

## **RELIGIOUS WOMEN SHAPING HUMANE COMMUNITY: AISYIAH'S CONTRIBUTIONS AND CHALLENGES**

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**R**eligious “flavor” is everywhere in Indonesia’s public sphere, manifest or hidden; it is also found clearly in the Indonesia’s declaration of independence, State’s foundational philosophy and Constitution. Religion is believed to be sources for ethical guide and reference for Indonesians. My presentation will address the questions regarding which ways and how such religious spirit and precepts have been perceived, interpreted and implemented in actual social life to shape humane community in Indonesian. In doing so, I will examine the experiences of one of the most longstanding Muslim women’s organization called Aisyiyah, founded in 19 May 1917 in Yogyakarta.<sup>1</sup> It is well documented that many religious interpretive teachings on the hands of different people have been understood and implemented differently, and in some cases even resulting in opposite proposal of actions; for instance on marital issues, population control, interfaith engagements and peace, and many more. Aisyiyah has had encountered such challenges and has always been using Islamic world view and ethics, as they understood, to offer counter arguments especially to male-centered interpretations propagated by a number of Muslim organizations. The highlights of what this organization, Aisyiyah, has contributed are in the area of education, marriage and family, and women’s contribution to community peace building and development. Education for all, especially for girls and women has been a priority for Aisyiyah since its early development during the colonial era. Education is believed by Aisyiyah as a significant key for social change and mobility, rather than formal politics, for attaining better life in this world and hereafter. When education for girls was denied for most indigenous population during the colonial era, this Muslim women’s group propagated for girl education in the subjects of religion and social-empirical need and practices. Marriage and family life are also the focus

of this organization; the organization has produced a conceptual and manual book on Keluarga Sakinah.

Among the biggest challenges faced by Aisyiyah come from intra-Islamic social movements which promote patriarchal interpretation and practices, and from extra-religious movements which promote human-hedonic centered world view. The rapid development of ICT consumed by children has been another challenge for women of Aisyiyah, as many of them are in the age group of X and early Y generations.

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<sup>i</sup> Misi 'Aisyiyah diwujudkan dalam bentuk amal usaha, program, dan kegiatan, meliputi:

1. Menanamkan keyakinan, memperdalam dan memperluas pemahaman, meningkatkan pengamalan serta menyebarkan ajaran Islam dalam segala aspek kehidupan.
2. Meningkatkan harkat dan martabat kaum perempuan sesuai dengan ajaran Islam.
3. Meningkatkan kualitas dan kuantitas pengkajian terhadap ajaran Islam.
4. Memperteguh iman, memperkuat dan menggembirakan ibadah, serta mempertinggi akhlak.
5. Meningkatkan semangat ibadah, jihad, zakat, infaq, shodaqoh, wakaf, hibah, membangun dan memelihara tempat ibadah serta amal usaha yang lain.
6. Membina Angkatan Muda Muhammadiyah Puteri untuk menjadi pelopor, pelangsun, dan penyempurna gerakan 'Aisyiyah
7. Meningkatkan pendidikan, mengembangkan kebudayaan, memperluas ilmu pengetahuan dan teknologi, serta menggairahkan penelitian.
8. Memajukan perekonomian dan kewirausahaan ke arah perbaikan hidup yang berkualitas.
9. Meningkatkan dan mengembangkan kegiatan dalam bidang-bidang sosial, kesejahteraan masyarakat, kesehatan, dan lingkungan hidup.
10. Meningkatkan dan mengupayakan penegakan hukum, keadilan dan kebenaran, serta memupuk semangat kesatuan dan persatuan bangsa.
11. Meningkatkan komunikasi, ukhuwah, kerjasama di berbagai bidang dan kalangan masyarakat baik dalam dan luar negeri.
12. Usaha-usaha lain yang sesuai dengan maksud dan tujuan organisasi (PP Aisyiyah, 2015)