

## Mainstreaming Ecotheology: Empowering Women Activists in Jambi City

### *Pengarusutamaan Ekoteologi: Penguatan Kapasitas Aktivis Perempuan di Kota Jambi*

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#### ABSTRACT

Environmental degradation in Jambi City such as the pollution of the Batanghari River, increasing floods, and the decline of green open spaces demonstrates the urgent need to strengthen environmental conservation movements based on religious values. In this context, women activists occupy a strategic position as agents of change due to their close connection with community social dynamics. This community service program focuses on strengthening the capacity of women activists in mainstreaming ecotheology, utilizing local assets as internal community strengths, and developing cross-sector collaborative networks. The objectives include enhancing conceptual and practical competencies, optimizing local assets for ecological movements grounded in religious values, and expanding support through multisector partnerships. The program's implementation shows that capacity building for women is a key factor in developing ecological awareness and encouraging environmental preservation at the community level. Conceptual and practical training strengthened skills in advocacy, leadership, and program management, enabling women to act as strategic drivers of change. The Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach ensures program sustainability by utilizing individual, social, cultural, and physical community resources. Networking with government, religious institutions, educational organizations, media, environmental communities, and the business sector reinforced movement consolidation and opened broader collaboration. These efforts have the potential to foster an inclusive, participatory, and sustainable ecotheology movement.

Keywords: Ecotheology, Empowerment of Women Activists, Asset Based Community Development; Multisectoral Networking

#### ABSTRAK

*Kerusakan ekologis di Kota Jambi, seperti pencemaran Sungai Batanghari, meningkatnya banjir, dan berkurangnya ruang hijau, menunjukkan urgensi penguatan gerakan pelestarian lingkungan berbasis nilai keagamaan. Dalam konteks tersebut, aktivis perempuan menempati posisi strategis sebagai agen perubahan karena kedekatannya dengan dinamika sosial komunitas. Fokus pengabdian ini adalah meningkatkan kapasitas aktivis perempuan dalam pengarusutamaan ekoteologi, memanfaatkan aset lokal sebagai kekuatan internal komunitas, serta mengembangkan jejaring kolaboratif lintas sektor. Tujuan kegiatan meliputi penguatan kompetensi konseptual dan praktis, optimalisasi aset lokal untuk gerakan ekologis berbasis nilai religius, serta perluasan dukungan melalui kemitraan multisektor. Pelaksanaan program menunjukkan bahwa peningkatan kapasitas perempuan menjadi faktor kunci dalam membangun kesadaran ekologis dan mendorong gerakan pelestarian lingkungan di tingkat komunitas. Pelatihan konseptual dan praktis berhasil memperkuat keterampilan advokasi, kepemimpinan, dan manajemen program, sehingga perempuan dapat berperan sebagai penggerak strategis. Pendekatan Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) memastikan keberlanjutan program melalui pemanfaatan potensi individu, sosial, budaya, dan fisik komunitas. Pengembangan jejaring dengan pemerintah, lembaga keagamaan, institusi pendidikan, media, komunitas lingkungan, dan dunia usaha memperkuat konsolidasi gerakan dan membuka ruang kolaborasi. Upaya pengarusutamaan ini berpotensi melahirkan gerakan ekoteologi yang inklusif, partisipatif, dan berkelanjutan.*

*Kata kunci: Ekoteologi, Pemberdayaan Aktivis perempuan, Asset Based Community Development (ABCD), Jejaring Lintas Sektor*

#### INTRODUCTION

Environmental degradation in Jambi Province remains a critical issue, as evidenced by declining water quality in the Batanghari River basin, increasing flood frequency, and ecosystem degradation

that has contributed to recurrent land and forest fires. These ecological impacts not only threaten the sustainability of natural resources but also directly affect local communities, particularly vulnerable groups such as women in rural areas (Azzahra et al., 2017). This situation calls for a strategic approach that integrates sustainability values with religious perspectives, one of which is through the mainstreaming of ecotheology (Wasil & Muizudin, 2023). This approach is aligned with one of the priority programs of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia for the 2025-2029 period.

