* X (2020): 1-4.

⁶ Emanuel Gerrit Singgih, "Moderasi Beragama Sebagai Hidup Yang Baik," *GEMA TEOLOGIKA: Jurnal Teologi Kontekstual Dan Filsafat Keilahian* 7, no. 2 (October 25, 2022): 191-212, <https://doi.org/10.21460/GEMA.2022.72.911>.

⁷ Tim Penyusun Kementerian Agama RI, *Moderasi Beragama*.

⁸ Albertus M. Patty, *Moderasi Beragama: Suatu Kebajikan Moral-Etis* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2021).

At this time, the number of religious moderation trainers is still limited, so an increase in the number of religious moderation trainers is needed. In terms of producing trainers then training of trainers is needed. These trainers are expected to be actors who are able to train other human resources such as *widyaswara*, academics religious leaders (lecturers, religious teachers), religious extension workers, and other professions to disseminate and implement messages of religious moderation. With this activity, it is hoped that the number of religious moderation trainers can meet the needs of religious moderation programs, so that the programs that have been set by the government in the national medium-term development plan for 2020-2024 can be achieved.

Religious moderation is a national responsibility or mandate. Every ministry, institution, and local government is expected to synergize and hand in hand to make it happen. The Ministry of Religious Affairs is at the forefront of realizing a program to strengthen religious moderation in all work units within the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, including in North Tapanuli. The work unit of the

Ministry of Religious Affairs of North Tapanuli Regency plays an important role in socializing and empowering its Human Resources (HR) to have knowledge and apply indicators of religious moderation in daily living practices.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research used a qualitative method where the data was analyzed in depth in accordance with the phenomenon to be studied. Bogdan and Taylor revealed that qualitative research is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of words both spoken and written from the object or subject observed.⁹

The data in this study were obtained from various sources related to the problem to be studied.¹⁰ The data sources in this study are divided into two types, namely primary data and secondary data. According to Sugiyono, the primary source is the data source that directly provides data to the data collector, and the secondary source is the indirect source of providing data to the data collector.¹¹ Primary data in this study were obtained directly from the field, such as data obtained from shared questionnaires and direct interviews with the object of study.¹² The main data source in this study was ta-

⁹ Bogdan and Taylor, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (Bandung: Remadja Karya, 2019).

¹⁰ Ajat Rukajat, *Pendekatan Penelitian Kuantitatif: Quantitative Research Approach* (Yogyakarta: Deepublish, 2018).

¹¹ Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2018).

¹² Nana Syaodih, *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2021).

ken from Christian extension workers in North Tapanuli. What is meant by secondary data is data that is used as a supporting or supporting object for the perfection of primary data. The data can be obtained both in the form of office/official files and documentation in the form of pictures, schemes, charts or structuralization of Christian religious counseling in North Tapanuli.¹³

In this study, the data collection method used was an interview to Christian extension workers as informants. Interviews are a way of collecting data by holding questions and answers between data seekers and informants or sources. This method aims to obtain information directly from informants.¹⁴ If in general the interview was conducted with direct question and answer with the informants, in this study, the type of interview used was a guided free interview, which was carried out by bringing a complete and detailed questionnaire.¹⁵ This method is used as the main method of collecting data or information. Of course, the questions raised relate to the role of Christianity in strengthening religious moderation in North Tapanuli. To obtain the validity of the processed data, researchers conducted further interviews using semi-structured interviews, namely the type of inter-

view, which made a series of questions that were already structured, then one by one deepened to pry further information.

