

Religious Leaders' Responses to Government Political Policies Following Flood and Landslide Disasters in Barumon, Padang Lawas, North Sumatra

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Abstract

The flood and landslide disasters that struck several regions of Sumatra, including Barumon, Padang Lawas, North Sumatra, have generated substantial social, economic, and environmental challenges. Beyond causing physical damage to infrastructure, agricultural land, and places of worship, these disasters have also raised concerns regarding environmental degradation and the effectiveness of government policies in disaster mitigation and recovery. In this context, religious leaders play a strategic role as moral authorities and community mediators in responding to government policies and strengthening social resilience. This study aims to examine the role of religious leaders in environmental preservation, their responses to government environmental policies, and their perspectives on post-disaster recovery policies in Barumon, Padang Lawas, North Sumatra.

This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation involving twenty religious leaders consisting of fifteen Muslim leaders and five Christian leaders. The collected data were analyzed through a descriptive qualitative process to identify patterns, meanings, and relationships among the findings.

The results reveal three major findings. First, religious leaders play a significant role in preventing environmental degradation by promoting moral and religious values that encourage environmental stewardship and condemn destructive practices. Second, religious leaders respond positively to government environmental policies, particularly those related to forest conservation, the prevention of illegal logging, and reforestation programs. Collaborative initiatives involving local governments, religious leaders, and communities have strengthened environmental rehabilitation efforts. Third, religious leaders strongly support post-disaster recovery policies, including the rehabilitation of places of worship, river restoration programs, community economic recovery, and housing reconstruction. Their active involvement in both religious outreach and community-based activities has enhanced public trust and contributed to social recovery. The study concludes that religious leaders serve as influential actors in promoting environmental awareness, supporting public policies, and fostering community resilience in post-disaster contexts.

Keywords: religious leaders; political policy; disaster recovery; flood and landslide disasters; environmental conservation; community resilience.

Introduction

Floods and landslides that struck Aceh, North Sumatra, and West Sumatra at the end of 2025 caused severe humanitarian, social, and economic consequences. The disasters resulted in substantial loss of life, widespread infrastructure damage, disruption of livelihoods, and significant environmental degradation. Despite the magnitude of the disaster, affected communities demonstrated remarkable resilience through mutual cooperation, social solidarity, and collective action, which became important social capital in maintaining community cohesion during the recovery process (Medan, 2025).

Amid the suffering caused by the loss of family members, homes, and sources of income, affected communities maintained optimism through the support provided by government institutions, humanitarian organizations, and civil society groups. Government assistance programs and rapid humanitarian responses contributed significantly to strengthening community resilience and reducing the psychological burden experienced by disaster victims (Observasi, 2025). Such solidarity reflects the continuing strength of social cohesion and national identity in Indonesia, where collective action often emerges in response to humanitarian crises.

Disasters frequently reveal not only environmental vulnerabilities but also social strengths. The flow of assistance from different regions of Indonesia to disaster-affected communities demonstrates the enduring values of humanity, empathy, and mutual support. Beyond material aid, these responses provide emotional reassurance and encourage communities to rebuild their lives after experiencing profound losses.

Among the disaster-affected areas in Sumatra, Barumon in Padang Lawas Regency, North Sumatra, represents a significant case for investigation. The region experienced extensive damage to agricultural land, plantations, residential areas, roads, bridges, and religious facilities. Local residents suffered severe psychological trauma as a consequence of the disaster (Simatupang, 2025). Community members, religious leaders, and customary leaders widely perceived that the disaster was exacerbated by long-term environmental degradation caused by irresponsible exploitation of forest resources. This perception is consistent with the environmental perspective reflected in the Qur'an (Ar-Rum: 41), which emphasizes that environmental destruction originates from human actions.

Three major rivers—the Barumon River, Aek Jorbing River, and Sosa River—play a vital role in supporting local livelihoods through agriculture and

fisheries. However, prolonged deforestation in upstream areas has increased environmental vulnerability, contributing to severe flooding and landslides. The disaster damaged agricultural land, destroyed houses along riverbanks, and affected important religious facilities. For example, the Miftahul Ghufon Mosque in Siraisan Village suffered substantial damage due to flooding and landslides, disrupting congregational prayers and Qur'anic learning activities for children (H. D. Nasution, 2025).

Similarly, the HKBP Church in Sosa Village experienced significant structural damage caused by flooding, landslides, and drifting logs. As a result, the congregation was unable to celebrate Christmas in 2025 at their local church and was forced to conduct religious services at another church approximately 50 kilometers away. During this difficult period, religious leaders played a crucial role in providing spiritual support and strengthening community resilience. Through effective communication, they encouraged patience, reinforced faith, and fostered confidence that government institutions would respond appropriately to community needs (Simbolon, 2025).

Government agencies, including central and local governments, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and various humanitarian organizations, provided assistance during the post-disaster recovery period. Through constructive communication between public authorities and religious leaders, support was mobilized for the rehabilitation of damaged mosques and churches. Gradually, communities began to adapt to post-disaster conditions and rebuild their lives despite ongoing challenges resulting from the floods and landslides.