Studies have emphasized that the mainstreaming of Islamic ecotheology can be effectively implemented through environmental activism (Mudin et al., 2025). Both government institutions and socio-religious organizations have strengthened the role of women and Muslim women activists in ecotheology-based environmental management (Priyatna et al., 2017). Women can be strategically engaged through training and capacity-building initiatives aimed at mainstreaming ecotheology within communities (Hasan et al., 2022). Women's involvement in natural resource management has been shown to enhance ecosystem sustainability, as women often maintain direct and everyday interactions with their environment (Mulya & Rustiadi, 2024; Risamasu, 2023). Therefore, women's strategic role in land management and conservation can be optimized through targeted training and the strengthening of collaborative networks (Rinoza, 2016).

Within this context, women activists in Jambi affiliated with various organizations such as the Korps Pergerakan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia Putri (KOPRI) PMII, Korps HMI-Wati (KOHATI), Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah Wanita (IMMAWATI), and Beranda Perempuan possess significant potential as agents of social and environmental change. They are not only engaged in advocacy activities but are also actively involved in community-based programs, including integrated waste management, reforestation initiatives, and environmental education conducted in schools and religious spaces.

Women activists in Jambi possess diverse assets that can be strategically optimized. Human assets include public communication skills, organizational and event management capacities, and collaborative networks with governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations. Socio-cultural assets are reflected in the utilization of local wisdom, such as customary prohibitions against tree cutting in designated areas, collective practices of mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), and environmentally oriented religious outreach. This asset mapping underscores that strengthening the capacity of women activists in mainstreaming ecotheology is not only relevant but also holds strong potential for sustainability. However, studies that specifically employ the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach in empowering women activists in Jambi City remain limited. This gap is what the present community engagement program seeks to address, with a focus on leveraging community assets as the foundation for capacity strengthening and sustainable empowerment.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The materials used in this community engagement program comprise substantive materials, training support materials, and operational materials. The substantive materials include training modules on socio-religious and ecological issues with a gender perspective, supporting readings in the form of scholarly articles and research summaries, as well as community asset-mapping instruments such as interview guidelines and observation sheets. To facilitate participatory training processes, the program employs participant worksheets, reflection and evaluation questionnaires, stationery, working papers, markers, sticky notes, and flipcharts, supported by presentation equipment including laptops, LCD projectors, audio devices, and visual media. In addition, documentation and administrative materials are utilized, including digital documentation tools, attendance lists, and official reports, along with operational support materials such as administrative supplies and participant refreshments to ensure the smooth and sustainable implementation of the program.

The implementation of this community engagement program is directed toward women activists in Jambi City who are actively involved in socio-religious and environmental issues. The activities are carried out by a community service team serving as facilitators, program implementers, and evaluators of program outcomes. A total of 25 participants are involved, consisting of representatives from student organizations, religious counselors of Jambi City, members of the Jambi City Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI), and local media representatives. The activities are conducted within community settings that are directly relevant to ecological issues and are implemented over a

structured and sustainable time frame. The program emphasizes active community participation from the planning stage through to the final evaluation.

The implementation stages include community asset mapping through field observations and interviews with religious leaders, organizational leaders, and women's groups; the formulation of shared objectives; the development of action plans; the implementation of training activities; reflection; and outcome evaluation. These stages are aligned with the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach, which emphasizes the utilization of internal community assets as the foundation for program strengthening. The implementation process is conducted through discussion forums, training sessions, and periodic evaluative meetings to ensure that the training dynamics remain participatory. Program effectiveness is analyzed using a reflective-participatory approach that integrates data from observations, training activities, and discussion outcomes.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### The Capacity of Women Activists in Mainstreaming Ecotheology

The capacity of women activists in mainstreaming ecotheology is a critical aspect that must be addressed in order to strengthen environmental conservation movements grounded in religious values and social empowerment. Women occupy a strategic position as agents of change due to their close engagement with everyday social life, their involvement in household resource management, and their ability to mobilize communities through interpersonal and cultural approaches.

