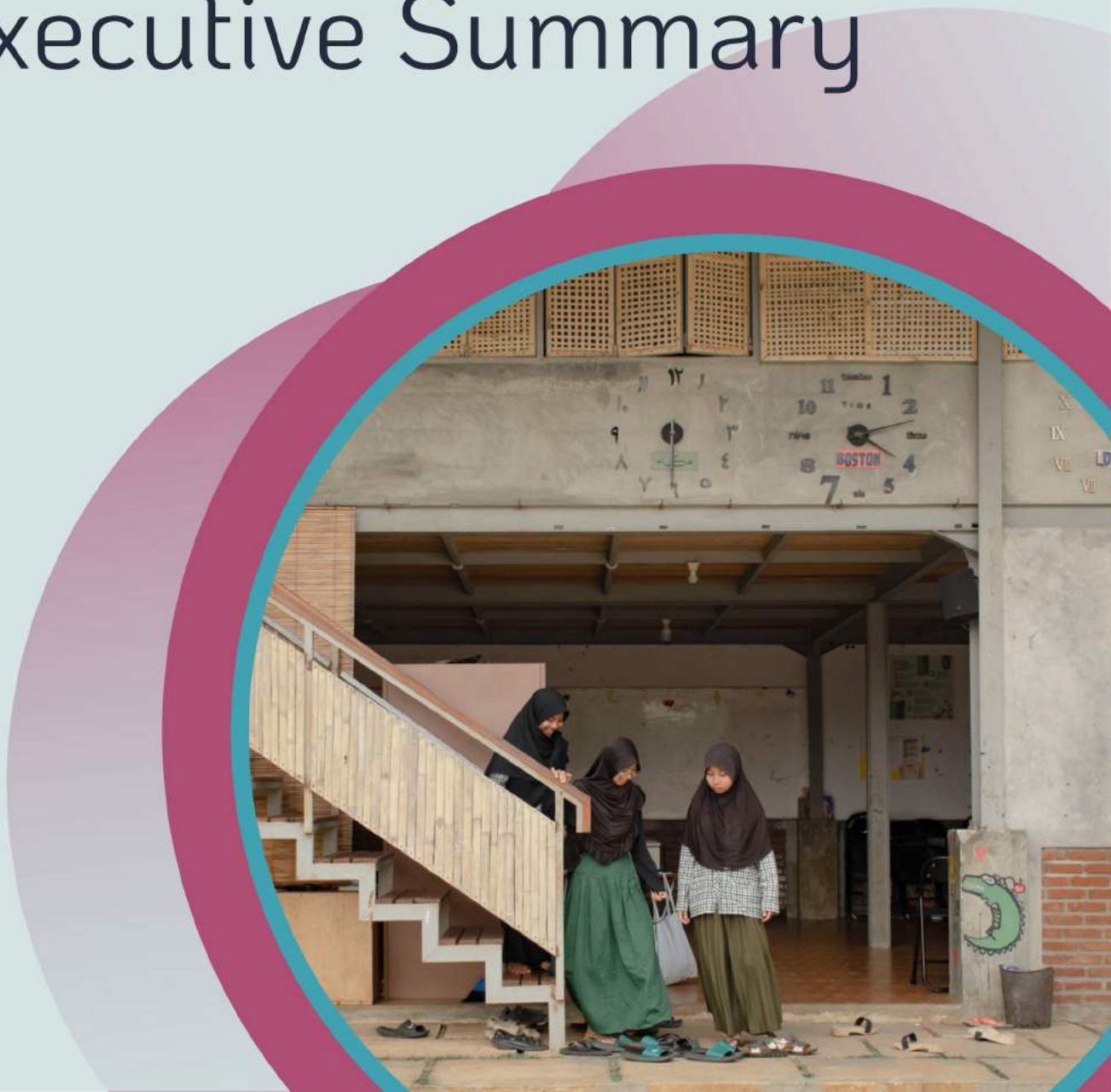


INDONESIA

# MID TERM REVIEW

## Executive Summary



# Introduction

JISRA (Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Action) is an international interfaith consortium consisting of Mensen met een Missie, Faith to Action Network, Tearfund (UK and Netherlands) and Search For Common Ground. The Arabic word “jisar” means bridge, symbolising what JISRA aims to do: build bridges between divided communities. The JISRA programme (2021 – 2025) is being implemented in seven countries: Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria and Uganda. JISRA started as part of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs' political agenda to strengthen civil society under the Power of Voices policy framework. The program aims to promote peaceful and just societies where all people can enjoy Freedom of Religion and Belief.

