

October 2018  
Number 3

Accountability Working Paper



## Movement-building for Accountability: Learning from Indonesian Women's Organizing

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## About PEKKA

*Perempuan Kepala Keluarga* (PEKKA, Women-Headed Family Empowerment) is an Indonesian organization whose work is rooted in a vision of women's collective power and participation for social change. Since 2001, PEKKA has addressed entrenched social exclusion through popular education and intensive leadership development, which made it possible for thousands of marginalized women to overcome stigma and engage in politically savvy, sustainable collective action in the public sphere.

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For more information about JASS, please visit the website: [www.justassociates.org](http://www.justassociates.org).

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## Notes on Support

Support for ARC comes from the Ford Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and Open Society Foundations.

## Disclaimer

The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed here are those of the authors.

*Cover Photo:* The Parade of Serikat Pekka Central Java in 2011, speaking out about the existence and strategic role of women headed family to contribute in creating a just and equal society. Credits: PEKKA.

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## About this Working Paper


This paper builds on a case study written in 2015 by Nani Zulminarni and Valerie Miller for a workshop on civil society policy monitoring and advocacy strategies (Zulminarni and Miller 2015). From that starting point, researchers from *Perempuan Kepala Keluarga* (PEKKA, Women-Headed Family Empowerment), Just Associates (JASS) and the Accountability Research Center (ARC) have collaborated to deepen and update the content to share PEKKA's experience with a wider audience of social accountability practitioners and scholars. In doing so, they have drawn on a range of sources, including transcripts of conversations with lead author Nani Zulminarni.


## About the Authors

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 **Valerie Miller** has worked in advocacy, international development, gender, and human rights for more than 35 years. She has collaborated with grassroots organizations, social movements, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international agencies as an organizer, advocate, popular educator, evaluator, and researcher. For more on Valerie, see: <https://justassociates.org/en/bio/valerie-miller>.

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## Acknowledgements

Thanks very much for insightful comments on earlier versions from Karen Brock, Scott Guggenheim, and Cate Sumner.

# Summary

## Movement-building for Accountability: Learning from Indonesian Women’s Organizing

*Perempuan Kepala Keluarga* (Women-Headed Family Empowerment, known as PEKKA) is an Indonesian organization whose work is rooted in a vision of women’s collective power and participation for social change. Since 2001, PEKKA has addressed entrenched social exclusion through popular education, intensive leadership development, and social accountability and policy advocacy. Thousands of marginalized women have overcome stigma and entered the public sphere to engage in politically savvy, sustainable collective action. This emphasis on autonomous grassroots voice is grounded in 2,559 village-level cooperatives that are also scaled up to district, provincial and national levels (PEKKA 2017).

PEKKA’s combination of national advocacy with grassroots organizing and countervailing power has influenced national social programs and broadened women’s access to the legal system. Improved access to the courts allows women to obtain legal documentation of their own civil status. This allows women to legalize a marriage that was valid under Islamic law or file a divorce case that will enable her to be recognized as the head of her family. The experience of gaining legal documents may build the knowledge and confidence required to obtain a birth certificate for their children, thereby securing opportunities and access to social services, including education, for the next generation.

PEKKA engages in cross-sector alliance-building with local government, Islamic authorities, national policymakers, and international development agencies. This creates the political space and legitimacy needed to navigate complex cultural and political dynamics and deflect those forces opposed to public accountability and social inclusion.

PEKKA’s grassroots members promote social accountability, monitoring access to services and solving problems through collaborative engagement with authorities—though without using those terms. What makes PEKKA’s approach to social accountability distinctive is its emphasis on building a broad, autonomous social base as the foundation for projecting grassroots women’s voices, combined with its multi-level approach to advocacy. PEKKA takes scale into account by engaging with authorities from the village level to national and international levels.

PEKKA’s long-term efforts to build a broad-based organization with more than 31,447 members have brought fresh and reimagined language, analysis, and strategy ideas to the transparency, participation, and accountability (TPA) field.

Key lessons from PEKKA’s accountability strategies include the following:

1. Address underlying institutional and cultural causes of social exclusion to create the confidence and space needed for women to exercise their voices and take collective action.
2. Use economic empowerment to build social foundations for autonomous voice and civic engagement.
3. Build countervailing power through action strategies that scale up member voice, leadership skills, and opportunities for participation in all aspects of the work.
4. Produce diverse forms of evidence for multiple audiences to advance advocacy strategies and maximize impact.
5. Cultivate allies and relationships inside and outside government, and at multiple levels, to expand impact and deflect opposition.



PEKKA National Forum. Credit: PEKKA



# I. Introduction

**P**erempuan Kepala Keluarga (PEKKA, Women-Headed Family Empowerment) is an Indonesian organization that uses movement-building strategies to build the power and voice of its participants in their lives and communities. PEKKA's work is rooted in a vision of women's collective power and participation for social change. PEKKA emphasizes the critical role of informed, active, and organized constituencies as advocates for responsive and accountable government. This goes beyond organizing marginalized women as "users and choosers" of services (Cornwall and Gaventa 2001), to engaging women as leaders so that they can influence decisions and policies that directly affect their lives. PEKKA's multi-faceted, long-term approach focuses on consolidating a broad social base through cooperatives, intensively developing grassroots leadership, and building multi-sectoral alliances to promote responsive government at multiple levels.

