

## **The Role of The *Solidaritas Perempuan Anging Mammiri* NGO in Empowering Marginalized Women in Makassar**

**Farhan Nazer Ahmad**

Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia

Email: fnazerahmad@gmail.com

| Keywords:                                                                                       | Abstract                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
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| Non-Governmental Organization; Women's Empowerment; Marginalization; Gender Equality; Makassar. | Marginalized women in Makassar continue to face structural vulnerabilities shaped by poverty, patriarchal norms, agrarian and coastal conflicts, and the weak implementation of gender-responsive policies. This study aimed to examine the role of <i>Solidaritas Perempuan Anging Mammiri</i> (SPAM) in empowering marginalized women in Makassar and to identify the factors supporting its empowerment efforts. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed at the SPAM office in Makassar. Participants were purposively selected and consisted of the organization's chairperson, program coordinator, and two members of assisted communities. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, direct observation, and document review. The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, consisting of data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. The findings showed that SPAM empowered marginalized women through three interrelated strategies: political education, capacity-building training, and sustained advocacy and accompaniment. These strategies strengthened women's access, participation, control, and benefits, including increased confidence in asserting their rights and greater involvement in household and community decision-making. However, family restrictions, patriarchal community norms, and weak policy implementation remained significant barriers. Legal instruments, partnerships with allied NGOs, government facilitation, and support from communities and families strengthened SPAM's empowerment efforts. The study concluded that SPAM played a substantive role in advancing women's empowerment through integrated educational, economic, and advocacy-based interventions. |

### **INTRODUCTION**

Indonesia's population living in poverty is recorded at 24.79 million people, representing 9.22% of the total population. Given the constitutional mandate requiring the state to guarantee citizens' basic rights, this figure is significant, particularly because limited economic capacity constrains people's ability to meet even their most fundamental needs. Poverty should not be understood merely as an individual condition detached from broader causes; rather, a critical perspective situates poverty within a sociopolitical context shaped by both internal and external structural factors.

Structural vulnerability is closely associated with agrarian conflict (Ribot, 2014; Peluso & Lund, 2011). In 2020 alone, at least 241 agrarian conflicts occurred across Indonesia as a result of land dispossession and eviction practices (Konsorsium Pembaruan Agraria, 2020), affecting 359 villages, involving 135,337 households, and covering an area of 624,272,711 hectares. These conflicts occurred across the agrarian, forestry, infrastructure, property, mining, military, coastal, and agribusiness sectors (Susila et al., 2021). In Makassar, *Solidaritas Perempuan Anging Mammiri* (SPAM) received at least 237 case applications, of which 111 were structural and 126 were nonstructural (SPAM, 2021). Violence and poverty often intersect within this sociopolitical context (Schneider & Frantz, 2020), with small and vulnerable communities disproportionately bearing the consequences (Larson et al., 2019). The empowerment of vulnerable communities can be pursued through the protection of living spaces, improved economic access, education, creative opportunities, and legal protection as citizens (Agarwal, 2018). However, these conditions remain far from the lived realities of many Makassar residents, as illustrated by the threatened eviction of the Bara-Baraya community, marine degradation affecting Kodingareng fishers (Adrianto & Matsuda, 2020), and the displacement of residents such as Pak Aliamin from their homes and livelihoods (Harahap, 2022).

Empowering people living in poverty cannot be achieved solely through programs aimed at increasing production; it also requires improvements in income and overall well-being. In this context, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) serve as important partners to government institutions in addressing social problems. NGOs operate in diverse areas, including human rights, legal aid, gender equality, corruption, and climate-related issues. This study focuses on *Solidaritas Perempuan Anging Mammiri* (SPAM), which originated from the Solidaritas Perempuan organization established on December 10, 1990, by Ati Nurbaiti Karta Hardimadja, Gracia Tjita Andangsedjati, Nursyahbani Katjasungkana, and Taty Krisnawaty, with a mission centered on institutional development and the advancement of women's human rights toward a democratic and egalitarian society. Its regional chapter, *Solidaritas Perempuan Anging Mammiri*, was subsequently established in Makassar to promote the protection and fulfillment of women's rights in South Sulawesi. Given SPAM's role in supporting marginalized women, this study focuses on "The Role of *Solidaritas Perempuan Anging Mammiri* NGO in Empowering Marginalized Women in Makassar."

