

The Role of Local Actors in the Development of Zakat Village : Religious Leaders and Village Government in Banjarwaru Village, Nusawungu Subdistrict, Cilacap Regency

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Abstract - This study aims to analyze the role of local actors, namely religious leaders and the village government, in the development of the Zakat Village Program in Banjarwaru, Nusawungu District, Cilacap Regency. Religious leaders serve a strategic function as agents of religious education by consistently delivering messages on zakat obligations through Friday sermons, religious gatherings, and community study forums. Their scholarly authority and spiritual approach have strengthened awareness and compliance among community members to fulfill zakat, particularly zakat mal, through official Zakat Collection Units (UPZ). Meanwhile, the village government plays a structural role through policies establishing UPZ in each prayer house, integrating zakat into the Village Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMDes), and providing institutional support. The government also promotes productive zakat distribution, skills training for beneficiaries, and systematic data collection of muzakki and mustahik. The synergy between religious leaders and the village government demonstrates that educational, structural, and economic collaboration can enhance community participation and realize more professional and sustainable zakat governance at the village level.

Keywords - community empowerment, local actors, religious leaders, village government, zakat management

I. INTRODUCTION

Zakat holds a strategic role as an instrument for wealth redistribution and community empowerment [1]. In addition to its value as an act of worship, zakat also functions as an instrument of socio-economic development that can help reduce poverty and inequality [2]. However, the realization of national zakat collection remains far below its potential, indicating the need for more effective and sustainable management strategies. Zakat holds a strategic role as an instrument for wealth redistribution and community empowerment [1]. In addition to its value as an act of worship, zakat also functions as an instrument of socio-economic development that can help reduce poverty and inequality [2]. However, the realization of national zakat collection remains far below its potential, indicating the need for more effective and sustainable management strategies.

One of the innovations in zakat management is the Zakat Village program initiated by BAZNAS in collaboration with strategic partners. This program integrates religious aspects with community empowerment, positioning zakat not only as a ritual obligation but also as an instrument for community development [3]. Banjarwaru Village in Cilacap Regency is one of the loci of this program's implementation, demonstrating the significant role of local actors.

Religious leaders play a role in shaping religious awareness and encouraging community compliance, while the village government provides institutional, regulatory, and programmatic support [4], [5]. The collaboration between the two serves as a key factor in ensuring both the effectiveness and sustainability of Zakat Village development at the local level.

Although there is a considerable amount of research on zakat, studies that specifically focus on the role of local actors in the context of Zakat Village remain limited. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the roles of religious leaders and the village government in Banjarwaru Village. The findings are expected to enrich contemporary zakat literature and provide practical recommendations for optimizing community-based zakat programs.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach using a case study method to understand the roles of local actors, particularly religious leaders and the village government, in the development of Zakat Village in Banjarwaru Village, Nusawungu Subdistrict, Cilacap Regency [6].

Informants were selected purposively, encompassing three main groups: the community as muzakki, religious leaders as providers of religious understanding, and village officials as parties involved in the regulation and policy of zakat management [7]. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, document studies, and focus group discussions (FGD) [8], [9].

Data validity was ensured through triangulation by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and official documents [10]. Data analysis was conducted in stages, including data reduction, data presentation, as well as drawing

and verifying conclusions to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the roles of local actors in the sustainability of Zakat Village.

III. RESULTS

A. *The Role of Religious Leaders in the Development of Zakat Village*

Religious leaders serve as the primary actors in fostering community awareness regarding the obligation of zakat. They utilize religious forums such as Friday sermons and majelis taklim as educational platforms. Ustadz Ahmad (Religious Leader) stated, *“Since being designated as a Zakat Village, we have consistently included explanations about zakat in sermons and religious gatherings. The aim is for the community to understand that zakat is not merely charity, but a Sharia obligation.”* This role is acknowledged by the community. One resident, Mr. Mukhlisin (Muzakki), remarked, *“If we are confused about zakat calculations, we usually consult the ustadz directly. He informs us of the exact amount of zakat to be paid.”* This indicates that religious leaders not only function as information providers but also as authoritative references in zakat practices.

In addition, non-formal forums such as tahlilan are also utilized to convey zakat messages in simple language, making them more easily understood by community members with limited educational backgrounds. The presence of religious leaders further reinforces the social legitimacy of the Zakat Collection Unit (UPZ). Many members of the community have begun to channel their zakat through the UPZ following direct appeals from religious leaders during religious gatherings. Thus, religious leaders serve a dual role: as authoritative references for religious knowledge and as mediators who reduce the psychological distance between the community and zakat institutions.