Informed by feminist power analysis, PEKKA's movement-building approach brings valuable insights to the global TPA field, where international agencies often

focus on bounded, project interventions that rely on 'light touch' activities. In contrast, long-term, socially grounded, constituency-led movements for accountable governance are under-represented in global TPA agendas and communities of practice. PEKKA's strategies incorporate social accountability into an integrated agenda for change—though without using that term. Like many other organizations that promote social accountability, PEKKA emphasizes collaborative engagement with government to monitor public service delivery and access to the legal system. However, PEKKA's approach to social accountability goes beyond local problem-solving efforts by emphasizing both a broad social base as the foundation for women's voice and sustained policy advocacy at the national level to promote institutional reforms needed to address underlying causes of social exclusion.

Learning from PEKKA's 17 years of building a broad-based organization (now with 31,447 members) offers fresh and reimagined language, analysis, and strategy ideas. PEKKA addresses entrenched social exclusion



PEKKA Association in Brebes, Central Java, Indonesia, stages a parade announcing the PEKKA program and activities throughout their village. Credit: PEKKA

through popular education and intensive leadership development, which has made it possible for thousands of marginalized women to overcome stigma and engage in politically savvy, sustainable collective action in the public sphere.<sup>1</sup> This emphasis on autonomous grassroots voice is grounded in 2,559 village-level cooperatives that have been scaled up to district, provincial, and national levels (PEKKA 2017). With cultural nuance, PEKKA engages both local government and Islamic authorities to create the political space needed to contend with forces opposed to public accountability and social inclusion. PEKKA’s multi-tiered results—shifts in policy agendas and practice within different arenas of government, from local to national—affirm its effective combination of mutually reinforcing change strategies. These include grassroots organizing, intensive leadership training, community media, and alliance-building, backed up by participatory research and evidence-based advocacy grounded in power analysis.

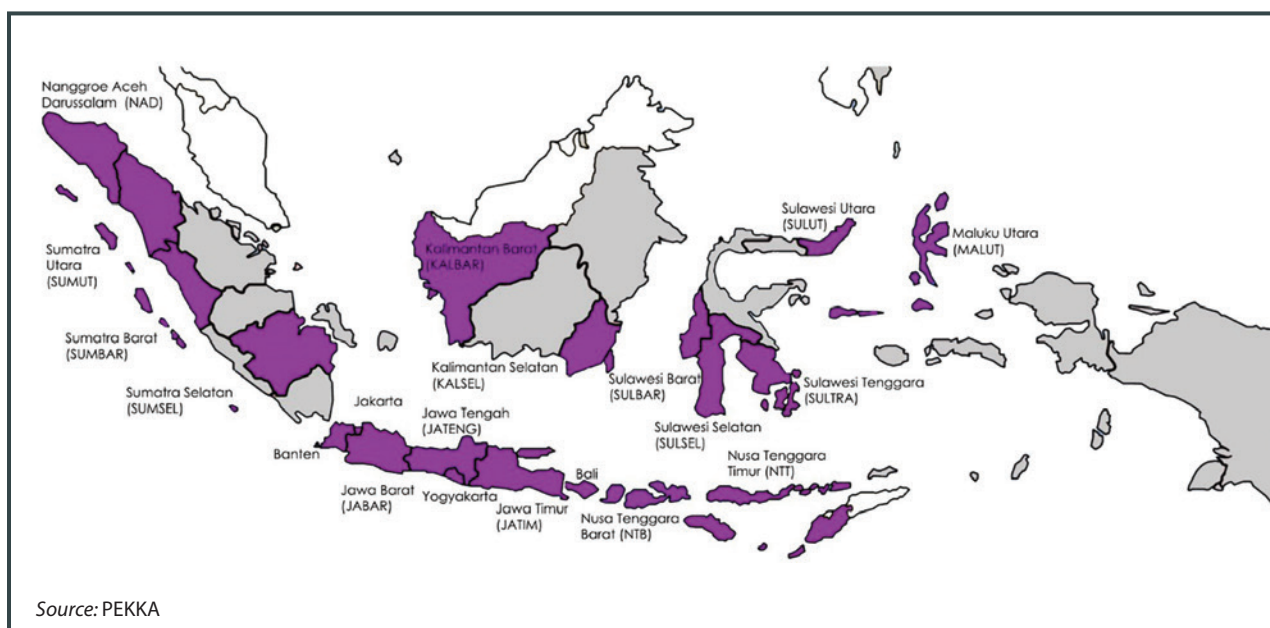
PEKKA has also made legal empowerment a strategic priority, joining a global movement that deploys community paralegals to broaden access to justice.<sup>2</sup> Some of PEKKA’s most profound achievements for women and children include expanded access to Indonesia’s court

systems, enabling them to obtain vital legal documents such as marriage, divorce, and birth certificates. Rooted in long-term collaboration and research with Indonesia’s Religious Courts and Supreme Court, and the Family Court of Australia, PEKKA’s paralegal program has provided legal information and assistance to 125,000 people in 20 provinces since 2010, as well as supporting the effective implementation of the government’s large-scale integrated and mobile court system (Sumner and Zulminarni 2017, 2018). These activities have helped to advance the legal status and right to identity of women-headed families, increasing access both to the family court system and to the government’s anti-poverty programs. PEKKA also provides women with opportunities and skills to gain social standing and participate in community development planning and budgeting—a critical avenue for encouraging local governments to be more responsive to the needs of marginalized women and their families.<sup>3</sup>

The most recent evolution of PEKKA’s work was launched in 2015 and included the development of a leadership training center named the Paradigta Academy. This intensive, 12-month program has trained more than 2,500 women, taking leadership development to scale.

**Figure 1. PEKKA’s Presence Across Indonesia**

PEKKA is active in the areas shown in purple on the map of Indonesia below.