Demographically, the population of Barumun is predominantly composed of Mandailing and Angkola Batak ethnic groups, with smaller populations of Minangkabau, Malay, and Javanese communities. Approximately 95 percent of residents are Muslim, while the remaining population is Christian. Social harmony is maintained through strong kinship networks and the Batak cultural philosophy of *Dalihan Na Tolu*, which emphasizes mutual respect and social balance. These cultural values contribute significantly to peaceful interreligious relations and social cohesion within the region (Hasibuan, 2025).

Religious organizations, including Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, Al-Washliyah, and the HKBP Church, maintain active communication and cooperation in promoting social harmony. Following the disaster, religious leaders became important actors in fostering stability and reducing social tensions. Through religious messages and community engagement, they helped transform public anger and disappointment into constructive efforts toward recovery and reconciliation (D. Nasution, 2025).

Previous studies have emphasized the importance of religion and community leadership in disaster contexts. Hakkim & Deb, (2022). Found that

religious meaning-making strengthens prosocial behavior and enhances community resilience among disaster response volunteers. Christia et al., (2026). Demonstrated that collaboration between religious leaders and local communities can improve disaster preparedness by integrating religious beliefs into risk management strategies. Likewise, Salsabilah, (2023) reported that religious commitment contributes positively to economic resilience and collective recovery after flood disasters. From a governance perspective, Hutagalung, (2025) highlighted the importance of adaptive governance in disaster risk reduction, while et al, (2025) emphasized the integration of scientific and religious perspectives in disaster mitigation efforts within Muslim communities.

While previous studies have examined religion, disaster resilience, environmental awareness, and disaster governance separately, little attention has been given to how religious leaders respond to government environmental and post-disaster recovery policies in culturally distinctive communities. This study contributes to the literature by examining the intersection of religious leadership, environmental governance, and disaster recovery in Barumon, Padang Lawas, North Sumatra, a region characterized by strong religious authority and Batak cultural traditions.

This study is grounded in Response Theory, which explains how individuals or social groups react to particular stimuli, events, or policies (Subandi, 1995). Responses are generally manifested through cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions that reflect individuals' understanding, attitudes, and actions toward a given issue (Rakhmat, 1998). In the context of this study, the theory is used to analyze how religious leaders perceive, evaluate, and respond to government environmental and post-disaster recovery policies in Barumon, Padang Lawas. To strengthen this analysis, the study also adopts Deborah Norden's perspective on societal responses to government policies, which categorizes responses into collusive, competitive, and combative patterns, depending on the degree of support or criticism expressed toward public policies.

The concept of religious leadership is equally important in understanding the role of religious leaders within disaster-affected communities (Furchan, Arief dan Maimun, 2005). Religious leaders are widely recognized as moral authorities who possess religious knowledge, social legitimacy, and the ability to influence public attitudes and behavior (Lubis, 2007). Beyond their spiritual functions, they often act as mediators between communities and government institutions, particularly during periods of crisis (Williams, 2011). Previous studies have demonstrated that religious leaders contribute significantly to social cohesion, emotional recovery, and community resilience by providing moral guidance, strengthening collective solidarity, and encouraging public

participation in recovery efforts (Effendy, 2013).

This study also draws on public policy theory, which views policy as a series of governmental decisions and actions intended to address public problems and promote collective welfare (Marzali, 2012). According to Dye, (1992). public policy encompasses both actions taken and actions deliberately not taken by government institutions. In post-disaster contexts, environmental protection, forest conservation, disaster mitigation, and recovery programs constitute important policy instruments for rebuilding affected communities. Therefore, examining religious leaders' responses to these policies provides valuable insights into the relationship between public policy implementation, community acceptance, and social resilience in disaster-prone areas (Wahab, 2008).

Accordingly, this study addresses three research questions: What roles do religious leaders play in preventing environmental degradation in Barumon, Padang Lawas? How do religious leaders respond to government environmental policies in Barumon, Padang Lawas? and How do religious leaders respond to government post-disaster recovery policies following the floods and landslides in Barumon, Padang Lawas, North Sumatra?

Methods

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore religious leaders' responses to government political policies following the flood and landslide disasters in Barumon, Padang Lawas, North Sumatra. The research participants consisted of twenty religious leaders, including fifteen Muslim leaders and five Christian leaders, selected based on their active roles and influence within local communities. The object of the study was government political policies related to environmental conservation, flood prevention, and post-disaster recovery programs, including the rehabilitation of housing, roads, bridges, and agricultural land. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted openly to explore participants' perspectives, experiences, and evaluations regarding government environmental and post-disaster recovery policies (Bungin, 2016). Observations were carried out to examine the physical conditions of disaster-affected areas and ongoing recovery efforts, while documentation was used to obtain demographic data and records related to the rehabilitation of public facilities, including houses, schools, roads, bridges, mosques, and churches (Moleong, 2015). The collected data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis, involving data reduction, categorization, interpretation, and critical examination to identify patterns and relationships among the findings (Sugiyono, 2012). This analytical process enabled a comprehensive understanding of religious leaders' responses to government policies and their roles in supporting environmental protection and post-disaster recovery in

Barumun, Padang Lawas.