The analytical technique used in this study is descriptive qualitative. The qualitative descriptive analysis steps according to Miles and Huberman are divided into three stages, namely: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. This data reduction is a form of data analysis in such a way that the final conclusions of the study can be verified. In this study, the data to be reduced is related to the role of Christian extension workers in strengthening religious moderation and what steps have been taken to make this happen. After the data is reduced, then the data is presented systematically either in the form of narrative text, matrix, network, or chart so that it is easy to understand and draw conclusions from the data. Next is carried out data verification, which is one part of the intact configuration. The meanings that arise from the data are tested for their correctness and suitability so that their validity is guaranteed. The member check stage is carried out by controlling the data and information collected so that the validity of the data can be trusted to be true. The last stage is carried out by testing the credibility of the results of data analysis ob-

¹³ Sukmadinata, *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2021).

¹⁴ Hadi Sutrisno, *Metodologi Research Jilid II* (Yogyakarta: Andi Offset, 2020).

¹⁵ Imam Suprayogo and Tobroni, *Metodologi Penelitian Sosial Agama* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2021).

tained by the data triangulation method, where the method unites data differences so that accurate and precise conclusions are drawn.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Theological Value of Religious Moderation

The goal of religious moderation is to form a moderate paradigm, to build religious attitudes, behaviors, and practices in common life, and how to express the essence of religious teachings or messages in everyday life. Understanding the essence of religious moderation theologically needs to be done to encourage moderate behavior. The theological basis of religious moderation will be studied based on four indicators of religious moderation, namely: national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and acceptance of other cultures.¹⁶

National Commitment

National commitment emphasizes acceptance of the principles of nationhood, loyalty to Pancasila as the philosophy of life of the Indonesian nation, adherence to the constitution of the 1945 Constitution and our persistence in fighting for national unity. The theological basis underlying this attitude is written in biblical texts. God's

command to show obedience and submission to the government, for the government is God's representative on earth as it is written in, Romans 13:1, "every man shall be obedient to the government upon him, for there is no government that does not come from God and is ordained of God." The doctrine of submitting to the government and being ready to do good learning is also the duty of Christians as written in 1 Peter 2:13-14.

Religious moderation has been established by the government as a national program and various efforts have been made to implement the values of religious moderation, so as religious people not only support government programs, but are actively involved in the practice of daily living. The national commitment can only be implemented if each Christian has the awareness and responsibility to seek the good and comfort of the city in which he lives, as set forth in Jeremiah 29:7, "seek the welfare of the city wherever you I throw it away, and pray for the welfare of the city." This means that the welfare of the city, the sense of security, justice, the situation without conflict and commotion depends on the condition of the territory they inhabit, so the welfare of the city must be pursued.

¹⁶ Tim Penyusun Kementerian Agama RI, *Moderasi Beragama*.

Tolerance

Religious moderation in the frame of tolerance provides a space to respect each other's uniqueness and respect each other's uniqueness.¹⁷ Tolerance refers to an open, airy, voluntary, and meek attitude in accepting differences. Tolerance is also always accompanied by an attitude of respect, accepting different people as part of oneself, and having a positive attitude.¹⁸

The Bible as a source of theology stretches the doctrine of tolerance in its deepest meaning. The appreciation and acceptance of all people without discriminating against religious, social, and other background status is expressly stated in the command to love. Jesus gave a command to His people: "I give you a new commandment, so that you may love one another; just as I have loved you, so must ye love one another" (John 13:34). This commandment of "must love" becomes an absolute obligation for everyone who professes Christianity. The first and first law in Christian teaching is to love the Lord God with all your soul and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself (Matt. 22:37). That is, the evidence

of loving God is expressed in the practice of sidekeeping one.¹⁹ The command to love is truly universal, regardless of social status, religion, clan, and other backgrounds. Loving is a command of Jesus that demonstrates the essence of faith in which demonstrates the values of solidarity. This same commandment is also known as the "golden rule" as the essence of tolerance and tolerance: "Everything that you want people to do to you, do likewise to them. That is the content of the whole book of prophets" (Matt. 7:12). The golden law is the basis for an attitude of solidarity to do good to others. The essence of this golden law can also be used as the heart of social ethics for all the religions of the world, because the tolerance contained in this golden law can encourage a more peaceful world.²⁰ A Christian must be one who can live tolerantly with others through a life commitment to accept, love others, and create social relationships in a harmonious brotherhood (Ps. 33) even in the midst of differences of faith.