## II. PEKKA's Emergence in Social Context

### 1. Women-headed Households in Indonesia

PEKKA's work began in 2001, emerging from the *Komnas Perempuan* (Widows' Project), which set out to document the lives of widows in the conflict-ridden Aceh region. In the Widows' Project, PEKKA founder Nani Zulminarni saw potential for something more, and re-cast the project into an ongoing and comprehensive strategy for change. Importantly, she changed the title, naming it PEKKA; as well as meaning Women-Headed Family Empowerment, the word is also an abbreviation for "women heads of household". Since Indonesian marriage law states that the household heads are male, and does not recognize women in this capacity, the organization's name sends a political message.

In 2010, the Indonesian Bureau of Statistics (BPS) estimated that of Indonesia's 65 million households, 14 percent (nine million) were headed by women (Sumner 2010; 2011). The BPS definition of the head of a household potentially allows for two different people to be considered as the head of a household: (i) the person who is actually responsible for the daily needs of a household or (ii) the person who is considered the head of the household. This definition is confusing, as only one person can be named as the head of household through the BPS national survey process. It is therefore probable that there is an under-estimation of the number of female-headed households in Indonesia. This has implications for policy planning and implementation for Indonesia's pro-poor poverty alleviation programs that should target female heads of household and their families.

Women who lead households have commonly been referred to in the Bahasa language as *janda*—a negative, dismissive term referring to women who are widowed, abandoned, or divorced. In Indonesia, the power of belief systems, laws, religious teachings, and class and ethnic hierarchies leads to the stigmatization and social exclusion of *jandas*. Many women without husbands

are considered a disgrace for falling outside or violating prevailing family norms—particularly those women who are divorced or have had a child outside marriage, have never married, have been abandoned, or suffered violence. They are seldom invited to social activities, let alone involved in any sort of community decision-making. In order to support themselves and their children, they work from morning to night, which makes it difficult to participate in social events or community life, where key information is shared and one's place in a community is established. As a result, such women lack access to existing development resources and ideas. Men judge them as "easy", lonely women, while other women suspect them of being potential husband-seducers. They must guard their behavior carefully, which exacerbates their sense of loneliness and isolation. Most do not acknowledge this, as they are socialized to deny and hide their feelings. For Nani Zulminarni, it became clear that marital status, as well as class, played an important part in the burden that the poorest Indonesian women carry. Calling themselves PEKKA was a way for these women to claim a new collective identity as responsible and contributing members of the community, rejecting the inferior status conferred on them by the label *janda*.

Cultural patterns of social exclusion are reinforced by how the legal system and governmental agencies treat women without husbands (and their children), which often require that they have marriage certificates. Surveys of PEKKA members have found that less than half are in a legally recognized marriage (Sumner 2011). Children whose parents do not have a registered marriage face difficulties obtaining a birth certificate with both the mother and father's names on it (Sumner and Zulminarni 2018), and lack of a birth certificate in turn limits access to formal education and identity as citizens. Women-headed households have also had trouble accessing government assistance such as cash transfer schemes, rice subsidies, and free medical treatment programs (Sumner 2011).<sup>4</sup>



Regional Forum of PEKKA Association in West Kalimantan in 2004, where members meet to strengthen the women-headed family movement. Credit: PEKKA

## 2. PEKKA’s Theory of Change

Since it began its work in Aceh, PEKKA has organized more than 31,400 divorced, single, abandoned, and widowed women members into more than 2,559 rural community-based savings and loan cooperatives in 20 of the country’s 34 provinces (see Box 1), as well as 56,325 participants (PEKKA 2017).<sup>5</sup> Because PEKKA’s organizers are feminists working within a largely Islamic context, change strategies depend on navigating within conservative social norms—while at the same time renegotiating them.

From the first stages of forming cooperatives at the village level, PEKKA takes great care to develop women’s confidence, capacity, and leadership. To counter the demobilizing effects of the invisible power of culture, social norms, bias, and dominant religious beliefs, PEKKA organizers use participatory feminist popular education to raise women’s critical awareness, disrupt the ‘naturalness’ of their stigmatization and exclusion, and support individual and collective empowerment as a foundation for movement-building. PEKKA establishes safe, creative

spaces of community and learning as part of the cooperative development process, working with women to share stories and dreams, find commonalities with other women’s struggles, explore critical questions and power dynamics, and—over time—undertake their own action steps. Feminist popular education builds power—both personal and collective—from the inside out, at the same time as it builds practical skills and experience (see Annex 1).

### Box 1. PEKKA by numbers

Year started: 2001  
 Cooperatives formed: 2,559<sup>b</sup>  
 Women’s cooperative members: 31,447<sup>b</sup>  
 Number of paralegals trained: 2,700<sup>a</sup>  
 Number of paralegals active: 1,350<sup>a</sup>  
 Number of cases supported by paralegals: 125,000<sup>a</sup>  
 Active provinces: 20<sup>b</sup>