Findings and Discussion

1. The Role of Religious Leaders in Preventing Environmental Degradation

a. Religious Leaders as Opinion Leaders

Religious leaders in Barumun, Padang Lawas, North Sumatra, play a significant role in various aspects of community life. As a predominantly religious society, the people of Barumun regard religious leaders as moral guardians and highly respected figures within the social structure. Their strategic position is closely associated with their responsibility to provide religious guidance, spiritual counseling, and moral education to the community.¹ Through religious sermons, social outreach activities, and community engagement programs, religious leaders contribute significantly to enhancing public awareness and social development. Consequently, they function as opinion leaders who help interpret contemporary social issues and provide ethical perspectives on matters affecting the community. Their extensive knowledge and moral authority make them trusted sources of guidance, not only in religious matters but also in social and political affairs.

Environmental degradation caused by illegal logging and the expansion of oil palm plantations has long been a major concern among religious leaders in Barumun.² For decades, they have consistently delivered religious messages emphasizing the importance of environmental conservation and warning against actions that cause ecological destruction. These messages are communicated through sermons in mosques, churches, and various religious gatherings. Religious leaders believe that strengthening environmental awareness through religious teachings is essential for preventing environmental degradation because individuals who adhere faithfully to religious values are expected to refrain from activities that damage nature and disrupt ecological balance.

Both Islamic and Christian teachings emphasize that environmental destruction contradicts religious principles and moral obligations. Consequently, environmental degradation is viewed as a collective concern that requires joint action from all members of society.³ Nevertheless, religious leaders have faced substantial challenges in addressing forest destruction caused by illegal business actors and, in some cases, individuals associated with governmental and security institutions. Despite continuous efforts to promote environmental stewardship, their messages were frequently ignored, contributing to severe environmental consequences that culminated in

¹ Interview with Abdul Wahab (Barumun community leader), December, 18, 2025

² Interview with H. Sarjana Syakir Nasution (Barumun Religious Figure), December, 17, 2025

³ Interview with Tigor Simatupang (Barumun Christian Figure), December 19, 2025

the devastating floods and landslides that affected Barumon in late 2025.

**LIST OF RELIGIOUS FIGURES IN BARUMUN WHO ACTIVELY
PREACH TO PREVENT ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE IN 2025/2026**

NO	NAME	INFORMATION
1	Drs. H. Syafaruddin Hasibuan, MA	Pesantren Aek Hayuara
2	H. Sarjana Syakir Nasution, S.Ag	Majalis Taklim Sibuhuan Julu
3	H. Nawawi Daulay, S.Ag	Majelis Taklim Sosa
4	H. Mujahid Harahap, S.Ag	Majelis Taklim Tandihat
5	Drs. H. Rohyan Hasibuan, M.A	Pesanten al Hakimiyah
6	H. Ismail Nasution, Lc. M.Th.	MUI Padang Lawas
7	Drs. H. Damanhuri Rangkuti	MUI Ulu Barumon
8	Pdt. Drs. Tigor Simatupang	Gereja HKBP Sosa Julu
9	Pdt. Parulian Simanjuntak, M.A.	Gereja HKBP Sosa Jae
10	Pdt. Luhut Pardomuan Tarigan	Gereja HKBP desa Rumbao

Source: Documentation of FKUB Padanglawas North Sumatra 2025⁴

Religious leaders in Barumon deserve recognition for their consistent commitment to promoting environmental awareness and conservation. Although most of them do not possess formal educational backgrounds in forestry or environmental sciences, they draw upon religious teachings that strongly advocate environmental protection. In Islam, for example, environmental stewardship is closely linked to the Qur'anic principle articulated in Surah Ar-Rum (30:41), which warns that environmental damage results from human actions. These religious perspectives have enabled religious leaders to become influential advocates for environmental responsibility within their communities.

Among the regions affected by floods and landslides in Sumatra, Barumon, Padang Lawas, became the primary focus of this study due to the scale of destruction experienced by local communities. In addition to psychological trauma, residents faced numerous social and economic consequences, including loss of life, destruction of housing, damage to agricultural land, disruption of livelihoods, and deterioration of public infrastructure. Government records documented substantial impacts on local communities, including fatalities, displaced families, damaged religious facilities, destroyed bridges, and extensive losses in agriculture and livestock. These impacts illustrate the multidimensional consequences of environmental degradation and natural disasters on community well-being.