In the context of Jambi City, the role of women becomes increasingly relevant given the range of ecological challenges currently faced, including deforestation, pollution of the Batanghari River, and urban waste management problems. These ecological challenges call for environmental movements that are not merely technical in nature but are also rooted in the moral and spiritual awareness of the community.

From this perspective, women play a highly important and strategic role in environmental issues. Women maintain direct engagement with everyday activities related to environmental management, such as water use, food provision, household waste management, and the maintenance of family living spaces. As a result, women are often more sensitive to and quicker to experience the impacts of environmental degradation, including flooding, water pollution, and the loss of green spaces. At the community level, women also exercise significant social influence through religious study groups (*majelis taklim*), women's organizations, and broader social networks. Therefore, women should not be viewed merely as beneficiaries of environmental programs but rather as key drivers of change and highly effective agents of environmental education in ecosystem conservation (Activists IMMAWATI, FGD, 12 December 2025).

This community engagement program is designed to address these strategic needs by enhancing the capacity of women activists through the integration of theoretical, practical, and advocacy dimensions. The training provided is based on the module "Building and Strengthening the Capacity of Women Activists in Supporting Environmentally Friendly Programs," which aims to improve the capacity, understanding, and skills of women activists in Jambi to identify, advocate for, and facilitate the implementation of ecotheology-based environmentally friendly programs (Documentation, 23 November 2025). The module offers a theoretical foundation on the urgency of ecotheology as an ethical framework for environmental stewardship grounded in religious teachings, positioning the natural environment as a spiritual trust (*amanah*) and a moral responsibility of humankind as *khalifah fil-ardh* (stewards of the earth) (Purwanto, 2025).

The capacity-building process is carried out through critical pedagogy and participatory learning methods that encompass an understanding of core concepts of environmental theology, such as the prohibition of causing environmental destruction (*fasād*), the obligation to sustain the continuity of all living beings, and the principle of ecological balance from a religious perspective. This approach strengthens the internal motivation of women activists, ensuring that ecological movements are not merely administrative in nature but are oriented toward long-term cultural and spiritual transformation (Setyawan et al., 2022). The training emphasizes the development of practical skills through action-planning workshops grounded in local needs. Women activists are trained to conduct problem identification, causal analysis, stakeholder mapping, issue prioritization, and the formulation of program performance indicators.



Figure 1. Participant Group Work (Documentation, 23 November 2025)

The stages outlined above equip participants with managerial competencies to design environmental action programs that are measurable, realistic, and socially relevant to the community context. The outcomes are reflected in participants' ability to formulate various community-based initiatives, such as waste segregation campaigns, greening programs for places of worship, *majelis taklim*-based waste banks, and the development of creative products made from recycled materials.

The urgency of these stages in strengthening the capacity of women activists is particularly significant in reinforcing practical efforts that translate the normative commitments of ecotheology into concrete community-level programs. Without a systematic process, the mainstreaming of ecotheology risks remaining confined to moral discourse and religious exhortations that are disconnected from behavioral change and policy impact.

First, problem identification serves as the primary entry point in determining the relevance and precision of interventions. Within an ecotheological framework, environmental issues should not be understood in abstract terms such as “environmental degradation” or “ecological crisis” but must be translated into concrete problems experienced by communities, including river pollution in residential areas, waste-burning practices, flooding, the excessive use of single-use plastics, or the lack of green spaces around places of worship.

Second, causal analysis is essential to prevent activists from adopting superficial and short-term solutions. Many ecological problems at the community level are not solely caused by individual behavior but are also shaped by structural factors, such as inadequate waste management services, environmentally unfriendly spatial planning policies, weak regulatory enforcement, and prevailing consumerist cultures. Through causal analysis, women activists are trained to think critically by examining both symptoms and root causes, as well as by understanding the interconnections among economic, social, cultural, and religious factors.

Third, stakeholder mapping holds strategic importance, as ecotheological movements cannot be effectively implemented by women activists acting individually. At the community level, multiple actors possess influence and resources, including religious leaders, mosque or church management boards, neighborhood associations, schools, youth groups, local entrepreneurs, and local government authorities. Mapping these stakeholders enables more inclusive collaboration and strengthens collective action.