Anti-Violence

The theological foundation of non-violence is explained in depth in the Bible,

¹⁷ Muhammad. Abror, "Moderasi Beragama Dalam Bingkai Toleransi," *RUSYDIAH: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 1, no. 2 (2020): 137–48, <https://doi.org/10.35961/rsd.v1i2.174>.

¹⁸ Pipit Aidul Fitriyana, *Dinamika Moderasi Beragama Di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kemenag RI, 2020).

¹⁹ Marianne Moyaert, *Fragile Identities: Towards a Theology of Interreligious Hospitality*, ed. De Wit

Hans Etc, *Exchange*, vol. 40 (Amsterdam-New York: Rodopi, 2011), <https://doi.org/10.1163/157254311x600780>.

²⁰ Lee Marsden, "The Golden Rule: Interfaith Peacemaking and the Charter for Compassion," *Review of Faith and International Affairs* 16, no. 3 (2018): 61–75, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2018.1509286>.

because God hates all acts in the form of violence (Gen. 6:13, Jer. 12:19, Ps. 7:16). In the New Testament Jesus taught: “do not resist those who do evil to you, but whosoever gives you your right cheek, give also your left cheek” (Matt. 5:39). The same thing is also said in 1 Peter 3:9, “do not avenge evil dengan evil, or insult with *caci maki*, on the contrary let you bless.” Both of these texts strictly prohibit acts of violence and revenge. Anti-violence insights and appeals need to be echoed by all religious people through teaching, sermons, teaching, and character education from an early age.

Acceptance of Other Cultures

Religion and culture have a close relationship, because humans cannot be separated from these two elements. Living in the midst of cultural diversity is an inevitable reality, so there is no other way but to enjoy that difference and accept it as unique. One way to be able to coexist with the other (the other), begins with a willingness to accept differences and make them a wealth that must be nurtured. The Bible confirms that there is no distinction of human status because all people are equal in God's eyes. Acceptance of the other encourages the spirit of relationships between people and living in harmonious brotherhood as it says in (Ps. 133). Accommodating to other people's cultures is also characterized by opening up

and building interfaith or cross-cultural relationships including learning and mingling with other cultures. Indicators of religious moderation related to acceptance of other cultures are important strategies for cultural preservation, including the promotion of local wisdom in various regions of the Indonesian state.

Efforts and Strategic Role of Religious Extension Officers of the Ministry of Religion of North Tapanuli Regency in Realizing Strengthening Religious Moderation

Education and Training Religious Moderation

From the results of an interview with Tigor Sianturi as the Head of the Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of North Tapanuli Regency, there are several efforts that have been made to prepare extension workers so that they can be at the forefront of strengthening religious moderation in this area. He realized that religious moderation is a national program that is currently being launched by the government by first producing qualified human resources in providing training to strengthen religious moderation. The government organizes various education and training in order to produce trainers, *widyaswara*, educators, including providing education and training to all religious extension workers in Indone-

sia. The Ministry of Religious Affairs in North Tapanuli district has also sent its extension workers to participate in religious training, although not yet a quasi-extension worker has received this training. Some of the programs that have been carried out are by organizing religious moderation training, both from the Ministry of Religious Affairs of North Tapanuli and from the North Sumatra Religious Training Center have been carried out by involving extension workers for various moderation driving training.

