

Increasing The Capacity of Rural Communities in Peacefully Resolving Legal Conflicts Through Mediation Training

M. Abdim Munib^{a)}, Dodik Wahyono^{b)}, Siti Alfiana Dzakia^{c)}, Nico Ferdian^{d)}

Law Study Program, Universitas Bojonegoro, Bojonegoro, Indonesia

^{a)}Corresponding author: nief_advokat@yahoo.com

^{b)}dodikwahyono71@gmail.com

^{c)}alfianadx@gmail.com

^{d)}nicoferdian38@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Efforts to resolve legal conflicts in villages through non-litigation channels are increasingly being eroded, along with the increase in legal conflict resolution through litigation channels. This condition shows the importance of strengthening the capacity of village communities in managing conflicts peacefully through non-litigation resolutions. Therefore, this community service program aims to increase the capacity of village communities in resolving legal conflicts through peaceful (non-litigation) approaches. The program is implemented through participatory counseling, simulation-based training, group discussions, and mentoring activities in Nglarangan Village, Kanor District, Bojonegoro Regency. Data was collected through observation and evaluation of participants. The results show a significant increase in participants' understanding of the urgency of peaceful legal conflict resolution, the mediation process, constructive communication, and conflict analysis. In addition, participants have improved their skills in facilitating dialogue and formulating mutually beneficial agreements. This program contributes to strengthening community-based conflict resolution and promoting sustainable social harmony.

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INTRODUCTION

A village is an area inhabited by a group of families who hope to live prosperously by utilizing the natural resources around them (Sugiman 2018). A village is a place where people interact with one another economically, culturally, and legally. Village communities often face social and legal conflicts between individuals, families, and groups. These disputes can take the form of boundary and land disputes, inheritance, debt, joint business disputes, conflicts between village officials, or differences in political or customary opinions.

Although most conflicts in villages are simple and can be resolved through deliberation, in practice, it is not uncommon for these conflicts to develop into serious problems that damage social harmony and the order of community life. This situation is often caused by low legal literacy among rural communities, a lack of understanding of peaceful and fair conflict resolution mechanisms, and the inability of village officials or community leaders to mediate effectively.

In fact, conflict resolution through peaceful means such as deliberation, mediation, and restorative justice approaches is an important part of the local wisdom of Indonesian society, which is in line with the values of Pancasila and the principles of restorative justice (Karjono 2024). This tradition emphasizes collective, participatory, and familial problem-solving to restore social relationships, not merely punishing the guilty party. However, with social changes and increasing legal complexity at the village level, this wisdom has begun to erode, so that communities often lose appropriate, effective conflict resolution mechanisms that are in line with local values (Dewa Gede Edi Praditha 2023).

In the context of national legal development, peaceful conflict resolution at the village level has a very strategic position (Yuliyanto 2017). Through Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages, the government has given villages the authority to regulate and manage their interests based on their ancestral rights and customs. This means that villages have great potential to develop community-based dispute resolution mechanisms based on local values (Muhammad et al. 2025). Furthermore, this approach is also in line with Supreme Court Regulation Number 1 of 2016 concerning Mediation Procedures in Court and Restorative Justice Policies, which are now the direction of criminal and civil law reform in Indonesia.

However, this potential has not been optimally realized. Various studies show that in many villages, conflict resolution mechanisms are not well structured, and village officials do not have adequate capacity to carry out mediation or conflict facilitation functions. Efforts to build awareness and increase public understanding of non-litigation conflict resolution have indeed been made, including by M. Irfan Islami Rambe et al. in an article entitled Building Community Harmony Through Peaceful Dispute Resolution Through Arbitration, which was published in the journal *Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat Nusantara (JPKMN)* Volume 6 Number 2, April–June 2025 edition. The conclusion that can be drawn from this scientific work is that building community harmony through peaceful dispute resolution through arbitration can increase awareness of the importance of peaceful dispute resolution, reduce conflict, increase trust, save time and costs, and build social harmony by resolving disputes fairly and transparently (Et al., 2025).

However, existing studies have not sufficiently discussed the practical implementation of community-based mediation training programs at the village level. Therefore, this community service activity aims to strengthen the capacity of village communities in resolving legal conflicts through mediation and participatory training. In addition, it was developed at the technical operational level, including the establishment of a village conflict service system in line with the formation of the Nglarangan Village

Legal Aid Post in Kanor District, Bojonegoro Regency, as stipulated in the Village Head Decree Number: 188/51/Kep/35.22.11.2024/2025 dated October 31, 2025.

Thus, this activity is expected to not only provide short-term benefits in the form of more effective conflict resolution but also have a long-term impact on the formation of a law-abiding, independent, and peaceful society, in line with Indonesia's national legal ideals.