Fourth, issue prioritization is crucial to ensure that ecotheology mainstreaming programs remain focused and realistic. In practice, activists are often confronted with a wide range of environmental issues such as waste, water, pollution, green spaces, and energy. Attempting to address all issues simultaneously may result in fragmented efforts, participant fatigue, and limited impact.

The process of prioritizing issues trains women activists to consider the urgency of problems, their impact on community livelihoods, available resources, opportunities for collaboration, and the potential for religious and cultural support. From an ecotheological perspective, priority issues may

be selected based on their proximity to everyday community practices. Thus, issue prioritization is not merely pragmatic but also reinforces the integration of religious values with ecological practices.



Figure 2. Strategic Program Initiative Presentation (Documentation, 23 November 2025)

Another key component of the training materials is the strengthening of leadership and advocacy capacities. Women activists are trained in persuasive communication skills and strategies for building networks with government institutions, religious organizations, media outlets, and youth groups. This process begins with an introduction to ecofeminism, which emphasizes the historical relationship between women and nature and highlights women's strategic roles as resource managers and environmental educators. This perspective reinforces the understanding that women's movements are not merely forms of formal participation but represent structural transformations aimed at dismantling the marginalization of women in public decision-making processes.

The program demonstrates a positive impact on participants' capacity development, as indicated by increased self-confidence, enhanced ability to design data-driven programs, and greater readiness to establish collaborative networks. Women activists increasingly serve as role models and peer educators within their respective communities, generating a multiplier effect in society (Widianto, 2018). Nevertheless, women activists continue to face several challenges in mainstreaming environmental and ecotheological issues at the community level. This is reflected in the testimony of a KOPRI PMII activist from Jambi City, as presented below:

When we talk about challenges, there are quite a number of them. First, patriarchal culture and the assumption that environmental issues are technical matters often regarded as men's domains still persist. As a result, women's voices in decision-making processes are frequently undervalued. Second, women's access to information, training, and networks remains limited, which constrains their advocacy and leadership capacities. Third, there is a challenge related to public awareness, as many community members continue to view environmental issues as the sole responsibility of the government rather than a shared responsibility. Fourth, women activists also face a double burden, as they must divide their time between family responsibilities, professional work, and social activism. In my view, these challenges need to be addressed through structural support and cross-sectoral collaboration (Activists Kopri PMII Kota Jambi, FGD, 12 December 2025).

The mainstreaming of ecotheology is realized as a form of social practice that balances religious, ecological, and social dimensions through concrete actions at the community level. This is evident in the strategic initiative programs formulated by the participants, as outlined below (Documentation, 23 November 2025).

1. Normalization and strengthening of drainage infrastructure: routine drainage cleaning, re-excavation of shallow channels, construction of new drainage systems, periodic inspections, repair of waste containment facilities, and installation of leakage detection sensors.
2. Integrated community-based waste management: segregation of organic and inorganic waste, reduction of single-use plastics, establishment of waste banks, compost production, provision of additional waste bins, and development of environmentally compliant temporary waste disposal facilities.

3. Strengthening green spaces and water infiltration systems: tree planting, the “One Household, One Tree” program, construction of infiltration wells, reforestation initiatives, planting of large-canopy trees, and integration of green spaces within residential areas (e.g., green buffers, green corridors, and high-vegetation parks).
4. Sustainable environmental education and outreach: educational programs for residents, schools, and communities on the importance of maintaining clean drainage systems, flood risk awareness, and waste management, as well as public campaigns such as “Stop Littering” through media and poster dissemination.
5. Environmental monitoring, rapid reporting, and evaluation: development of rapid reporting systems, mapping of flood-prone areas, regular evaluation meetings, and continuous monitoring of environmental risks, including potential waste leakage and waste accumulation points.
6. Ecologically friendly development policies: promotion of “Zero Deforestation Housing,” community-based carbon compensation schemes, use of low-emission building materials, and ensuring that development activities do not degrade tree cover and maintain ecosystem balance

In the context of Jambi City, environmental issues such as flooding, pollution of the Batanghari River, the loss of green spaces, recurring haze, and the increasing volume of waste have given rise to movements that emphasize not only the technical aspects of environmental management but also the integration of religious values, ecological ethics, and the social role of communities (Takriyanti et al., 2015). Therefore, the six programs outlined above represent concrete applications of ecotheological principles through practical actions involving grassroots community participation.