#### Sources:

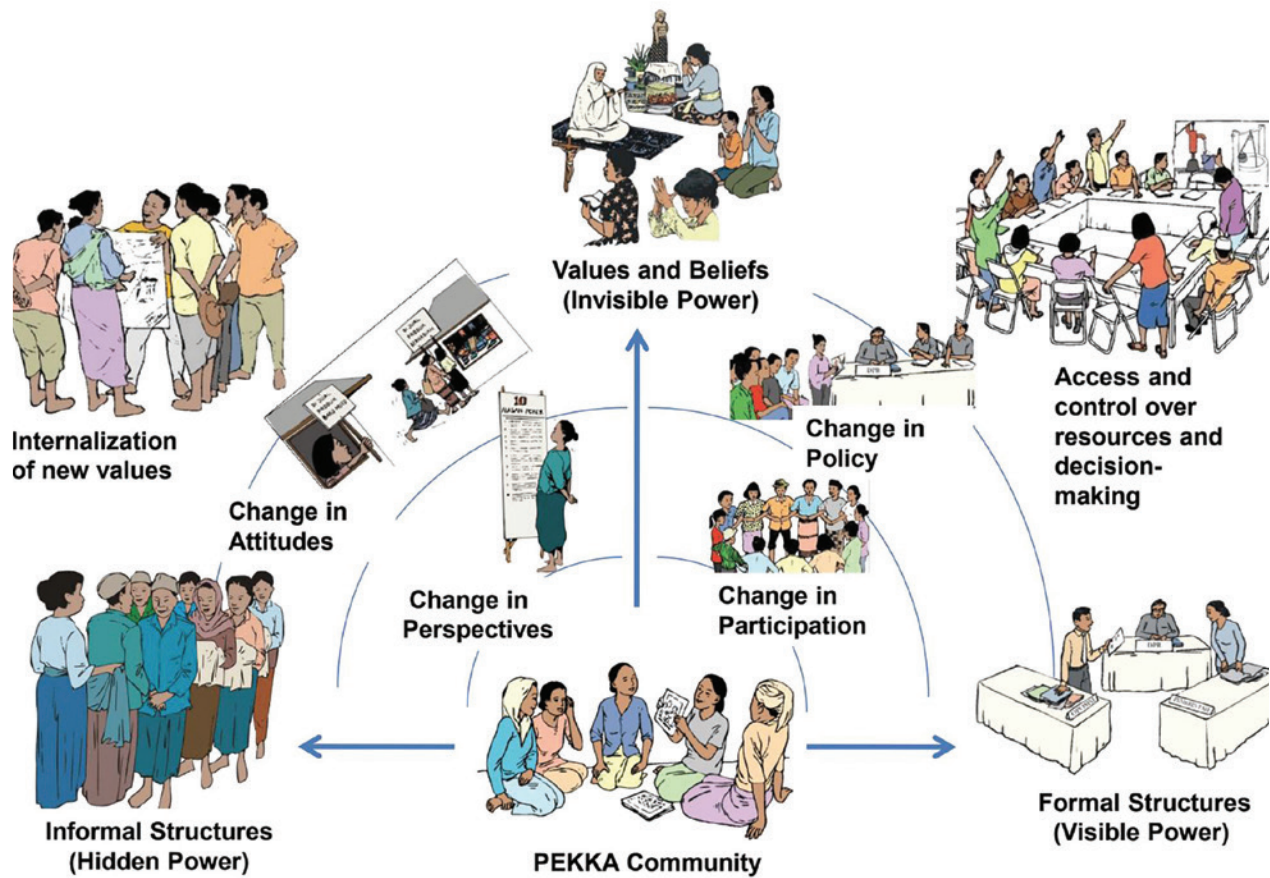
<sup>a</sup> Sumner and Zulminarni 2017

<sup>b</sup> PEKKA 2017

PEKKA's 10-year retrospective report outlines how the problems and issues faced by women household heads essentially stem from power dynamics that dominate their lives in three distinct dimensions: formal power, informal or shadow power, and belief systems (invisible power). The empowerment of women household heads

is intended to enhance their individual and collective capacity to influence these dimensions of power, and thus enable economic stability, equality, and justice (PEKKA 2012). This work has grown from the theory of change visualized in Figure 2. PEKKA's more detailed framework can be found in Annex 2.

**Figure 2.** PEKKA's Theory of Change



Source: PEKKA 2012



### III. Building the Countervailing Power of Citizens for Social Change and Public Accountability

From its inception, PEKKA's approach to social change and women's empowerment has centered on the creation of small-scale savings and loan cooperatives. By starting with women's most pressing economic survival needs, PEKKA helps provide a critical element of economic stability and community connectedness, which are vital to organizing. The women in cooperatives pool small sums that grow over time and from which they can borrow for approved projects. PEKKA also has matching funds that it can make available once the cooperatives get to a certain level of savings. PEKKA simultaneously works to catalyze and

strengthen the skills of savings cooperative members in leadership, critical thinking, and organizational and political participation. These cooperatives foster a culture and practice of community-building (solidarity), democratic decision-making and participation in legal matters, enabling women to become confident leaders and engage with authorities to advocate for change. Participatory research, leadership training programs, and a paralegal program all contribute to civic empowerment and sophisticated advocacy strategies based on women's priorities.

*Despite daunting obstacles and setbacks, our vision remains true today—strengthening women's economic possibilities and solidarity as a way to improve their lives and their capacity to act, as a way to advance their political participation in society as dynamic, caring, smart, and sensitive citizens, capable of navigating the twists and turns of power that shape their contexts. At the outset, we made a strategic choice to use women's economic empowerment as an entry point with the clear belief that it would lead to better lives for women and their families.*

*Zulminarni (2014)*



## IV. Power and the Feminist Movement-building Approach

One of the most important elements of PEKKA's approach is the power analysis framework (see Annex 1), which underpins movement organizing, strategies, and advocacy work. It is an approach based on a nuanced understanding of power and how to build it most effectively with marginalized women.<sup>6</sup>

### 1. Building Countervailing Power

The feminist movement-building approach sheds light on one of the important insights emerging from recent TPA research: the need to build countervailing power to promote and maintain responsive governance and challenge anti-accountability forces.<sup>7</sup> The development of PEKKA's power is derived from a well-organized network of cooperatives and the legitimacy and credibility built through work with communities and through strategic alliances with officials at multiple levels of government.