Based on the results of the interview with Ka. Bimas Islam Ministry of Religious Affairs of North Tapanuli, namely Mr. Ainuddin Ujung, obtained data that Islamic extension workers with state civil apparatus status totaled 2 people and non state civil apparatus totaled 72 people. In 2021, a training activity on Mainstreaming Religious Moderation was held at the Alfalah Hall in North Tapanuli, attended by 56 Islamic extension workers, both state civil apparatus and non state civil apparatus. Furthermore, in 2022 there has been an activity to strengthen religious moderation at the Palapa Tarutung hotel and was attended by 27 non state civil apparatus extension participants. This activity was organized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of North Tapanuli. Other programs are monthly meetings in the Office of Religious Affairs

of each sub-district, and coordination meetings in the form of regular meetings. This is done to support the success of each planned program, including discussing the implementation of strengthening religious moderation in each sub-district.

According to the Head of Catholic religious affairs, that of the two religious moderation activities that have been carried out, one time initiated and organized by the North Tapanuli Ministry of Religion Office, and subsequently held by the North Sumatra Religious Training Center. He stated that it is important to maintain the integrity of the nation by voicing messages of peace, love for the homeland, and national unity through awareness of the reality of plurality and its dynamics. The Head of the Religious Ministry's Office emphasized the importance of religious believers to use the pulpit of sermons or *tauisyah* with messages and teachings that provide coolness, empathy and solidarity, not things that ignite quarrels, divisions or disputes. Indeed, interfaith relations in North Tapanuli district are harmonious. Protestants Catholics and Christians, and Islam have no problem. However, this harmonious relationship must be maintained and it is necessary to continue to encourage the creation of harmony between religious people. The Ministry of Religious Affairs of North Tapanuli Regency also developed a work program

with the North Tapanuli Interfaith Communication Forum in various activities including organizing religious moderation seminars by involving Islamic, Christian and Catholic extension workers as participants in order to improve the competence of religious extension workers as drivers of strengthening religious moderation. One way to maintain harmony between religious people in heterogeneous or plural areas is to maintain harmony in interfaith relations through the activities of the Interfaith Communication Forum as a forum for bringing together religious and community leaders the role of religious extension workers in every counseling activity that continues to encourage harmony between religious people.²¹

Socialization of Religious Moderation

According to Tigor Sianturi, the head of the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office of North Tapanuli Regency, said that the Ministry of Religion continues to socialize the strengthening of religious moderation. At the sub-district level, the socialization of religious moderation has been carried out through seminars, and they even make religious moderation a thema in regular meetings of religious extension workers held in each sub-district once a month. These areas include: Tarutung District,

Pangaribuan District, Muara District, Siborong-borong District, Sipoholon District, Pahae District (Julu and Jae). This is expected to provide understanding for religious extension workers, especially non state civil apparatus religious extension workers who have not received religious moderation training. Socialization is carried out by making thema religious moderation the topic of religious extension meetings in each sub-district. In addition, religious extension coordinators, who of course have received education and training on religious moderation, always share their insights with other religious extension workers to make the issue of religious moderation part of the coaching and counseling materials in the extension community.

Although education and training programs related to religious moderation are still limited, religious extension workers also receive socialization and education about religious moderation through scientific seminars organized by universities, especially the IAKN Tarutung Religious Extension Education Department as a partner of the North Tapanuli Ministry of Religion. The scientific seminar held nationally through the zoom application by the Religious Extension Education Department “Strengthening Religious Moderation” and material on “How to care for Tolerance bet-

²¹ Abd Kadir, “Peran Penyuluh Agama Dalam Peningkatan Kerukunan Umat Beragama Di

Kabupaten Mamuju,” *Mimikri* 3, no. 1 (2017): 91–100.

ween Religious People,” presented religious extension workers, especially religious extension workers from the Ministry of Religious Affairs of North Tapanuli. National seminars that are held regularly with themes of religious moderation also add to the understanding and insight of extension workers to mainstream religious moderation in the implementation of counseling guidance in the assisted community.

Establishing Values of Religious Moderation in Counseling Materials

In an interview with Mrs. Astrit Octavia Sinaga as the extension coordinator of the Ministry of Religion, North Tapanuli Regency, information was obtained that the Ministry of Religion North Tapanuli had tried to prepare extension workers to provide insight into religious moderation to the assisted community through training for religious moderation drivers (education and training) which had been followed by state civil apparatus extension workers driven by the Medan Religious Training Center.