Based on the background described above, this study focuses on examining the role of SPAM Makassar as a non-governmental organization in empowering marginalized women in Makassar. Specifically, the research investigates how SPAM Makassar contributes to the empowerment process and identifies the supporting factors that facilitate the organization's efforts (Muslimin et al., 2025; Prakasa et al., 2025; Seng, 2024; Surya et al., 2021; Susilo, 2023).

In line with these research questions, this study aims to examine the role of SPAM Makassar in empowering marginalized women and to identify the factors that support the effectiveness of its empowerment programs. Through this study, a deeper understanding can be developed regarding the contribution of NGOs to strengthening women's

capacities, improving social well-being, and addressing the challenges experienced by marginalized groups.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Type and Approach**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the role of *Solidaritas Perempuan Anging Mammiri* (SPAM) in empowering poor and marginalized communities in Makassar City (Sugiyono, 2014). The approach enabled an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and the social phenomena associated with SPAM's empowerment activities.

### **Time and Location**

The study was conducted at the office of the Women's Solidarity Anging Mammiri (SPAM) Makassar. This location was selected because SPAM is an NGO that provides direct empowerment assistance to poor communities in the city.

### **Data Sources and Informants**

Data were drawn from two sources: primary data, obtained directly through interviews and field observation concerning SPAM's empowerment efforts, and secondary data, drawn from documents, reports, and literature relevant to the research topic. Informants were selected purposively and comprised SPAM's chairperson (Suryani), the coordinator of SPAM's BEK program (Nurfianallisa), and two community members assisted by SPAM—a coastal resident affected by port-development activities in Tallo (Ibu Zainap) and a village resident involved in an agrarian land dispute in Takalar (Ibu Asriyani).

### **Research Instrument and Data Collection Technique**

The researcher served as the primary instrument, supported by an interview guide, field notes, and a voice recorder. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, direct observation of SPAM's activities, and documentation review.

### **Research Focus**

The research focus comprises two components. The first concerns SPAM's empowerment strategy, described through three indicators: education (the direct distribution of knowledge concerning citizens' rights and how to claim them), training (building creative and innovative capacity for sustainable livelihoods), and advocacy/accompaniment (institutional support and response to community cases, whether personal counseling or collective issue advocacy). The second concerns supporting factors, comprising legal instruments (laws or regulations that benefit vulnerable communities), allied NGOs (partner organizations working on litigation or non-litigation legal issues), and community support (individuals, students, or groups who voluntarily assist SPAM's empowerment work).

### **Data Analysis Technique**

Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (1992), in which data collection, reduction, display, and conclusion drawing/verification proceed interactively and continuously until the data reach saturation, as summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1. The Interactive Data Analysis Model of Miles and Huberman**

| Stage                                | Description                                                                                                                             |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Data collection                   | Gathering data in the form of words rather than numbers, through observation, interviews, document review, and editing.                 |
| 2. Data reduction                    | Summarizing and focusing on essential information, identifying themes and patterns, to clarify and simplify subsequent data collection. |
| 3. Data display                      | Presenting reduced data as narrative text, brief description, or diagrams of the relationships among categories.                        |
| 4. Conclusion drawing / verification | Identifying meaning within the displayed data, drawing conclusions, and verifying their validity against the collected data.            |

Source: Miles & Huberman (1992), adapted by the author, 2022.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Organizational Profile**

Solidaritas Perempuan (Women's Solidarity) is a national organization with community chapters in twelve Indonesian provinces. Its South Sulawesi chapter, SP Anging Mammiri (SPAM), was formed on 26 November 2000, initiated by women's rights activist Zohra Andi Baso together with Yuberlian, Christina Joseph, and other colleagues, in response to persistent gender-blind development policy, weak involvement of women in development planning, rising oligarchic politics, and increasing marginalization of women from public space in South Sulawesi. As of 2022, SPAM had 57 members (51 women and 6 men) from diverse professional backgrounds, including academics, advocates, homemakers, laborers, migrant workers, and students. SPAM's vision is to realize a democratic social order grounded in justice, ecological awareness, pluralism, and non-violence, based on an equal relationship between men and women in access to and control over natural, social, cultural, economic, and political resources. Its mission includes strengthening women's collective power nationally, building solidarity with women's movements globally, defending marginalized and oppressed women, advancing human-rights awareness with a focus on women's rights, and challenging patriarchal norms, attitudes, and legal-policy systems.