PEKKA's work with marginalized women is shaped by a deep understanding of the multi-faceted ways in which power operates to silence and exclude women. To create and sustain countervailing power for long-term accountability, broad-based collective action is needed at local, national, and international levels. Many development interventions and strategies, when they consider power, usually focus on its most visible or formal forms—laws, policies, courts, access to credit, and electoral processes. Yet formidable players often operate behind the scenes using 'shadow or hidden power' to influence politics and silence opposition voices such as those of women, indigenous groups, and impoverished communities. Ideology, social norms, and belief systems also act as an 'invisible power,' shaping mindsets in ways that marginalize and denigrate people on the basis of identity, gender, class, race or ethnicity. The power of cultural attitudes—both passively and through its active manipulation—often discourages people from advocating for themselves, as they accept or resign themselves to inequities in their lives. Invisible power

also undermines the public case for laws and policies that would challenge the status quo. PEKKA's analysis of these multiple dimensions of power informs long-term, multi-layered strategies for building and sustaining countervailing power (VeneKlasen and Miller 2002).

PEKKA's movement-building strategy is designed to address these various power dynamics by building an organized and active network of women leaders and allies that function as countervailing power. In the process, PEKKA has designed careful and creative strategies to enable members to navigate and leverage power at multiple levels—from local villages to national line ministries. These strategies include the following:

- Building the economic independence of its members, providing a foundation of security and confidence to encourage their social inclusion and civic participation.
- Developing the organized capacity of its members—including research, analytical, and leadership skills—as an effective collective voice for their interests.
- Affirming a sense of community and solidarity among members, emphasizing mutual care and a commitment to a shared vision of improvement in their lives.
- Using collaborations with highly regarded research institutes to document and gain recognition for women-headed families in official statistics—a necessary basis for broadening access to services.
- Gaining legitimacy and clout through building strategic alliances inside and outside government and within the Indonesian court system, which enable the organization to advance formal justice system policy solutions and budget recommendations that are helpful to its members.
- Countering religious and social narratives that undermine women by promoting critical awareness and engaging key allies (see Box 2) and disseminating communications with alternative messages.

## 2. Backlash

As might be expected, PEKKA's successes have triggered backlash and resistance from powerful interests such as moneylenders, religious fundamentalists, and civil society and government players who view PEKKA's work as a threat. Some have even tried to discredit PEKKA and its members, calling them troublemakers, prostitutes, or even terrorists, and delegitimizing the issues they work on as being frivolous, disrespectful of religion, or simply private family matters unworthy of public consideration. PEKKA's ability to engage a large and widespread membership and to gain powerful champions over the years has been pivotal in navigating such criticisms.

Rather than taking the risk of confronting its opponents directly, PEKKA has consciously built relationships with allies to protect and strengthen members and advance their issues. Using a combination of tactics, PEKKA has navigated within and around power structures to gain approval for its work and has built allies and supporters both inside and outside of government. It has also built goodwill by cultivating relationships with officials at various levels of government—from local village chiefs to district authorities to provincial and ministerial leaders. PEKKA also strategically cultivates allies among NGOs, progressive religious groups, and international donor agencies, including the World Bank and Australian Aid.

These strategic domestic and international alliances have both helped PEKKA in its advocacy and accountability efforts and defended it from attack and backlash.

### Box 2. Contending with Shadow Power by Creating Space within Islam for Discussing Women's Rights

PEKKA partners with ALIMAT, a network of progressive male and female Islamic scholars and civic leaders.<sup>9</sup> PEKKA and ALIMAT share Islam's broader vision of justice, educating local imams and authorities on a woman-friendly interpretation of the Koran. The two organizations hold joint workshops to strengthen their own staff and membership and to reach out to local religious leaders with a wide range of perspectives on women's roles in society—from the most fundamentalist views to the most open-minded. ALIMAT and PEKKA also work together to hold seminars with officials at village, district, and national levels. This space for dialogue is especially important in majority-Muslim Indonesia, where conservative religious groups exercise growing influence and promote narratives that borrow from cultural traditions to oppose women's independence as counter to religion and society.



PEKKA promotes lifelong learning through Functional Literacy activities for members. Here, members in Banten are reading letters and words together. Credit: PEKKA



## V. Organizing Autonomous Cooperatives as a Basis for Empowerment and New Skills

### 1. How PEKKA Establishes Cooperatives

**A**fter assessing local contexts for the viability of forming savings cooperatives, PEKKA organizers introduce the program to village authorities to gain official permission. They stress the community development aspects of cooperatives, which allows for greater buy-in from officials and potential members, thus better ensuring the sustainability of the work and the security of both staff and members. Going from

house to house, PEKKA organizers then introduce the program to village women who are widowed, divorced, abandoned or single. Building trust and excitement, they invite those who are interested to small gatherings to discuss women's individual dreams and the common challenges they face. They are encouraged to consider possible solutions and then the option of forming savings and loan groups is proposed and analyzed.