ASSISTANCE LOCATION

This community service program was carried out in Nglarangan Village, Kanor District, Bojonegoro Regency, based on several considerations, including: first, the village government expressed its willingness to become a partner in community service. Second, the East Java Provincial Government has instructed the regency/city governments in East Java to establish village/subdistrict-level Legal Aid Posts within the framework of peaceful resolution of problems in villages/subdistricts. Third, the community still needs legal literacy and techniques for the peaceful resolution of legal problems.

METHOD

The approach used in this community service collaboration is a community-based participatory approach. Systematically, the activities started from basic activities to advanced activities, namely:

- Legal counseling

Materials that can be provided include the importance of peaceful conflict resolution, the principles of restorative justice, and consensus building.

- Mediation and Negotiation Training

The material in this training covers an introduction to the concepts and basic techniques of mediation, facilitation, and peaceful communication, as well as dispute resolution simulations (role play) using case studies.

- Assistance in providing village legal aid services

Assistance for village officials as a concrete part of strengthening peaceful legal conflict resolution in villages. This activity begins with preparing village residents to become service providers at the local Village Legal Aid Post. Next, together they develop Standard Operating Procedures for the provision of peaceful legal conflict resolution services in the village.

This capacity-building program involved approximately 40 participants, including village officials, community leaders, and staff from the Nglarangan Village Legal Aid Post. Data was collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and participant evaluation forms, and was then analyzed using descriptive qualitative methods. This method was chosen because the main objective of the activity was not to test hypotheses or make statistical generalizations, but rather to gain an in-depth understanding of the process of capacity building in rural communities in the peaceful resolution of legal conflicts, as well as to describe changes in the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of participants in a contextual manner.

The stages of activities carried out in this community service activity were broadly oriented towards planned collaborative efforts, beginning with the following stages:

TABLE 1.

No.	Activities	Time
1.	Legal counseling	2 Hours
2.	Mediation and Negotiation Training	2 Hours
3.	Assistance in providing services Village Legal Aid Posts	2 Hours

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the outreach and assistance activities carried out include two main interrelated aspects. The series of community service activities carried out included the following materials:

- Legal Conflicts in Villages and Their Types

Village communities have unique social characteristics marked by close kinship ties, emotional closeness, and strong traditional values that guide social interactions (Ishami, Nurkhasanah, and Raudhatul 2025). These characteristics create high social capital in village communities because social interactions are based on trust and collective solidarity. However, social changes resulting from modernization and village development have also given rise to new dynamics that have the potential to cause legal conflicts between residents (Husni Thamrin et al. 2026). These conflicts are often related to issues of rights, economic interests, and the increasingly complex distribution of village resources. In addition, the low level of legal literacy among rural communities also increases the potential for misunderstandings in conflict resolution (Yamin 2025). Therefore, understanding the social characteristics of rural communities is an important foundation for designing effective and sustainable approaches to conflict resolution.

Legal conflicts in rural communities are situations of conflicting interests related to legal rights and obligations governed by state law, customary law, and local social norms. Legal conflicts are not only normative in nature, but also have social and psychological dimensions that influence the dynamics of relationships between residents. Common types of legal conflicts in villages include land disputes, family conflicts, social conflicts between residents, and disputes related to the management of village resources (Gunawan, Dialog, and Fitriana 2023). The roots of these conflicts often stem from unclear rights, differences in economic interests, poor communication, and low legal understanding among the community. In addition, emotional factors and cultural values also play a significant role in intensifying social conflicts in villages. Thus, legal conflicts in villages must be understood as a multidimensional phenomenon that requires a holistic approach to resolution.

- Litigation and Non-Litigation Approaches to Village Conflict Resolution

Legal conflicts can be resolved through litigation or non-litigation approaches. Each of these approaches to resolution has different characteristics and implications for social relations in the village community. The litigation approach is carried out through judicial institutions with formal procedures and produces binding decisions that tend to result in win-lose solutions (Fakhriah and Afriana 2023). This approach is often necessary in serious conflicts, those involving broad public interests, or when the parties do not have the good faith to reconcile. Conversely, the non-litigation approach emphasizes dialogue, deliberation, and mutual agreement as more flexible and contextual mechanisms for conflict resolution. The non-litigation approach also has the advantage of maintaining social harmony and strengthening long-term relationships between villagers (Hastowo and Laksito 2024). Therefore, the non-litigation approach is considered more relevant in the context of village communities that have strong social ties.

- **Mediation as the Main Instrument for Resolving Village Conflicts**

Mediation is a conflict resolution process involving a neutral third party whose task is to help the parties reach a voluntary, peaceful agreement (S and Syafiuddin 2025). The main principles of mediation include voluntariness, mediator neutrality, confidentiality, equality of the parties, and good faith in the dialogue process. The stages of mediation begin with preparation, opening dialogue, presenting issues, identifying interests, formulating solutions, and drafting a peaceful agreement. In the village context, mediation acts as a communication bridge that can transform conflict into a social learning process. The success of mediation is largely determined by the mediator's ability to create a safe and conducive atmosphere for dialogue between the parties. Thus, strengthening the mediation capacity of village communities is an important strategy in building a culture of peaceful conflict resolution.