This formulation constitutes not merely a technical response to ecological challenges in Jambi City but also a representation of ecotheological praxis that integrates religious values, local wisdom, and women’s empowerment strategies. These programs underscore that environmental conservation is not solely a matter of policy or technology but also entails a transformation of perspectives and spiritual culture that recognizes nature as a sacred space to be collectively protected. The proposed initiatives hold the potential to serve as a model of sustainable, inclusive, and transformative community-based ecotheology movements in strengthening ecological resilience in Jambi City. Enhancing the capacity of women activists emerges as a key strategy in reinforcing ecotheological movements, as conceptual, technical, and advocacy empowerment provides a solid foundation for women to act as agents of ecologically grounded transformation rooted in religious values and local wisdom.

### **Optimizing Local Assets in the Ecotheology Movement**

The optimization of local assets constitutes a primary strategy for strengthening ecotheological movements at the community level, as this approach positions communities as the main agents of change by leveraging the potentials already present within their social environment. This approach is grounded in the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) paradigm, which rejects the view of communities as deficient entities in need of external intervention. Instead, it emphasizes that every community possesses inherent strengths in the form of social, cultural, spiritual, economic, and environmental capital that can be activated as resources for ecological transformation.

Within the context of ecotheological movements, the optimization of local assets ensures that environmental conservation efforts do not rely solely on large-scale funding, technical assistance, or top-down governmental directives, but rather emerge from the internal capacities of communities, supported by religious values as moral and spiritual foundations (Febrianti, 2025). In this program, local assets encompass diverse potentials that can be mobilized to advance ecotheological initiatives. First, social assets include networks of women’s organizations, student or youth communities, religious educational institutions, and community leaders who possess moral influence in mobilizing collective action. Second, physical assets may consist of community-owned vacant land, the yards of places of worship, school gardens, and public spaces that can be optimized for greening initiatives or the development of community gardens. Third, cultural assets involve local wisdom that respects ecological balance, traditions of mutual cooperation, and collective norms related to cleanliness and public health. Fourth, economic assets include environmentally oriented micro and small enterprises, waste banks, recycled handicraft production, and green entrepreneurship opportunities that support sustainability. Fifth, theological assets comprising religious teachings on the obligation to protect the earth, environmental justice, and the integration of worship with ecological ethics serve as moral drivers in fostering sustained ecological awareness.

In its implementation, the optimization of local assets is carried out through community-based asset mapping activities, which involve identifying existing resources that can be mobilized to support ecotheological programs. This mapping process does not merely document physical assets but also uncovers less visible strengths, such as women's leadership capacities, trust-based relationships between community members and religious leaders, and cultural values that emphasize harmonious coexistence with nature. This perspective is articulated by an activist from Beranda Perempuan as follows:

In my view, the most effective strategy begins with mapping local assets and identifying the problems within the community. By understanding both existing potentials and the most pressing needs, we can design programs that are more targeted. For instance, if a mosque has a large courtyard, it can be utilized as a community food garden. It is also important to connect each asset through collaboration for example, religious leaders delivering ecotheological messages, women's communities carrying out environmental actions, and the government providing facility support. Essentially, local assets must be creatively integrated so that they reinforce one another rather than operate in isolation (Activists Beranda Perempuan, FGD, 12 December 2025).

The results of this mapping process are subsequently used as the foundation for designing environmental conservation programs that are contextual, realistic, and aligned with the social characteristics of the community. In this way, the optimization of local assets ensures that ecotheological movements are rooted in internal community strengths rather than merely adopting externally driven programs that risk lacking local embeddedness (Awaluddin et al., 2025).

Optimizing local assets to support ecotheological movements requires a model capable of guiding women activists in managing community potentials in a systematic and strategic manner (Aryanti et al., 2024). This model is designed so that each stage not only produces tangible technical outcomes in environmental conservation but also cultivates ecological awareness grounded in religious spirituality and strengthens community self-reliance through the empowerment of women as primary agents of change (Hendrastiti & Setiahadhi, 2022).