### **The Role of SPAM in Empowering Marginalized Women**

SPAM's chairperson, Suryani, explained that the organization's empowerment mandate flows directly from its vision of transforming an unjust social order into one with equal access and control between women and men. Because women are marginalized by patriarchal legal systems, structures, and culture, SPAM's central strategy is to build women's critical consciousness through political education, capacity strengthening, and joint strategy-building toward women's sovereignty:

*"Because our mandate, based on our vision, is how to change an unjust social order into one that is fairer in the distribution of access and control between women and men, we inevitably take the side of marginalized women—marginalized by a patriarchal legal system, structure, and culture... That is where SP plays its role: strengthening, providing*

*political education, and building strategies together to realize women's sovereignty"* (Suryani, SPAM Chairperson, 22 June 2022).

Field data confirm that SPAM's empowerment work operationalizes this mandate through three interrelated strategies, summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2. SPAM's Empowerment Strategies for Marginalized Women**

| Strategy                 | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Illustrative Activity                                                                               |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Education                | Political education strengthening women's understanding of their rights as women, citizens, mothers, and daughters.                                                                                                                  | Village discussions on gender awareness, feminism, and human/women's rights                         |
| Training                 | Capacity building enabling women to intervene in strategic planning spaces (e.g., village development deliberations) and to build independent, self-managed collective economic activity, termed Feminist Economic Solidarity (FES). | Skills training; identification of natural resources for community-managed economic activity        |
| Advocacy / accompaniment | Direct, sustained accompaniment on cases faced by communities, both individual counseling and collective issue advocacy, including litigation and non-litigation legal aid.                                                          | Case accompaniment in coastal Tallo (port development impacts) and Takalar (agrarian land disputes) |

Source: Interview data, processed by the author, 2022.

Community members corroborated these findings. A coastal resident in Tallo, whose livelihood as a shellfish gatherer was disrupted by port-development activity, described how SPAM's accompaniment changed her willingness to speak publicly about her situation:

*"They accompanied us, gave us understanding. Before, I was rather afraid to speak, afraid of saying something wrong, afraid of being arrested, afraid of being scolded by the government. But after being accompanied by SP and joining its activities, I gained understanding, so I became brave... I consider that SP taught us, as coastal women, to become knowledgeable"* (Ibu Zainap, Tallo community member, 22 August 2022).

Prior to this accompaniment, Ibu Zainap described the material harm caused by nearby port construction to the coastal ecosystem on which her livelihood depended: the obstruction of tidal flow led to sedimentation and pollution that pushed local shellfish populations toward local extinction, forcing her and other coastal women to travel by boat to the more distant Salodong area in search of remaining shellfish stocks. She specifically identified SPAM's activities—village discussions, feminist training, and advocacy—as the source of her newfound ability to recognize and articulate the injustice of this situation, a form of knowledge she contrasted explicitly with formal schooling: "I gained this knowledge from SP, not from school."

Similarly, a resident of Takalar involved in a land dispute linked to industrial encroachment reported that SPAM's education on gender equality directly changed household decision-making practices around agricultural land use, shifting from an

exclusively male-determined process to one that now involves women in family deliberation. Ibu Asriyani, who also serves as secretary of her village's Village Consultative Body (BPD) and as a family-planning cadre, explained that SPAM's initial engagement with her community centered on building basic understanding of gender equality, countering a prevailing local norm that women's role should be confined to domestic duties. She described the resulting change as tangible and beneficial: agricultural decisions that were previously determined solely by male household heads are now discussed collectively within the family before a decision on what to plant is reached, a shift she attributed directly to SPAM's educational intervention.

### **Barriers to Empowerment**

According to Suryani, barriers to empowerment arise at three levels. At the family level, husbands may restrict married women's participation. At the community level, entrenched patriarchal norms constrain women's public role. At the policy level, development programs and policies remain largely gender-blind; even where a 30% quota for women's participation in development forums (*musrenbang*) is met, SPAM observes that this numerical presence rarely translates into women's substantive voice being heard and incorporated into resulting programs. This persists despite the existence of a South Sulawesi provincial regulation (2015) and a Makassar city regulation (2010/2012) on gender mainstreaming in development—SPAM's field observation indicates that implementation of these regulations remains weak, with very few women meaningfully involved in the development processes the regulations are meant to govern.