As the coordinator of religious extension, Mrs. A. Sinaga stated that in the coordination meeting of extension workers held every month, the theme of religious moderation became one of the topics of conversation to mainstream the religious moderation movement. He also recognized the importance of extension workers taking

their part in promoting this religious moderation movement.

Strengthening Religious Moderation through the Practice of Pancasila

The extension workers became participants in this research, having insight into nationality and love for the homeland. The Ministry of Religious Affairs of North Tapanuli Regency has tried to apply the values of Pancasila in real life as an Indonesian citizen. Some evidence that they have a good national insight is the awareness that Indonesian society is plural, cannot be forced to have only one belief, by loving one's own country and obeying government regulations, faithfully paying taxes and evidenced by the existence of an Taxpayer Identification Number, faithfully participating in the flag raising ceremony, mastering the national anthem Indonesia Raya and Pancasila, loving Indonesian products, and actions in daily life are aligned with the values of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution.

In terms of tolerance, all extension workers in the Ministry of Religion of North Tapanuli have applied it in their daily lives. Tangible evidence of tolerance is seen in friendship and rebuke with different religions, respect for other religions that are being discussed, not being fanatical, establishing brotherhood with other religions, not discriminating against other religions in

community activities, respecting and participating in large celebrations and worship outside of one's own religion and still maintaining security around the place of residence, not imposing the will on others both one religion and different religions, and trying to live in harmony with a non-Christian society.

In addition to tolerance, religious extension workers in North Tapanuli have also implemented anti-violent behavior, including opposing terrorists, not vigilantism when there are criminal perpetrators, not committing violence in the workplace and not responding to neighbors who often disturb peace in society, mediating (reconciliation) conflicts/problems in the family, maintaining attitudes and being wise in social media. Religious moderation is not just moderate, but religious moderation is also able to accept other cultures.

The extension workers in North Tapanuli also have an attitude of accepting other cultures, based on the fact that religious extension workers in North Tapanuli always follow the traditional parties around the house, respect the culture around the environment, do not vilify each other's culture, easily accept the culture of others besides Batak culture, learn to use the lan-

guage of other cultures, such as learning the languages of the Karo, Nias, and Simalungun tribes, and learning to enjoy other cultures.²² The hope related to religious moderation that North Tapanuli extension workers, based on the facts found, is to conduct training for extension workers who have not received religious moderation training and socialize religious moderation in the field of education and in the community both rural and urban communities, so that religious moderation can be accepted in society in order to create peace and avoid religious radicalism.

Challenges of Religious Extension Workers in Efforts to Strengthen Religious Moderation

Limited Religious Moderation Training

According to the Head of the Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of North Tapanuli, Tigor Sianturi, religious moderation training is still limited. When questioned have all extension workers had the opportunity to attend religious moderation training? It was found that 4 out of 11 state civil apparatus Christian extension workers had participated in it, but not all non-civil servant Christian extension workers had received religious moderation train-

²² Raja Maradjogi Simatupang, *Dalihan Natolu: Adat Budaya Batak* (Jakarta: Indosari Mediatama, 2020).

ing. Unlike the supervisors in the field, all of them have participated in these activities. It is hoped that all extension workers will have the opportunity to take part in religious moderation training so that extension workers can implement this to their target communities.

In his narration, Tigor Sianturi said that the ministry of religious affairs of North Tapanuli district has made efforts to empower extension workers in various religious moderation activities, in an effort to improve their competence as professional extension workers. Meetings held at the sub-district level discussing themes of religious moderation, added to their insights. It is worthy of appreciation. This activity is also a forum to convey the hopes of non-state civil apparatus extension workers to be included in receiving education and training in moderation.