First, the process of optimizing local assets begins with identifying the assets possessed by the community, both visible and latent. This stage involves mapping human assets such as women activists, religious leaders, and environmental cadres; social assets including *majelis taklim*, religious institutions, and women's organizations; physical-environmental assets such as land belonging to places of worship, rivers, and open spaces; cultural assets in the form of traditions of mutual cooperation and values of ecological balance; economic assets such as creative micro and small enterprises, waste banks, and local food initiatives; as well as spiritual assets comprising religious ethics concerning the stewardship (*amanah*) of the earth. Asset identification ensures that ecotheological programs are not framed around community deficiencies but are instead grounded in the internal strengths already present within the community.

Second, the process involves formulating a shared ecotheological vision of the community, which entails translating local asset potentials into collectively envisioned future goals for faith-based environmental conservation. This vision is developed through participatory deliberation that integrates theological, ecological, and social dimensions, thereby serving as a source of motivation and moral legitimacy for religiously grounded environmental movements. The vision formulated through the participants' deliberations "Dari Iman, Lahir Aksi untuk Bumi", reflects a collective commitment to fostering a religious community that demonstrates care for the natural environment grounded in faith. This shared aspiration functions as a strategic foundation for program planning by clarifying both the direction of action and the values of change to be achieved.

Third, asset-based program mapping is conducted by translating the articulated aspirations into concrete actions through the strategic management of assets according to their respective roles and benefits. This process involves aligning existing assets with program objectives and strategic steps, such as utilizing mosque or community yards for ecological food gardens, employing social media as an educational platform for environmental campaigns, engaging religious leaders in ecotheological preaching, or developing green entrepreneurship through women-led microenterprises based on recycling initiatives. This stage ensures that ecotheological movements are translated into operational steps that are relevant and effective within the community context.

Subsequently, a reflection stage is carried out throughout program implementation to ensure continuous learning through participatory observation, reflective discussions among women

activists, and the strengthening of spirituality that frames ecological action as an act of worship and moral responsibility. Reflection provides a space to interpret field dynamics, refine strategies, and adjust programs to remain responsive to community needs while remaining aligned with cultural and religious values.

The final stage involves program and impact evaluation, conducted qualitatively through focus group discussions (FGDs) to assess changes in ecological behavior, levels of community participation, and the intensity of public campaigns on social media. This stage ensures that the program not only operates effectively but also produces accountable evidence of outcomes that can be justified academically, socially, and spiritually. In sum, this model of local asset optimization constitutes a strategic and transformative approach that positions women as primary drivers of change, strengthens community self-reliance, and harnesses religious values as moral energy for sustainable ecological transformation.

The optimization of local assets also holds strategic significance in fostering community self-reliance. By utilizing available resources, women's groups can manage waste banks, and schools can serve as hubs for community-based environmental education without relying on external actors to initiate or sustain such programs (Activists Kohati Kota Jambi, FGD, 12 December 2025).

When sustainability becomes the primary objective, asset-based empowerment proves to be far more robust than problem-based approaches. Moreover, the utilization of local assets encourages cross-sectoral collaboration and facilitates the strengthening of partnership networks, as government institutions, academic actors, and non-profit organizations are more inclined to provide support when they recognize the readiness and internal capacity of the community. The optimization of local assets in strengthening human resource capacity particularly among women activists thus becomes a key factor in ensuring the sustainability of ecotheological movements within society. This perspective is emphasized by the following activist:

In my view, there are several essential competencies. First, a conceptual understanding of ecotheology is crucial not merely understanding environmental issues from a technical standpoint, but also being able to connect them with religious values and spirituality as the foundation of environmental ethics. Second, communication and advocacy skills are vital, as activists must be able to convey messages persuasively to communities, religious leaders, and policymakers. Third, managerial and program-planning skills are necessary, including local asset mapping and problem-solving in the field. Fourth, collaboration and networking skills are indispensable, because environmental movements cannot be carried out in isolation. Therefore, courage, self-confidence, and a strong commitment to continue acting despite numerous challenges are equally important (Activists Beranda Perempuan, FGD, 12 December 2025).