#### *Organizing Takes Time*

*I would have to go door to door, in person, connecting with women one by one. Out of the women I met, I would find one whom people seemed to really trust, who had a good reputation in the village. I would go over ideas with her first. When I called a meeting, I would choose a time when women weren't so busy, often in the evenings. Most women were silent in meetings—shy and afraid. I saw a lot of sadness in these women. When you meet jandas you see from their faces that they carry a heavy burden: social pressure, trauma, stigma. People tell them, "You're only a widow." Jandas just don't matter, everyone says. They were never given the chance to talk or participate; this was their first real opportunity. So I would spend a lot of time building their confidence.*

*I talk with the women about the program but in the language of daily reality. In the meeting, they get to know other women, other jandas. They get to feel that they have a lot of friends and can be confident together. From there, we move on and I present the details of the program to them. I explain how we might address the problems they tell me about. I share the stories I heard from other villages who have the same problems. This is an important part—to explain what other women have done to change their situations. After two or three months, we'd form a team with a vision and mission. With 10 women, you are able to change lives.*

*PEKKA organizer  
(Zulminarni and Miller 2015)*



PEKKA savings and loans activities in South Kalimantan, which support women's economic empowerment. Credit: PEKKA

When a new PEKKA group is being formed, it often faces resistance from community members, such as moneylenders who make a profit from loaning cash to poor people. Other vested interests also resist. Wives of the local elites who run a quasi-governmental organization known as *Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga* (PKK, Family Welfare Movement) have long been the only force organizing rural women and shaping development.<sup>9</sup> They tend to feel threatened by this new opportunity for more autonomous organization, particularly since PEKKA women quickly gain expertise in politics and economics and achieve real impact (Zulminarni and Miller 2015).

Joining a cooperative enables poor women to gain the collective power and respect needed to improve conditions in their communities and beyond. To accompany women in the formation of their cooperatives, PEKKA organizers facilitate a long process of team-building and organizational skill development, validating members' ability to make change in their lives and creating a spirit of collaboration and solidarity. These initial steps are vital to developing leadership and democratic practice. Women vote on a name for their cooperative and elect officers; for many, it is the first time they

have participated in making public decisions. Groups also set up their own ground rules to encourage cooperation and mitigate conflict. Cooperatives build their economic stability and independence, bolstering women's economic potential and standing in the community. Successful savings cooperatives have been able to contribute educational resources, construct community centers, fend off unscrupulous moneylenders, offer paralegal services, and establish a chain of cooperative-run village markets to provide food at fair prices. Ultimately, cooperatives operate with a significant amount of local autonomy.

The cooperatives also provide a platform for women to claim space in the public sphere. Each PEKKA cooperative has its own motto, which seeks to affirm members' worth and dignity; in one village, the motto is "Look at me, I'm strong." Some have named their groups after a flower, such as jasmine or rose, or an Indonesian heroine such as Cut Nyak Dien or Kartini; others select a motivating label such as *Senang Hati* (Happiness), *Murah Rezeki* (Living in Prosperity), *Perempuan Bangkit* (Women Raised), *Sumber Rezeki* (Source of Wealth) or *Putri Mandiri* (Independent Women).



### *We Start from Zero*

*We start from zero, talking one by one with each woman to find out her priority concerns. Women always start with the problem of money. So we begin with a group savings project as a practical way to bring women together, but also to seed a strategy to resist consumerism and debt. At first, they tell us they have no money, but then discover with the coins they spend on candy for their children from time to time or sweet drinks, they could have a bit of savings. Sometimes they gather and sell coconuts. With these small savings to start with, women are able to invest in joint economic endeavors that generate a growing profit over time, if they are frugal and work hard. They control their own income, which is not owed to anyone. The more women have cash in hand, the more they can bargain with brothers or partners. Individually, they become more independent and as a group, they begin to understand the potential of their economic and political power.*

*By setting up democratic cooperatives, a form of credit union, women also practice new leadership, decision-making and democracy: one woman, one vote, equal rights. This leads to more practical and emotional independence. Of course, it takes lots of consciousness raising and capacity building. That's an appropriate role for NGOs, we feel; not bringing in the money and making profit off the interest that individual women have to pay. Participatory democracy and leadership does, inevitably, create clashes and internal conflict—people always resist doing things differently. Some want to take control, which is why we have a leadership change every three years. That's our role as organizers in PEKKA, supporting this growing grassroots movement of women—to develop and support new kinds of leadership and to build women's capacity to manage conflict, basic business and planning skills, and then, gradually, how to use their collective power to influence local and even national politics.*

*We don't attach women to an existing cooperative. They build their own together. From the profit they generate by investing their savings, in some cases they eventually have enough to build their own women's centers. Economic organizing in this way enables us to work under oppressive governments. We say, "We're doing savings and credit", and the authorities leave us alone. Over time, our experience shows that the women will promote their own leaders to become village head or members of the village parliament. From there, they have influence, gain more power, and can make bigger changes.*

*Now women are going wild with their dreams—a shelter for older women, a hospital, a school, their own bank, to be elected village heads, to sit in parliament.*

*(Zulminarni and Miller 2015)*

## **2. Linking Cooperatives for Greater Impact**

Effective movement-building processes depend on groups and organizers capable of energizing and consolidating confident and politically savvy constituencies committed to social justice. PEKKA has drawn on and cultivated the skills and qualities of talented organizers and facilitators—feminist popular educators—who help deepen, inspire and catalyze the knowledge, talents, and competencies of their members and communities. As of 2015, PEKKA had identified and trained 5,900