In Indonesia, JISRA has ten partners working in diverse contexts of religious initiatives: PeaceGeneration, AMAN, Muhammadiyah, Nasyiatul 'Aisyiyah, Gusdurian, Dian Interfidei, Fahmina, Mosintuwu, Fatayat NU, and Imparsial, who are supported by Mensen met een Missie and Faith to Action Network. Together these partners address discrimination and extremism in religious communities, strengthen the bridge between religious communities, and engage international, national and local authorities on issues of freedom of religion and belief (FoRB).

Mid-way through the programme, Vashi Impact Group conducted a mid-term review of the programme to study the effectiveness, coherence, and relevance of JISRA to the advancement of FoRB, and generate learnings and recommendations to improve the programme. VIG utilised a mixed-methods evaluation approach using primary and secondary qualitative and quantitative methods, including focus group discussions, key informant interviews, programmatic document reviews, and surveys.



# Key Findings

JISRA has proven to be an adaptive and resilient initiative, aligning itself with the contextual factors shaping Indonesia's socio-political and economic landscape. The programme is effective in addressing stereotypes and prejudices, especially in relation to religious minorities who often face discrimination. The program has contributed to preventing tensions between religious groups, especially in a religiously diverse society like Indonesia.

Through the engagement of religious and community leaders, JISRA promotes reconciliation and peaceful coexistence in complex environments, where religious differences often intersect with political and social factors. JISRA has also successfully played a role in fostering constructive dialog among different religious communities, demonstrating its relevance in addressing the complex challenges faced by Indonesian society.

## Peaceful and just societies where all enjoy FoRB

### **Intra-Religious Pathway**

(within religious communities)

More open and tolerant religious norms and practices within communities.

Extremist tendencies diminished

### **Inter-Religious Pathway**

(between religious communities)

Religious actors work together across religious divides

Religious communities jointly address common and mutual grievances

### **Extra-Religious Pathway**

(Policy Influencing)

(Inter)National FoRB policies are increasingly religion- and context-sensitive

Rigorous security practices reduced

### **Cross-Cutting Pathway**

(Women & Youth)

Increased representation of women and youth in decision-making

Increased capacity of CSOs

# Key Findings

In addition, the program actively helps address gender stereotypes, promoting equality and inclusiveness in all walks of life. JISRA's participatory grant making proves their commitment to empowering youth and women groups as well as religious groups that experience discrimination. The JISRA program also engages in international advocacy and achievements at the national level, demonstrating their commitment to the improvement of freedom of religion or belief.

Despite facing new risks related to political tensions and religious conflicts in Indonesia, the program remains relevant and effective in addressing such challenges. JISRA's work aligns with the Indonesian government's, particularly its policies and frameworks; and also collaborates with local governments, security actors, and religious leaders in Indonesia.





# Intra-Religious Pathway

JISRA aims to achieve positive transformation within religious communities; religious actors and communities introspect on their beliefs, interpretations of religious texts, and daily norms and practices. This introspection includes the integration of religious, cultural, and social traditions, with local interpretations.

JISRA has made progress in shaping positive attitudes and behaviours towards women in the target communities. However, changes in attitudes have not been fully reflected in behaviours, indicating potential delays in translating positive attitudes into concrete actions. Similarly, community positive attitudes towards the youth (86.3%) were higher when compared to positive behaviours (77.2%). Despite the active involvement of young people in promoting peace and other positive initiatives, they face significant challenges in expressing their opinions freely. Young people's views are often dismissed due to their perceived lack of experience, particularly when they hold multiple identities such as being young, female, and from a religious minority.