On the other hand, the integration of spiritual and cultural assets within ecotheological movements strengthens the social legitimacy of environmental programs (Madina, 2021). When environmental conservation is linked to religious messages such as the mandate (*amanah*) to protect the earth and the prohibition against causing destruction (*fasād*) community participation tends to increase, as such programs are perceived as integral to acts of worship and moral responsibility (Masoga, 2024). Thus, the optimization of local assets not only enhances the technical dimensions of environmental movements but also revitalizes ecological spirituality that fosters long-term collective awareness.

Strengthening the spiritual dimension within ecotheological movements functions not merely as a normative foundation but also as an effective cultural strategy for building community acceptance and engagement (Abubakar, 2025). Religious values operate as a medium for internalizing environmental messages that transcend technical rationality and penetrate deeper realms of moral and spiritual consciousness (Annisa & Azizah, 2025). In this context, the empirical experiences of activists in the field demonstrate how religious messages genuinely function as driving forces for changes in ecological behavior within communities (Alim, 2024). This dynamic is acknowledged by one of the religious counselors in Jambi City, as presented below:

In my view, religious values play a very powerful role in motivating communities. Many people are more deeply moved when environmental messages are conveyed from religious and devotional perspectives for example, the idea that maintaining cleanliness is part of faith, or that human beings are stewards (*khalifah*) on earth who are responsible for protecting God's creation. When environmental issues are linked to Qur'anic verses and prophetic traditions

(*hadith*), communities tend to be more receptive and feel a stronger moral obligation to change. Thus, religion becomes a highly effective entry point for fostering ecological awareness (Religious Counselor Kota Jambi, FGD, 12 December 2025).

Within ecotheological movements, religious approaches function not only as persuasive tools but also as ethical foundations that confer moral legitimacy on environmental conservation practices (Munawar Rachman, 2024). When spiritual values are integrated with scientific understandings of ecological degradation, a more comprehensive awareness emerges, framing environmental stewardship not merely as an option but as a moral, social, and religious obligation (Pardi, 2020).

Accordingly, the involvement of religious leaders, faith-based institutions, and religious spaces such as *majelis taklim*, Friday sermons, and regular religious study forums serves as an effective medium for disseminating ecological messages capable of mobilizing concrete behavioral change. This approach holds significant potential for fostering a sustainable environmental culture in which ecological action is perceived as an integral part of everyday religious practice. Through this strategy, ecotheological movements are expected to develop not as short-term interventions but as initiatives that grow from the internal strengths of communities, are rooted in local wisdom, and are grounded in universal religious values. Ultimately, the optimization of local assets becomes the foundation for achieving sustainable ecological transformation and for building empowered, self-reliant, and ecologically just communities.

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Strengthening the role of women activists constitutes a strategic step in mainstreaming ecotheology in Jambi City. This community engagement program demonstrates a significant contribution to enhancing women's capacity as agents of ecotheological advocacy within society. Through participatory approaches and critical pedagogy, women have successfully transformed from program beneficiaries into strategic actors capable of analyzing ecological challenges, formulating solutions, and implementing sustainable initiatives. Capacity strengthening among women activists can be achieved through the optimization of local assets as the foundation of community empowerment. The Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach enables the mobilization of internal potentials, such as women's social networks, cultural and spiritual capital, religious spaces, and community physical assets. The utilization of these assets ensures that ecotheological movements grow autonomously, are not dependent on external assistance, and are deeply rooted in local values and religious teachings regarding the stewardship (*amanah*) of the earth. Furthermore, the development of cross-sectoral networks emerges as a key factor in reinforcing these movements. Partnerships with local governments, religious institutions, educational organizations, media outlets, environmental communities, and the private sector expand access to resources and strengthen social legitimacy. Consequently, the mainstreaming of ecotheology holds strong potential as a collaborative strategy for cultivating a sustainable ecological culture grounded in religious values and active community participation.

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