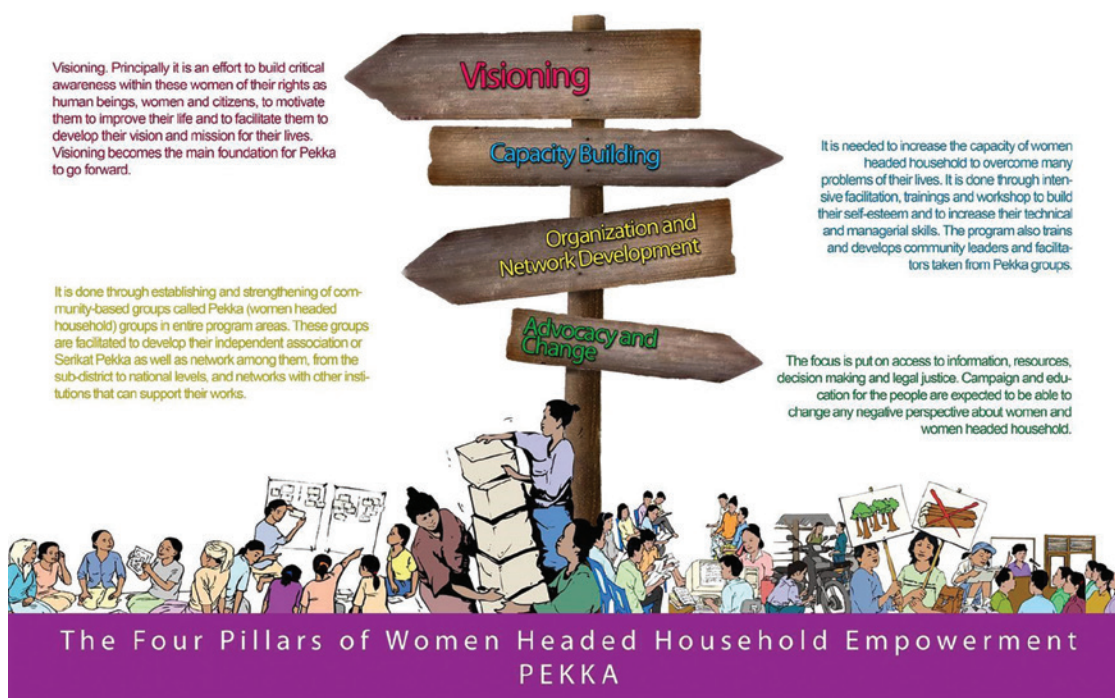
cadres and leaders, and their numbers were growing by 15 percent annually (PEKKA 2016:15). Expanding the numbers, scope, and quality of these organizers needs to be a priority investment of organizations and donors who are working for social justice, because movement-building efforts require long-term vision and support. Grounded in these local associations, PEKKA has cultivated a process to transition from a staff-dependent organization to a fully member-run national organization.

The founding of an autonomous national PEKKA federation in 2013 was the culmination of a seven-year exercise in democratic process, leadership, and organizational development. This involved a multi-faceted organizing and education effort engaging diverse PEKKA cooperatives across Indonesia. Elected representatives from PEKKA associations in each province were invited for a five-day national forum in Jakarta, where they discussed bylaws and agreed to form a national-level federation to bring their voices to the national level and to engage with the Indonesia women’s movement on advocacy work. They held democratic elections for a chair, secretary and treasurer for the federation. Earlier in 2018, the federation established its own national secretariat in Jakarta, which is run by three elected leaders. The federation has a multi-tiered operating structure, which links cooperatives across 1,232 villages and 20 provinces. The

associations already had their own advocacy capacity at the district level, but the process through which the federation was organized has gradually strengthened their capacity to lead national advocacy work as well.

In the current structure of the federation, assemblies at district, provincial, and national levels are held every three years. Here, women celebrate their achievements, identify important issues and opportunities for action, elect representatives and organizational leaders, and set priorities for the future. This scaling up process—linking cooperatives within provinces and linking provinces together in a federation—strengthens the democratic and citizenship practices necessary for holding government accountable in the long term. For more on PEKKA’s strategy, see Figure 3.

**Figure 3. What is PEKKA's Strategy?**



Source: PEKKA



## VI. Women's Leadership Development through Ongoing Training and Action

### 1. Leadership Skills within Cooperatives

Given that PEKKA's focus stretches beyond solving economic needs to long-term changes in power relations, grounded skill-building helps prepare women to make decisions, lead within their organizations, and engage with allies and government officials at different levels. As women in cooperatives slowly save and create a shared pool of resources, PEKKA educators and organizers work with them, using feminist popular education processes (see Box 3). This includes problem-posing methodologies that challenge women to examine assumptions and beliefs, and to develop critical thinking skills to examine their contexts and experiences within society's multiple power dynamics.

#### Box 3. What is feminist popular education?

A participatory, problem-posing approach to learning and action that focuses on women's realities—promoting critical thinking, solidarity, and change strategies, while challenging and changing power dynamics that maintain inequality and discrimination based on gender, race, class, age, and sexual orientation.



The election process of the board of the PEKKA Association of South Sumatera in 2013, which instills democratic values, supports women leaders, and strengthens grassroots women's organizations. Credit: PEKKA

The feminist training approach is participatory, imbued with a sense of inquiry, joy, and camaraderie, and affirms women's practical wisdom and knowledge as well as sources of inspiration. Members analyze concrete problems, develop strategies to address them, and learn skills to deal with the inevitable challenges and conflicts that emerge. As women take action, PEKKA organizers provide opportunities for critical reflection about their experiences so they can learn from their own successes and failures. The emphasis on empowerment includes consciousness raising, power analysis, and negotiation skills.

Practical training on issues as varied as decision-making models and basic accounting are all understood as foundational for the success of the individual cooperatives and, ultimately, for movement-building. Cooperative officers receive additional skill training for their particular leadership roles, including the basics of democratic process, politics, business management, and organizational development.