*“From my perspective based on my community, many religious leaders are like my friends. Many of our activities are supported by them, for example when we do live Instagram our religious leaders often encourage us to continue working and offer help if we find difficulties. We the young people feel emotional closeness with the religious leaders in our community, so there are no barriers, and there is ease of communication between us and them.” Young person in Bandung*



JISRA has advocated for coherent values shared among diverse religious groups, which has proven to be effective in resolving conflicts and promoting constructive dialogue in Indonesia. JISRA has recognized the role of religious leaders in perpetuating or defusing conflict as well, and has worked with religious leaders to counter harmful narratives. JISRA seeks to influence conflict dynamics in its intervention areas by equipping religious leaders to be change agents across the The evaluation shows that religious leaders are instrumental in fostering tolerance and promoting positive attitudes among community members, including young people. This has led to a growing sense of closeness between youth and religious figures within their communities.

JISRA has also assisted in bringing up sensitive issues for dialogue in a bid to address harmful practices that were rife in the communities. For example, JISRA contributed to support the International Conference and the Second Indonesia Women Ulama Congress (KUPI II) in Semarang and Jepara including disseminating of the fatwa and recommendations to public audiences.

*“I once held a Srawung Damai where we brought together young people from various religious backgrounds, communities and genders to discuss peace issues and see how radicalism was getting stronger without us realising it. Sometimes those who accidentally join a radical group are not aware that they are doctrines and feel that they are the most correct, this is the concern at that time. We have also created online articles and content regarding the issue of terrorism, with the hope of having a positive influence and increasing insight and openness to thinking.” Youth Leader*





# Inter-Religious Pathway

JISRA focuses on peaceful coexistence and collaboration between faith groups. Religious actors are encouraged to support interfaith action within and beyond their communities, working together to promote faith-based diversity. It is hoped that this process will build a sustainable culture and system of interfaith collaboration, with faith communities using shared spaces to address grievances and conflicts and encourage peaceful coexistence. Advocacy for coherent values shared among diverse religious groups has proven to be effective in resolving conflicts and promoting constructive dialogue in Indonesia.

*“The youth community in West Java establishing Jabar Jampe, as a community platform for promoting tolerance in West Java province by using social media, conducting lobby paper or conducting hearing with stakeholders after participated in the training that increased their capacity in advocating, lobbying and digital campaigns to advocacy FoRB issue (no need to write this last part as it will be covered under contribution)”*





# Inter-Religious Pathway

The use of media was found to be contributing to FoRB. Religious actors were able to collaborate with community members to address conflict in their communities using social media. Interfaith collaboration is also found through community activities and positive responses to religious differences. Young people have been carrying out activities that promote tolerance in their communities; 15 youths (men and women) disseminated issues of diversity and religious tolerance in the community in Cirebon and Majalengka.

*"Taking the story from one of the mass organisations that was conveyed, it was actually religious figures who were the perpetrators of violence, for example, the sealing of the Ahmadi Mosque. For society, it is more about dialogue to solve problems, that is the same as what the Wahidiyah community did when they were said to be heretics. Our efforts to oppose discrimination are by voicing it at the majlis, they will be given the understanding that there is no need to differentiate if it does not touch on principles."*





# Extra-Religious Pathway

JISRA aims to influence national and state security laws, policies and practices that may disadvantage minority groups by leveraging the role of religious actors. JISRA advocates for the role of religious leaders and civil society organisations in policy-making processes, and holding policy-makers accountable for faith-based diversity, and development and implementation of policies that are sensitive to religion and its context. JISRA aims to ensure the needs of faith communities are voiced, increasing representation in policy processes, and producing policies based on evidence and interactions with various religious leaders and civil society organisations.