⁴ Documentation of FKUB Padanglawas tahun 2025

**The Impact of Floods and Landslides in Barumon, Padanglawas, North
Sumatra in 2025**

NO	DISASTER IMPACT	DESCRIPTION
1	Residents swept away	There were 18 residents swept away in the Barumon River and Sosa River
2	Fatalities	Two people died due to a landslide in Siraisan Ulu Barumon village.
3	The house is washed away	There are 20 floating houses located on the banks of the Sosa River and the Barumon River.
4	Agricultural land is damaged	More than 300 hectares of residents' agricultural land were damaged due to floods and landslides.
5	Damaged mosque	There were 3 mosques damaged in Ulu Barumon due to floods and landslides
6	Damaged Church	There is 1 damaged church in the sosa area due to floods and landslides
7	Damages bridges	There are 3 damaged bridges over the Barumon River and 2 bridges over the Sosa River
8	Evacuated residents	There are 16 families displaced from their homes along the banks of the sosa and Barumon Rivers
9	Traumatized residents	Thousands of Barumon residents are traumatized by the 2025 flood and landslide disasters
10	Jobless residents	Hundreds of residents lost their jobs due to the destruction of agricultural land and plantations
11	Livestock swept away and missing	Hundreds of livestock were swept away and went missing during the 2025 flood disaster

Source: Documentation of Padanglawas December 2025⁵

Despite these challenges, disaster response efforts were implemented collaboratively by central and local governments, humanitarian organizations, community groups, and religious institutions. Assistance from various regions

⁵ Documentation of Padanglawas, 2025

of Indonesia reflected strong social solidarity and national unity.⁶ Religious leaders actively participated alongside government agencies and local communities in providing humanitarian assistance, supporting reconstruction efforts, and encouraging collective action. Through these collaborative initiatives, the people of Barumun gradually began to recover from the disaster and rebuild their social and economic lives.

2. Religious Leaders' Responses to Government Political Policies on Forest Conservation

a. Forest Conservation Regulations

In principle, government policies concerning forest protection and conservation in Indonesia have been relatively comprehensive and oriented toward public welfare. The legal framework governing forest management is primarily based on Law No. 41 of 1999 on Forestry and Law No. 18 of 2013 on the Prevention and Eradication of Forest Destruction. These regulations emphasize ecosystem preservation and sustainable forest management through forest zoning systems, including protected, conservation, and production forests. Government policies also include moratoriums on new permits for primary forests and peatlands, reforestation and ecosystem restoration programs, forest patrols conducted by Forest Management Units (FMUs), and strict legal measures against illegal logging activities. In addition, social forestry initiatives and the recognition of customary forest rights have been introduced to encourage community participation in forest conservation.⁷

According to religious leaders in Barumun, the existing regulatory framework demonstrates the government's commitment to environmental protection and sustainable natural resource management. Forests, water resources, and other environmental assets are regarded as essential foundations of community well-being and should therefore be preserved collectively. Religious leaders generally acknowledge that government regulations are designed to ensure environmental sustainability and intergenerational justice. However, they also emphasize that the effectiveness of these policies depends largely on their implementation and enforcement at the local level.

Despite the existence of comprehensive regulations, many religious leaders perceive a significant gap between policy formulation and practical implementation. Illegal logging, forest encroachment, and the conversion of forest areas into oil palm plantations continue to occur in many parts of Barumun. Informants argued that environmental destruction is often tolerated due to weak law enforcement and the involvement of certain business actors

⁶ Interview With H. Rohyan (Barumun Religious Figure) December, 22 2025

⁷ UU NO. 41 tahun 1999 tentang Kehutanan dan UU NO.18 tahun 2013 tentang Pencegahan dan Pemberantasan Perusakan Hutan (UU P3H)

who prioritize short-term economic gains over long-term environmental sustainability. Some respondents also expressed concerns regarding alleged collusion between illegal logging operators and individuals within government or security institutions. Consequently, local communities often perceive that environmental regulations are not enforced consistently, thereby reducing public trust in government environmental policies.

b. Preventing Illegal Logging

Religious leaders in Barumon demonstrated a strong understanding of government environmental policies, particularly those related to forest conservation. While they generally supported the objectives of existing regulations, they consistently highlighted discrepancies between policy intentions and realities on the ground. Forested areas that were once characterized by dense vegetation and ecological richness in regions such as the Bukit Barisan Mountains, Simartolu Hills, and Ulu Barumon have gradually been transformed into degraded landscapes and oil palm plantations. According to religious leaders, these environmental changes have significantly increased the vulnerability of local communities to floods and landslides.

For more than two decades, religious leaders have repeatedly warned communities and government authorities about the environmental risks associated with illegal logging. Through sermons, religious gatherings, and public discussions, they emphasized the importance of environmental stewardship and criticized the exploitation of forest resources for short-term economic interests.⁸ However, many of these warnings received limited attention from policymakers and local stakeholder. Although the consequences of deforestation were not immediately visible, the devastating floods and landslides that occurred in late 2025 revealed the long-term environmental impacts of unsustainable forest management practices.⁹

The responses of religious leaders to weak forest governance can be categorized as constructive and critical. They consistently referred to religious teachings, including the Qur'anic principle that environmental destruction results from human actions (Qur'an, Ar-Rum 30:41), to encourage greater accountability among government officials and community members. Religious leaders argued that effective environmental governance requires not only strong regulations but also integrity, transparency, and commitment from public officials responsible for implementing those policies. In their view, corruption and collusion remain major obstacles to successful environmental protection efforts.