Suryani elaborated that policymaking itself is frequently produced without a gender perspective, since those who design development programs and regulations are, in her account, predominantly gender-biased by default and rarely incorporate women's viewpoints in the drafting process; when women are eventually included, their inclusion is often treated as satisfied once a 30% participation quota in a public forum such as *musrenbang* is nominally reached. SPAM explicitly rejects this narrow, quota-based reading of participation, arguing instead that genuine involvement requires women to be present in full, given the right to speak, and to have their views actually heard and taken into consideration in shaping the resulting program—prompting SPAM to repeatedly question what kind of “involvement” has truly occurred beyond the symbolic fulfillment of a numerical target. SPAM further noted that even though South Sulawesi has held a provincial regulation on gender mainstreaming in development since 2015, and Makassar has held a comparable city-level regulation since around 2010–2012 mandating that every development plan formulated in the city involve, and accommodate the interests of, women, cross-checking with the women SPAM has directly assisted in the field reveals only minimal actual involvement in development processes, underscoring a persistent gap between regulatory text and field-level implementation that requires continued civil-society oversight.

### **Supporting Factors**

SPAM identified several supporting factors for its empowerment work, summarized in Table 3.

**Table 3. Supporting Factors in SPAM's Empowerment Efforts**

| <b>Factor</b>                     | <b>Description</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Legal instruments                 | Regional regulations on gender mainstreaming in development (South Sulawesi provincial regulation, 2015; Makassar city regulation, c. 2010–2012) provide legal legitimacy that SPAM can invoke to support its advocacy. |
| Local government facilitation     | Selected neighborhood (RT) and village/sub-district (kelurahan) officials support SPAM's activities by providing meeting space and facilitating community entry, although support is inconsistent and issue-dependent.  |
| Allied NGOs                       | Partner organizations working on litigation and non-litigation legal issues share the workload of community accompaniment and the production of public discourse.                                                       |
| Community and family support      | Village-level community organizations (LPM) and, at the household level, husbands or fathers who no longer restrict but instead permit women's participation in SPAM's activities.                                      |
| Internal organizational resources | Mobilization of SPAM members' and volunteers' ideas, time, and membership contributions (iuran) as a resource base for field-level empowerment work.                                                                    |

Source: Interview data, processed by the author, 2022.

The coordinator of SPAM's BEK program, Nurfianallisa, described how internal and external factors combine to sustain the organization's advocacy work: internally, through the maximized contribution of members' and activists' ideas, time, and dues to fund empowerment activities; and externally, through the trust extended by women in the communities and villages SPAM accompanies, as well as support from journalists and university students who help publicize SPAM's work to the broader public. She also noted that support from village and sub-district officials is highly context-dependent: engagement on relatively less contentious issues, such as migrant-worker protection, tends to receive comparatively smooth government support, whereas engagement on coastal and agrarian conflict issues—where government or corporate interests are directly implicated—tends to encounter far greater resistance. In such contexts, Nurfianallisa explained, SPAM's strategy is to maintain a full and consistent presence within the community (a practice she described as “live-in” engagement), which over time can shift family-level dynamics such that husbands or fathers move from actively restricting women's participation to instead making space for it.

The findings show that SPAM's empowerment strategy substantively fulfills the empowerment indicators proposed by Riant Nugroho (2008)—access, participation, control, and benefit. Education builds women's critical awareness and equips them with the knowledge required to access legal and political resources; training strengthens women's capacity to participate in strategic planning spaces and to control independent economic resources through the Feminist Economic Solidarity model; and advocacy secures the benefit dimension by ensuring that community concerns are carried into legal and policy processes. This pattern is consistent with Sulistiyani's (2004) conception of empowerment as the transfer of capability from those who possess it to those who do not,

and with Moeljarto Tjokrowinoto's emphasis on stimulating individuals' capacity for independent choice.