B. *The Role of Village Government in Enhancing the Effectiveness of Zakat Village*

The Banjarwaru Village Government supports the development of Zakat Village through institutional policies, program integration, and productive zakat distribution. One of the main steps is the establishment of a Zakat Collection Unit (UPZ) in every mushalla, providing the community with closer and more trustworthy access for channeling their zakat. The Head of Banjarwaru Village, Mr. Mugi Prihantono, explained, *“We established UPZ in each mushalla so that the community can easily pay zakat. In addition, the zakat program is included in the RPJMDes to provide a clear legal basis.”*

In addition to institutional policies, the village government also develops productive zakat programs, such as livestock assistance and small business capital, aimed at promoting the economic independence of mustahik. Mr. Slamet (Mustahik) stated, *“Previously, I only received zakat in the form of rice; now I receive goat assistance from the UPZ. Alhamdulillah, I am able to develop, and even start generating profits.”*

The government also implements a systematic data collection mechanism for both muzakki and mustahik, ensuring that zakat distribution is targeted accurately through transparent accountability reports. In addition, zakat socialization is conducted on a scheduled basis, both through official village forums and religious activities, further reinforcing the program's legitimacy in the eyes of the community.

C. *The Synergy between Religious Leaders and Village Government*

The synergy between religious leaders and the village government serves as a crucial factor in the effectiveness of the Zakat Village Program. The village government actively involves religious leaders in socialization efforts, particularly through religious forums. Wahid Azis, a village official, stated, *“When a kyai provides explanations about zakat, the community trusts and is more willing to follow.”*

This collaboration is reflected in the routine coordination among the UPZ, village officials, and religious leaders in preparing zakat dakwah materials. The presence of religious leaders provides spiritual legitimacy, while the government offers institutional and policy support. The synergy between the two strengthens community acceptance of a more organized and Sharia-compliant zakat payment system.

IV. DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that the development of Zakat Village in Banjarwaru Village is highly influenced by the roles of local actors, namely religious leaders and the village government, who synergistically shape community awareness and compliance with zakat obligations. Religious leaders hold a strategic role as both sources of knowledge and social mediators, utilizing various religious forums such as Friday sermons, majelis taklim, routine religious gatherings, and

tahlilan to convey zakat education repeatedly and gradually. Their presence helps the community understand that zakat mal is not merely charity, but a Sharia obligation encompassing agriculture, trade, and income. The use of simple language in non-formal forums facilitates comprehension among residents with limited educational backgrounds, while the active involvement of religious leaders in encouraging the community to channel zakat through the Zakat Collection Unit (UPZ) reinforces the social legitimacy of the institution and reduces the psychological distance between the community and the official zakat management system. Community responses demonstrate increased openness and compliance, evident in the growing number of residents consulting on zakat calculations, nishab, and haul, as well as their willingness to follow the guidance of religious leaders regarding distribution through the UPZ.

The role of the village government is also proven to be crucial in the effectiveness of Zakat Village. The government supports the establishment of Zakat Collection Units (UPZ) in every mushalla, integrates zakat programs into the RPJMDes, and provides operational budget allocations as well as training for UPZ administrators. This support expands the community's access to channel zakat through official channels and enhances the program's legitimacy. In addition, the village government develops productive zakat distribution programs, such as livestock assistance and small business capital, to increase the economic independence of mustahik and provide long-term social benefits. The systematic data collection mechanisms for muzakki and mustahik, along with transparent zakat distribution reports, demonstrate professional management and prevent misallocation. Routine socialization through official forums and religious activities further strengthens community acceptance of a structured zakat payment system.

The synergy between religious leaders and the village government serves as the primary factor in the success of Zakat Village. The involvement of religious leaders in preparing educational materials and delivering zakat dakwah provides spiritual legitimacy, while the village government offers institutional and policy support. Routine coordination among the UPZ, village officials, and religious leaders ensures the consistent and targeted delivery of zakat messages. This synergy fosters collective awareness within the community, transforming zakat practices from individualistic and ritualistic behaviors into collective compliance grounded in religious morality. As a result, the residents of Banjarwaru increasingly fulfill their zakat mal obligations through official channels, with a better understanding of the types of zakat, the timing of payment, and the socio-economic benefits generated.

Thus, the development of Zakat Village demonstrates that the effectiveness of the program heavily depends on the combination of educational, spiritual, and structural roles played by local actors. Religious leaders, as conveyors of religious values, and the village government, as institutional facilitators, collaborate to build a professional, transparent, and sustainable zakat ecosystem. This collaboration not only enhances community compliance but also promotes local economic welfare through productive zakat initiatives.

V. CONCLUSION

The development of Zakat Village in Banjarwaru demonstrates that the roles of local actors, particularly religious leaders and the village government, are crucial in enhancing community awareness and compliance with zakat obligations. Religious leaders function as educational agents and social mediators, conveying zakat understanding through both formal and non-formal religious forums, while also encouraging residents to channel zakat through official channels such as the UPZ. Meanwhile, the village government provides institutional support, policy guidance, and productive zakat programs that ensure zakat distribution is properly targeted and delivers long-term economic benefits to mustahik. The synergy between religious leaders and the village government establishes an effective, transparent, and sustainable zakat management ecosystem, transforming community zakat practices from individualistic behaviors into collective compliance grounded in religious morality. These findings underscore the importance of educational, spiritual, and structural collaboration in the development of Zakat Village as a model of professional zakat management that contributes meaningfully to the socio-economic welfare of the village.

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