Religious leaders also recognized that local communities themselves

⁸ Wawancara dengan Pdt. Luhut Pardomuan Tarigan (tokoh Kristen Barumon) tgl 21-12-2025

⁹ Wawancara dengan H. Ismail Nasution (tokoh agama Barumon) tgl 22-12-2025

sometimes contribute to environmental degradation. Economic incentives offered by logging companies often encourage residents to participate in activities that damage forests. While these activities may provide temporary financial benefits, they ultimately generate severe environmental and social consequences for future generations. Consequently, religious leaders have continuously promoted environmental ethics through religious education, emphasizing the concept of *hablum minal alam* (the relationship between humans and nature), which encourages Muslims to protect and preserve natural resources as part of their religious obligations.¹⁰

Long before the floods and landslides occurred, religious leaders had regularly reminded village, sub-district, and district government officials about the importance of protecting forests and water resources in Barumun. During large religious gatherings attended by public officials, they frequently urged government authorities to uphold environmental regulations honestly and consistently.¹¹ According to the participants, environmental degradation in Barumun was not merely the result of inadequate regulations but rather the consequence of weak governance and insufficient commitment to law enforcement. They argued that only a small number of individuals benefited from forest exploitation, while the broader community suffered the consequences through environmental disasters and economic losses.

c. Reforestation Policies

Although religious leaders were critical of weaknesses in forest governance, they did not reject government policies altogether. Instead, they adopted an objective and balanced position by supporting policies they considered beneficial to society while criticizing those they viewed as ineffective or harmful. Following the floods and landslides of late 2025, religious leaders strongly supported reforestation initiatives launched by village, sub-district, and district governments. These programs encouraged communities to plant trees along riverbanks and upstream watershed areas surrounding the Barumun River, Aek Jorbing River, and Sosa River.¹²

Religious leaders actively promoted these initiatives through sermons and religious gatherings, encouraging community participation in tree-planting campaigns as part of both environmental conservation and disaster mitigation efforts. They viewed reforestation as a practical strategy for restoring ecological balance and reducing the risk of future flooding. One religious leader, Syafaruddin Hasibuan, emphasized that successful environmental policies require not only effective regulations but also serious commitment to

¹⁰ Wawancara dengan H. Sarjana Syakir Nasution (tokh agama Barumun) tgl 19-12-2025

¹¹ Observasi di pengajian Pondok Al Hakimiyah Barumun, tgl 21-12-2025

¹² Observasi di pengajian Sibual-buali Barumun, tgl 23-12-2025

implementation. According to him, the tree-planting movement represented a positive collaboration between government institutions, religious leaders, and local communities in addressing environmental degradation and preventing future disasters.¹³

The following data shows community support in various villages in the Barumun area for the tree-planting movement in the upper and lower reaches of the river:

**TREE-PLANTING MOVEMENT
IN THE UPPER AND DOWNSTREAM OF THE BARUMUN
RIVER IN 2026**

NO	VILLAGE	NUMBER OF TREES
1	Sosopan	10
2	Aek Bargot	10
3	Ulu Aer	10
4	Pagarambira	10
5	Siundol	10
6	Siraisan	10
7	Parambatu	10
8	Tanjung	10
9	Tandihat	10
10	Sipege Julu	10
11	Sabarimba	10
12	Aek nabara	10
	Jumlah	120

Sumber: dokumentasi Pemda Padanglawas tahun 2026¹⁴

**GERAKAN MENANAM POHON
DI HULU DAN HILIR SUNGAI AEK JORBING TAHUN 2026**

NO	NAMA DESA	JUMLAH POHON
1	Paringgonan Julu	10
2	Paringgonan Jae	10
3	Pasaripuh	10
4	Matondang	10
5	Simanuldang Jae	10
6	Simanuldang Julu	10
7	Sibulussalam	10
8	Pintupadang	10
9	Sigorbus	10
10	Mompang	10
	Jumlah	100

¹³ Wawancara dengan H. Syafaruddin Hasibuan (tokoh agama Barumun) tgl 17-12-2025

¹⁴ Dokumentasi Pemda Padanglawas Januari 2026

Sumber: dokumentasi Pemda Padanglawas tahun 2026¹⁵

**GERAKAN MENANAM POHON
DI HULU DAN HILIR SUNGAI SOSA TAHUN 2026**

NO	NAMA DESA	JUMLAH POHON
1	Sibuhuan	10
2	Janji Lobi	10
3	Kampung Saroha	10
4	Tanjung Botung	10
5	Hapung	10
6	Batu Gajah	10
7	Bonan dolok	10
8	Handio	10
9	Harang jae	10
10	Harang julu	10
11	Pasir jae	10
12	Rumbao	10
13	Ujung batu	10
	Jumlah	130

Source: Documentation of Padanglawas 2026¹⁶

The findings indicate that community participation in reforestation programs was substantial. Villages located along the Barumun, Aek Jorbing, and Sosa river systems actively contributed to tree-planting initiatives organized by local authorities.¹⁷ Religious leaders played a significant role in mobilizing public support through persuasive communication and community engagement. This collaboration between religious institutions, government agencies, and local residents demonstrates the importance of social capital and collective action in environmental restoration efforts.¹⁸