The education strategy in particular reflects the two-step sequence proposed by Riant Nugroho (2008)—siding with the disempowered party and preparing that party to access, participate in, control, and benefit from available resources. Suryani's account of SPAM's political education work makes explicit that the goal is not merely to inform women of their rights in the abstract, but to build the critical consciousness required for women to recognize their own marginalization as a structural, rather than personal, condition—a distinction that matters because it shifts the locus of responsibility away from the individual and toward the patriarchal systems, structures, and cultural practices that produce marginalization in the first place. Ibu Zainap's testimony that she moved from fear of speaking publicly to confidence in voicing her concerns illustrates this shift concretely, and aligns with Schuler, Hashemi, and Riley's indicator of legal and political awareness as a marker of successful empowerment.

The training strategy, exemplified by the Feminist Economic Solidarity (FES) model, addresses the control dimension of empowerment by building women's capacity to manage collective economic resources independently rather than depending on external actors or male-dominated household decision-making. Ibu Asriyani's account of agricultural decision-making shifting from an exclusively male-determined process to one involving family deliberation illustrates how training and education work together to change concrete household practice, not merely abstract attitudes. This finding is consistent with Schuler, Hashemi, and Riley's indicators of involvement in major decision-making and relative freedom from family domination as markers of empowerment success, and suggests that SPAM's strategy operates simultaneously at the level of individual consciousness and household-level practice.

At the same time, the persistence of patriarchal barriers despite the existence of gender-mainstreaming regulations at both the provincial and city levels illustrates a recurring gap between formal policy and substantive implementation. SPAM's response—treating the 30% participation quota as necessary but insufficient, and pushing instead for women's voices to be genuinely heard and incorporated—reflects a more substantive reading of the participation indicator than mere numerical representation. This finding underscores that legal instruments alone are insufficient without sustained civil-society pressure to ensure implementation, positioning NGOs such as SPAM as indispensable intermediaries between formal policy and lived community experience. This also resonates with the normative principle of participation discussed in Section 2.1: participation as an ongoing, interactive process requiring genuine involvement in decision-making, rather than a one-time, symbolic act of attendance.

The supporting factors identified—legal instruments, allied NGOs, local government facilitation, and family/community support—function as a distributed support system that compensates for the limitations of any single actor, consistent with the view of NGOs as partnership-based, rather than substitutive, actors in community empowerment (Lisa Jordan & Peter Van T, 2009). Notably, the internal barrier of limited

human resources, addressed by SPAM through the recruitment of volunteers from among students and socially engaged youth, mirrors the organizational elements of public administration discussed in Section 2.5—particularly personnel and organization—suggesting that SPAM’s institutional sustainability depends as much on its internal administrative capacity as on the external legal and social environment in which it operates. Taken together, these findings indicate that SPAM’s role extends beyond direct service provision to encompass a longer-term project of structural change: building women’s critical consciousness, contesting the gap between formal policy and lived practice, and cultivating a support network capable of sustaining that contestation over time.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined the role of *Solidaritas Perempuan Anging Mammiri* (SPAM) in empowering marginalized women in Makassar City. The findings showed that SPAM effectively carried out its role through three interrelated strategies—education, training, and advocacy—that substantively fulfilled the empowerment indicators of access, participation, control, and benefits, particularly for women marginalized by patriarchal systems, structures, and cultural norms. Barriers remained at the family, community, and policy levels, most notably the weak implementation of existing gender-mainstreaming regulations in South Sulawesi and Makassar. Supporting factors included facilitation by local government, legal instruments, partnerships with allied NGOs, and community and family support, all of which helped sustain SPAM’s advocacy and empowerment efforts. Based on these findings, several recommendations are proposed for SPAM Makassar. First, given that its current role has been positively received by the community, SPAM should maintain and further broaden the flexibility and inclusiveness of its empowerment approach. Second, collaboration with allied institutions, particularly legal aid organizations, agrarian reform advocates, and environmental NGOs such as WALHI, should be strengthened to enhance SPAM’s advocacy capacity. Third, discourse on legal equality should be expanded so that SPAM’s empowerment efforts are not limited to development-related disputes but also address broader human rights issues. Fourth, SPAM may consider broadening its membership and engagement beyond women alone, as advancing gender equality is a shared responsibility; greater gender inclusivity could strengthen the organization’s legitimacy, outreach, and effectiveness in promoting women’s empowerment across Makassar City.

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