Low Honorarium of Religious Extension Workers in North Tapanuli

One of the obstacles described by Mr. Tigor Sianturi is the low honorarium of religious extension workers. Another obstacle experienced by extension workers is the problem of the thinking paradigm, which assumes that extension workers cannot carry out any activities without money. It is true that money is necessary, but when there are obstacles in terms of funds, it does not

mean that we stop working. Limited budget funds for extension workers in districts/cities related to religious moderation training. However, he hopes that all the tools in the ministry and religion in each profession and capacity can be based on the main duties and functions, which is just an orientation to money. Such an awareness is constantly built in every individual extension worker, so that the profession he carries as a name as a light that enlightens and educates the community. The Ministry of Religious Affairs, through extension workers is the frontline for religious moderation efforts carried out in this country, so awareness of the duties and responsibilities of extension workers must still be encouraged. The important thing to do is the proposed program of activities related to interfaith praxis activities, such as live-in together between Islamic and Christian or Protestant extension groups, especially youth/youth foster groups. It can also hold joint activities such as environmental cleanliness that is practiced by the youth of the church and church youth, or the interfaith local community. This kind of thing needs to be done to answer the challenges of religious plurality and neutralize the tension of interfaith relations. Budget shortfalls are often an obstacle, but this situation should not be the reason for the absence of work programs, especially in efforts to implement strengthen-

ing religious moderation. Religious extension workers who already receive training are advised to share their knowledge and experience with other extension workers and target groups.

Another highlight is the seriousness of the extension workers carrying out their duties and functions. Integrity is required in terms of preparing counseling work reports. According to the head of the office of the ministry of religious moderation North Tapanuli, there is an impression that in the counseling work report, the activity has been carried out optimally, and the material is delivered as it should be, but their work still needs to be monitored and evaluated regularly. In principle, religious extension workers in North Tapanuli district have tried to do their duties properly, and as much as possible community counseling and guidance have been carried out in assisted groups as appropriate, especially community groups in remote and disadvantaged areas.

Mr. Sihaloho emphasized that the most important thing is to empower extension workers to be a blessing in their various areas of work. And specifically Catholic extension workers are directed to create foster groups (youth faith fosters) organized in schools (extension workers not as teachers but coaches). The evidence in the report that is needed is a stamp from the school. For

state civil apparatus extension workers, they are required to report six activities in their target groups and for non-state civil apparatus extension workers at least two target groups that must be carried out and written in the extension work report.

Absence of Religious Moderation Module

The Ministry of Religious Affairs of North Tapanuli also needs a module on religious moderation to make it easier for them to deliver or adjust counseling materials. Based on the results of interviews with religious extension workers in North Tapanuli, information was obtained that they considered religious moderation to be tantamount to tolerance, some considered that religious tolerance was part of religious moderation and most others considered that the two things were different. Basically, they consider that religious moderation is a movement to counteract radicalism and tolerance as part of religious moderation seeking to maintain harmony by respecting and respecting each other among adherents of different religions.

All extension workers stated that religious moderation is required by all extension workers and pluralistic assisted communities. The extension workers' insights into Pancasila and national commitment helped their understanding of religious moderation. They realize that the role of exten-

sion workers is to take care of existing diversity, and each must show an attitude of tolerance between adherents of different religions. The importance of religious moderation is realized by extension workers as a spearhead of service in the community.

CONCLUSION

In the midst of the plurality of Indonesians who are vulnerable to social and religious conflicts, strengthening religious moderation is a common need in order to build pluralist awareness and acceptance of the reality of diversity itself. Religious moderation is the key to creating harmony, both in the family, society, and nation, even at the global level, so that harmony becomes the glue for national unity and unity can be realized. Religious extension workers are one of the actors and even become the forefront of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia in strengthening religious moderation, because religious extension workers have informative, educational, transformative duties and functions in order to develop religious guidance or counseling activities and nation building through religious language.

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