In addition to government-led programs, environmental initiatives were also promoted through religious institutions. The Office of Religious Affairs in several sub-districts introduced a policy requiring Muslim couples to plant at least one tree before receiving marriage documentation. Trees could be planted in family-owned land or in designated areas along the Barumun, Aek Jorbing, and Sosa rivers. This initiative reflects an innovative integration of environmental responsibility into religious and social practices, reinforcing the role of religious institutions in promoting sustainable environmental stewardship within local communities.¹⁹

3. Religious Leaders' Responses to Post-Disaster Recovery Policies

¹⁵ Dokumentasi Pemda Padanglawas Januari 2026

¹⁶ Documentation of Padanglawas, Januari 2026

¹⁷ Observation in aek jorbing river (Barumun) Januari 2026

¹⁸ Interview with H. Mujahid Harahap , December, 23, 2026

¹⁹ Interview with Khoiruddin, December, 18, 2026

Government policies aimed at post-disaster recovery in Barumun, Padang Lawas, North Sumatra, received highly positive responses from religious leaders. The rapid emergency response implemented by government institutions, together with support from humanitarian organizations and social foundations, significantly alleviated the suffering of communities affected by floods and landslides. Assistance in the form of food supplies, clean water, medicines, blankets, and financial aid helped reduce the immediate hardships faced by disaster victims. Religious leaders not only expressed support for these recovery programs through sermons and public appeals but also actively participated in community-based recovery efforts, including distributing aid and mobilizing collective action to rebuild damaged facilities.

For the people of Barumun, the arrival of assistance from various regions of Indonesia and from different social organizations represented more than material support. It demonstrated the strength of national solidarity and humanitarian concern for fellow citizens affected by disaster. These forms of assistance helped communities overcome immediate challenges such as food insecurity and health risks while also restoring optimism and social cohesion. Religious leaders consistently encouraged communities to remain patient, resilient, and united during the recovery process, reinforcing the importance of mutual cooperation and social solidarity.

Beyond emergency relief, long-term recovery required the rehabilitation of damaged infrastructure, including roads, bridges, agricultural land, residential areas, mosques, and churches. In addition, environmental restoration through reforestation and forest rehabilitation became a crucial component of recovery efforts. Religious leaders strongly supported government initiatives aimed at rebuilding physical infrastructure and restoring environmental sustainability. Their endorsement and active participation increased community trust in government programs and contributed to the successful implementation of post-disaster recovery policies.²⁰

a. Responses to the Rehabilitation of Religious Facilities

Among the facilities damaged by floods and landslides in Barumun were three mosques and one church. The damaged mosques were located in Pagarambira, Siraisan, and Tanjung villages within Ulu Barumun District, while the affected church was located in Rumbao Village, Sosa Jae District.²¹ To support recovery efforts, the Padang Lawas Regional Government allocated IDR 20 million to each damaged house of worship, while the Ministry of Religious Affairs provided an additional IDR 10 million per facility. In total, the four religious institutions received IDR 120 million in rehabilitation

²⁰ Interview with H. Sarjana Syakir Nasution, December, 17, 2025

²¹ Observation in Barumun Padanglawas, December, 17, 2025

assistance.²²

Religious leaders and local communities welcomed this support positively. Although the funding was insufficient to cover all reconstruction costs, it was viewed as evidence of government concern for the religious needs of disaster-affected communities. Additional financial resources were obtained through donations from social organizations, private donors, and community fundraising initiatives. Community members also participated voluntarily in mutual cooperation activities to repair damaged mosques and churches, reflecting strong social solidarity and interfaith cooperation during the recovery period.

The assistance provided by the government, amounting to IDR 20 million from the local government and IDR 10 million from the Ministry of Religious Affairs for each damaged house of worship, is highly commendable. Considering the extensive costs required to restore various damaged facilities, this support demonstrates the government's concern for religious communities. It reflects the responsiveness of government institutions to the religious needs of society. In addition to government assistance, funds for the rehabilitation of mosques and churches were also obtained from other donors, including social organizations and individual contributors. Therefore, the reconstruction of religious facilities following the floods and landslides has not encountered significant financial obstacles.²³

We are deeply grateful for the assistance of IDR 30 million provided by the government through the local administration and the Ministry of Religious Affairs for the rehabilitation of the church in Rumbao Village. For us, the significance of this support lies not merely in the amount of funding received, but in the government's genuine concern for the religious life of the community. When religious facilities are supported during a period of disaster, it contributes to strengthening public morale. Moral and spiritual reinforcement is particularly important when communities are facing hardship. Since the people of Barumon are highly religious, faith-based approaches play a crucial role in helping them recover from adversity and rebuild their lives.²⁴

The positive response of religious leaders toward these rehabilitation programs reflects the harmonious relationship between government institutions and faith-based communities in Barumon. Effective communication and cooperation between public authorities and religious leaders have strengthened public trust and facilitated the implementation of recovery programs. Such collaboration contributes not only to the reconstruction of physical