Findings highlight significant changes in the representation of religious leaders and increased engagement of civil society organisations. Indonesia's commitment to inclusion and collaboration is underscored by the active involvement of the CSO Coalition for FoRB in lobbying and advocacy activities. By preparing a comprehensive report on the FoRB situation in Indonesia for the 4th cycle of UPR in 2022, these CSOs have actively contributed to influencing policy changes and decision-making processes. During the pre-session of the UPR, the issue of limitation of places of worship and the use of headscarves in public schools were addressed in the engagement with the Indonesian government, as well as at international level with diplomatic missions in Geneva. The JISRA program engages in international advocacy and achievements at the national level, demonstrating their commitment to the improvement of freedom of religion or belief.





# Cross-Cutting Pathway

JISRA is committed to increasing the representation and capacity of women and young people in decision-making towards FoRB, with a focus on gender-sensitive project cycle management, media engagement, and evidence-based advocacy. JISRA made progress in the active participation of CSOs, coalitions in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), and efforts to increase the representation of women and young people in decision-making processes, which remains a focus for improvement to increase the positive impact of the program.

JISRA's participatory grant making proves their commitment to empowering youth and women groups as well as religious groups that experience discrimination. JISRA's achievements in promoting gender equality and interfaith cooperation serve as a valuable model for other initiatives aiming to create more inclusive and just societies.

Women play a crucial role as religious actors, exemplified by their involvement in various grassroots peacebuilding initiatives in Indonesia. These initiatives, spearheaded by women, strive to enhance social cohesion, and create more open platforms for dialogue. JISRA initiatives in Indonesia are actively empowering the youth, contributing to the reduction of unemployment rates and the establishment of continuous income sources. This underscores the growing awareness of economic empowerment among young individuals.





# Recommendations

**Improved Coordination Mechanism:** One of the coordination challenges faced by the JISRA program is the need to balance and address multiple priorities within a limited timeframe by partners.

**Enhancing Cross-Channel Coordination and Integration:** JISRA should focus on strengthening coordination and integration among four pathways: intra-religious, inter-religious, extra-religious, and cross-sectoral.

**PGM initiatives as a means for gender transformation and youth empowerment:** MTR has noted the potential of the PGM initiative in improving the status of women and its implementation should be accelerated given the late start of the program.

**Integration of Women's and Youth Empowerment Initiatives:** Integrating deeper initiatives for women and youth empowerment in every aspect of the program is important.

**Promoting dialogue over confrontation:** The emphasis on dialogue as the primary tool to address discrimination and violence reflects JISRA's commitment to peaceful resolution.

**Strengthening Local Alliances and Partnerships:** Continuing efforts to build and strengthen partnerships with local partners, CSOs, and religious groups will increase capacity to achieve program objectives.

**Enhanced Real-Time Monitoring and Evaluation:** Adopting responsive, real-time monitoring and evaluation (MEL) systems can provide faster and more adaptive insights.

**Partnerships with Youth and Women's Organisations:** Build strong partnerships with established youth and women's organisations.



**Inclusive Approaches to Decision-Making:**

Continue to increase the involvement of women and youth in decision-making by creating inclusive and safe forums for them to voice their views and ideas.

**Strategic Consultations and Adjustments with Local Stakeholders:**

Regularly holding strategic consultations with local stakeholders, including religious groups, civil society organisations, and other key figures, can help JISRA adapt the program to the changing context

**Countering Increased Harassment/Discrimination:**

To counter victimisation/discrimination, especially against traditionally marginalised groups such as atheists, JISRA should focus on education and awareness campaigns that promote tolerance, inclusiveness, and recognition of diverse belief systems.

**Strengthening Community Education and Engagement:**

Taking a more active approach to community education and engagement can increase people's awareness and understanding of freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) and their contribution to building peace.

**Strengthening Local Stakeholder Engagement and Ownership:**

JISRA should continue to prioritise strengthening collaboration and communication with local stakeholders, including religious leaders, civil society organisations, and community members.

**Use of Technology and social media for Active Engagement:**

Utilise technology and social media as tools to increase youth and women's engagement and participation.

**Leadership and Participatory Skills Training:**

Build the capacity of youth and women in leadership and participatory skills.