FIGURE 1. Presentation of material on the peaceful resolution of village conflicts

- **Local Wisdom as Social Capital for Conflict Resolution**

Local wisdom, such as deliberation, cooperation, and family values are the main social capital in resolving conflicts in rural communities. The value of deliberation reflects the tradition of consensus-based decision-making that has long been practiced in rural communities. Meanwhile, cooperation strengthens social solidarity and facilitates cooperation in solving common problems. The integration of state law and customary law also enables the creation of substantive justice that is more acceptable to the community (Tenripadang and Mustarin 2025). Therefore, the synergy between local values and the formal legal system is an effective strategy in resolving village conflicts.

On the other hand, the Village Government has a strategic role as a facilitator in resolving community legal conflicts through a participatory and dialogical approach. The village head acts as a leader who maintains social stability while mediating conflicts between residents as mandated in Law Number 6 of 2014. The Village Consultative Body functions to absorb community aspirations and bridge the interests of residents in the conflict resolution process. In addition, village community institutions play a role in driving community participation in maintaining social harmony. Conflict prevention strategies include

improving community legal literacy, transparency in village administration, and strengthening village deliberative forums as spaces for participatory dialogue (Muhammad Khalali, Arista Candra Irawati, 2025). Thus, strengthening the capacity of village institutions is a key factor in creating a sustainable conflict resolution system.

▪ **Stages and Processes of Mediation in Resolving Village Legal Conflicts**

The mediation process in resolving legal disputes in village communities is a conflict resolution mechanism that is carried out systematically through structured stages and is oriented towards achieving a sustainable, peaceful agreement. The stages in the implementation of mediation are as follows:

- ✓ Mediation preparation (identification of issues and parties involved);
- ✓ Opening and explanation of rules (setting ground rules)
- ✓ Presentation of issues (each party is allowed to present issues from their perspective)
- ✓ Identification of interests (exploring actual needs)
- ✓ Formulation of Solution Options (seeking alternative solutions)
- ✓ Agreement and closing (finalization and documentation)

The stages in the mediation process are a series of steps that must be carried out sequentially, as they form an integrated process aimed at creating social harmony and peaceful justice in the village community.



FIGURE 2. Discussion and Q&A on the stages of peaceful village conflict resolution

This service significantly impacted the participants' capacity building. Evidently, the evaluation results through pre-tests and post-tests showed an increase in understanding after the activity. In the pre-test, most participants were in the low category. In contrast, after the activity, the post-test results showed an increase in understanding and skills.

DISCUSSION

This community service activity was carried out in response to the local community's lack of literacy regarding the legal framework and the urgency of resolving legal conflicts in the village peacefully without having to go through litigation (the judicial system). In addition, this activity was also intended as an effort to provide skills in mediation techniques with the hope that paralegals at the Legal Aid Posts that had been established in the target villages would have the technical ability to resolve conflicts.

Rural areas such as Bojonegoro Regency must shift the pattern of conflict resolution from a confrontational approach to a mediative approach in order to create social stability. Referring to Lawrence Friedman's legal system theory, the effectiveness of law in villages is greatly influenced by the legal culture of the community, which tends to still view the court system as a symbol of absolute supremacy (Rachmarani, Afriana, and Mantili 2024). However, the high cost of litigation and the complexity of the judicial bureaucracy often create barriers to justice for vulnerable groups. Therefore, this outreach and training emphasizes the importance of reconstructing citizens' legal awareness so that they view conflict as an opportunity for social restoration, not merely a competition for rights. By changing this perspective, the people of Nglarangan Village can reduce their dependence on formal institutions, which often create opportunities for psychological problems between residents after legal conflicts are resolved. This effort is in line with the global movement to strengthen community-based justice that is more inclusive and responsive (Askolani 2024)

The success of this program is influenced by a participatory approach that is in line with the community-based justice model. Through these activities, community leaders and village Legal Aid Post officers now have the basic skills to mediate effectively when conflicts between residents are unavoidable.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above description, community-based training in mediation and peaceful communication effectively improves the ability of village communities to resolve legal conflicts. This program improves participants' knowledge, skills, and attitudes towards conflict resolution without litigation. Improving local mediation capacity can contribute to sustainable social harmony and community resilience.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above conclusions, it is recommended that: first, village governments institutionalize village mediation mechanisms by establishing forums or mediation teams involving community leaders, village officials, and youth as a means of preventing long-term conflict. Second, capacity-building programs need to be sustained through more practical follow-up training, particularly in strengthening peaceful communication skills and negotiation techniques for local mediators.

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