²² Interview with H. Achmad Fauzan Nasution, December 18, 2025

²³ Interview with H. Damanhuri Rangkuti, December, 23 2025

²⁴ Interview with Pdt. Parulian Simanjuntak, December, 23, 2025

infrastructure but also to the restoration of spiritual well-being and social stability within affected communities.²⁵

b. Responses to River Rehabilitation Policies

The rehabilitation of river systems constituted another important aspect of post-disaster recovery. Severe flooding altered river channels and deposited large quantities of rocks, sand, and timber on agricultural land. These environmental changes reduced agricultural productivity and threatened the livelihoods of local residents. Consequently, restoring river channels became a priority for both government agencies and local communities.

Religious leaders responded positively to river rehabilitation initiatives and actively encouraged community participation through religious gatherings and public meetings. They emphasized the importance of collective responsibility in restoring environmental conditions and protecting local livelihoods. In addition to providing moral encouragement, many religious leaders directly participated in community-based rehabilitation activities alongside local residents.

The collaboration among religious leaders, community members, and government authorities significantly accelerated river restoration efforts. Their collective involvement strengthened social cohesion and demonstrated how religious leadership can contribute to environmental recovery and community resilience following natural disasters.²⁶

c. Responses to Community Economic Recovery Policies

The economic consequences of the floods and landslides severely affected the livelihoods of Barumon residents, particularly those dependent on agriculture and plantations. Religious leaders strongly supported government policies designed to strengthen local economic recovery. Through coordinated efforts at village, subdistrict, and district levels, assistance was distributed to affected households in the form of food supplies, financial aid, livestock, agricultural inputs, and fishery resources.

Government support included rice, cooking oil, eggs, cash assistance, cattle, goats, fish fingerlings, and various fruit tree seedlings such as banana, coconut, durian, orange, and duku trees. In addition, government agencies provided technical assistance and equipment to rehabilitate agricultural land damaged by flooding, including the removal of rocks, debris, and timber deposits. Religious leaders welcomed these initiatives and encouraged communities to participate actively in recovery programs.²⁷

Berikut ini jenis bantuan yang diberikan pemerintah daerah

²⁵ Interview with pdt. Tigor Simatupang, December 23, 2025

²⁶ Observation in Matondang village and Siraisan village, December 29, 2025

²⁷ Interview with Taufik Hasibuan, December, 30, 2025

Padanglawas:

**POLICY FOR STRENGTHENING THE ECONOMY OF
RESIDENTS
FOLLOWING THE 2026 BARUMUN FLOOD DISASTER**

NO	TYPE OF ASSISTANCE	DESCRIPTION
1	Rice	30 kg per affected resident
2	Cooking oil	5 kg per affected resident
3	Eggs	3 kg per affected resident
4	Cattle (Cows)	4 heads per village
5	Goats	8 heads per village
6	Money / Cash	IDR 1,000,000 per affected resident
7	Banana tree seedlings	50 seedlings per village
8	Durian tree seedlings	50 seedlings per village
9	Coconut tree seedlings	50 seedlings per village
10	Citrus/Orange tree seedlings	50 seedlings per village
11	Duku tree seedlings	50 seedlings per village
12	Fish fingerlings / Fish seeds	100 per village
13	Rehabilitating damaged agricultural land	Deploying equipment and labor to clear rocks and wood from the agricultural land

Source: Documentation of Padanglawas, Januari 2026²⁸

Beyond supporting government assistance, religious leaders promoted values of charity (*sadaqah*), mutual assistance, and social responsibility through religious teachings. They encouraged wealthier community members to assist vulnerable households and emphasized the importance of solidarity during times of hardship. These religious messages strengthened community resilience and complemented formal government recovery programs. As a result, economic recovery efforts were supported not only by public policies but also by community-based social and religious networks.²⁹

d. Responses to Housing Rehabilitation Policies

Religious leaders also expressed strong support for government policies aimed at rehabilitating and relocating damaged housing. Numerous homes located along riverbanks and mountain slopes were either destroyed or severely damaged by floods and landslides. To reduce future disaster risks, some households were relocated to safer areas away from vulnerable locations.³⁰

The government provided housing rehabilitation subsidies of approximately IDR 10 million per household. Although this amount covered only a portion of reconstruction costs, it provided important financial assistance to affected families. Religious leaders and community leaders encouraged collective

²⁸ Documentasi of Padanglawas, January 2026

²⁹ Interview With H. Ismail Nasution (MUI Padanglawas), Januari 4, 2026

³⁰ Observation in Paringgonan Village, December 29, 2025

action and mutual cooperation to supplement government support and reduce rebuilding expenses.³¹

Community members responded positively to these appeals and actively participated in rebuilding damaged houses through voluntary labor and local fundraising initiatives. The involvement of religious leaders in mobilizing community support strengthened social solidarity and demonstrated the important role of faith-based leadership in post-disaster recovery. Their efforts helped ensure that vulnerable households received both material assistance and moral support, thereby facilitating the broader process of social and economic recovery in Barumon.

Conclusion

This study on religious leaders' responses to government policies following the floods and landslides in Barumon, Padang Lawas, North Sumatra, yields three major conclusions.

First, religious leaders play a significant role in preventing environmental degradation within the Barumon community. They are widely regarded as moral authorities who guide society through religious teachings delivered in mosques, churches, and various socio-religious activities. Through these platforms, religious leaders consistently emphasize the importance of environmental stewardship and the preservation of forests, water resources, and other natural assets. From an Islamic perspective, environmental destruction is considered a form of wrongdoing (*munkar*), and the Qur'an (Ar-Rum: 41) explicitly states that environmental damage is caused by human actions. Therefore, adherence to religious values is viewed as an important foundation for promoting environmental responsibility and preventing ecological destruction.

Second, religious leaders demonstrated a positive response toward government environmental policies implemented after the floods and landslides. Three policy initiatives received particularly strong support: the enforcement of forestry regulations, efforts to prevent illegal logging, and reforestation programs. In the case of reforestation, effective collaboration was established among village, subdistrict, and district governments, religious leaders, and local communities. This collaboration was manifested through tree-planting initiatives along the upstream and riverbank areas of the Barumon, Aek Jorbing, and Sosa Rivers. Such programs were regarded as important preventive measures for restoring environmental sustainability and reducing future disaster risks.

Third, government recovery policies following the disaster were positively received by religious leaders, who actively supported their implementation

³¹ Interview with Muhammad Syahwil, December 30, 2025

through both religious messages and direct community engagement. Religious leaders hold a respected position within society because their contributions extend beyond preaching; they also participate directly in community service activities, including mutual cooperation programs, tree-planting campaigns, and the rehabilitation of damaged homes. Four recovery policies were particularly appreciated by religious leaders: the rehabilitation of houses of worship, river restoration programs, community economic recovery initiatives, and housing reconstruction projects. According to religious leaders, these policies generated tangible benefits for affected communities and contributed significantly to both short-term recovery and long-term social resilience.

KESIMPULAN

Riset tentang respons tokoh agama pada kebijakan politik pemerintah pasca bencana banjir dan tanah longsor di Barumon Padanglawas, memberi tiga kesimpulan berikut ini:

1. Tokoh agama di Barumon Padanglawas Sumatera Utara memiliki peran penting dalam usaha mencegah kerusakan lingkungan. Dalam pandangan masyarakat Barumon, tokoh agama dianggap sebagai benteng moralitas. Melalui pesan-pesan keagamaan dalam berbagai kesempatan (baik di masjid, di gereja dan juga tempat kegiatan sosial keagamaan), tokoh agama sering menyampaikan agar setiap warga menjaga lingkungan. Masyarakat yang merusak lingkungan (hutan, air dan kekayaan alam lainnya) dalam pandangan agama (Islam) disebut sebagai *kemunkaran* (kajahatan). Dipertegas lagi dalam al Qur'an (surat ar Ruum ayat 4), bahwa terjadinya kerusakan di muka bumi adalah karena ulah manusia itu sendiri. Sejatinya manusia yang taat pada ajaran agamanya, tidak akan melakukan perusakan pada lingkungan (hutan, air dan kekayaan alam yang lain).
2. Respons tokoh agama pada kebijakan pemerintah dalam merawat lingkungan pasca bencana banjir dan tanah longsor di Barumon Padanglawas sangat positif. Ada tiga kebijakan pemerintah yang

dinilai sangat positif oleh tokoh agama, pertama, merealisasikan aturan tentang kehutanan, kedua, mencegah *illegal logging*. Ketiga, melakukan *reboisasi*. Khusus dalam kebijakan *reboisasi* di Barumun, ada kerjasama yang baik antara pemerintah (desa, kecamatan dan kabupaten) dengan tokoh agama dan masyarakat. Kerjasama tersebut diwujudkan dengan gerakan menanam 100 pohon setiap desa di hulu dan pinggir sungai Barumun, sungai aek jorbing dan sungai sosa.

3. Kebijakan *recovery* pasca bencana banjir dan tanah longsor di Barumun dinilai positif oleh tokoh agama, sehingga mereka mendukung maksimal baik dalam pesan-pesan kegamaan dan juga dalam tindakan langsung di masyarakat. Tokoh agama mendapat tempat terhormat di masyarakat karena mereka tidak hanya sebatas ceramah agama, namun juga ikut langsung gotong royong, menanam pohon dan memperbaiki rumah warga yang rusak. Ada empat kebijakan *recovery* yang dilakukan pemerintah yang dinilai sangat positif oleh tokoh agama. Keempat kebijakan tersebut yaitu, rehab tempat ibadah, rehab aliran sungai, penguatan ekonomi warga, dan rehab rumah warga. Dalam pandangan tokoh agama, kebijakan *recovery* tersebut langsung dirasakan manfaatnya oleh masyarakat baik dalam jangka pendek maupun jangka panjang.

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