## 2. "Women Standing Tall and Strong": The Emergent Paradigta Academy

PEKKA has strengthened its leadership development by creating a training center both for its own members and members of other civil society organizations to increase their capacity for community engagement, public deliberation, and decision-making. In 2015, PEKKA developed a curriculum, modules, and manuals to establish the Paradigta Academy (see Box 4) (PEKKA 2017). *Paradigta* comes from an ancient Javanese word meaning "a woman who stands tall and strong."

The Paradigta Academy is designed as an educational and applied learning process to prepare local women for organizing and leadership in the public domain, including village budget processes (PEKKA 2016). The curriculum consists of three key elements: self-strengthening, building constituents and strengthening the community, and technical capacity. The latter focuses on understanding the governance structure, laws, lobbying, and budgeting necessary to impact and influence decisions.

The program is designed to build women's leadership capacity to participate in village governance, including the village development planning processes,

### Box 4. Paradigta Academy Training Modules

1. Introduction and writing
2. Understanding your village and its history
3. Changes and envisioning the future
4. Women's leadership
5. Village Law
6. Governance and budgeting
7. Government services
8. Monitoring and rights
9. Key issues
10. Political awareness and power
11. Advocacy
12. Communications
13. Community organizing

monitoring of public services, and engagement with village heads. Entry requirements for the training program include literacy, fluency in Indonesian languages, some experience with community action, and a willingness to put the skills learned to work for the community in the future. Village heads also play a role in nominating women to attend Paradigta. The training modules include 25 percent of the work in the classroom, where trainees spend 25 days over a one-year period, and 75 percent of the work is on a practical project (PEKKA 2017:13). Each week, women attend three sessions (each lasting three hours) facilitated by a coordinator; each woman is also paired with a mentor. There are seven Paradigta centers around Indonesia, and each participating village can send five women. In 2016, the Paradigta Academy's 12-month program graduated 482 women, a graduation rate over 80 percent (PEKKA 2017:18). A total of 2,500 women were enrolled in 2017.

One of the first Paradigta graduates, Waode (age 22) from south-east Sulawesi, said: "I was very pleased, particularly in being more knowledgeable about APBDes [village budget], women in the public domain, women's leadership, Rural Law, and village organizations and institutions. At first I was shy to speak in public, but now I am more confident, and have made friends with people from other villages" (PEKKA 2017).



Paradigma Academy (Leadership Training Program) participants in West Java reading the Alumni Pledge aloud at their graduation; ready to build a socially just and dignified life. Credit: PEKKA

### 3. An Opening for Paradigta Trainees: Decentralization and Indonesia's Village Law

While the Paradigta Academy represents a consolidation of PEKKA's longstanding strategy for leadership development, Indonesia's 2014 Village Law created a new opening to exercise those skills. Paradigta prepares community leaders and PEKKA members to participate in the local development planning and budgeting envisaged by the Village Law. The idea is to ensure women's informed and collaborative citizen engagement, both as participants and monitors of this community governance process.

Since 2001, Indonesia's decentralization process has devolved significant budget and development planning responsibilities to village governments. Historically, women have been excluded from the local public sphere and village decision-making—especially young women (Feruglio et al. 2017).<sup>10</sup> The government's first approach to decentralization promoted strong community checks on the power of village heads, but their reaction led to a rollback of those accountability measures in 2004 (Antlöv, Wetterberg, and Dharmawan 2016). With the 2014 Village Law, the pendulum swung back towards more space for community oversight and participation, building on previous participatory rural development planning initiatives. The law includes 'downward

accountability' innovations, such as community assemblies (Antlöv et al. 2016), as well as a very substantial increase in the local budgets for social investment.

The Village Law offers opportunities for the inclusion of women's voices in public decision-making, including the potential for participatory budgeting processes. Yet in practice, the Law's stated commitment to more space for all elements of society to participate does not necessarily translate into opportunities for poor rural women (such as the women household heads who make up PEKKA's members) to actively engage in the development of their villages. For example, in the name of decentralization, district and village officials can create community-level regulations that actually inhibit women's participation and rights. In this context, networked and trained local women's organizations provide a foundation to realize the Village Law's potential, by articulating proposals for inclusionary development initiatives. Specific measures to strengthen grassroots women's leadership and their organized capacity to put forward needs and demands—especially those of women household heads—must be continually undertaken to ensure that women are able to take on a more central role in village governance.

Building on many years of advocacy to promote a more gender-sensitive and inclusive approach to village governance, PEKKA also participated in official consultations on implementation regulations for the Village Law. PEKKA joined together with a broad coalition of women's rights organizations, grounded in the provinces, to develop a detailed platform for inclusionary village governance reform (see Box 5 for a summary). While the final version of the implementation regulations is still weak on gender rights, some articles in the Village Law do create space for women to claim their place as leaders. For example, while the proposed gender quota was not accepted, the regulations do support the goal of including women's voices in decision-making.



Functional Literacy activity for members of PEKKA Association in Yogyakarta, who are passionate about learning to read and write at any age. Credit: PEKKA

**Box 5. Critical Review and Input from the Indonesian Women’s Movement on Draft Government Regulation Concerning Village Administration, Jakarta, May 2–3, 2014**

Upon the release of The Draft Government Regulation (*Rancangan Peraturan Pemerintah*, RPP) on Village Administration in 2014, the Indonesian Women’s Movement, through 55 representatives from nearly all regions across Indonesia, organized a workshop and focus group discussion to analyze the implications of the law for women. Upon studying the Draft Government Regulation on the Implementation of Law No. 6/2014 on Villages, the group determined that the regulation needed to take into account the different social, economic, cultural, and political contexts affecting women in Indonesia in a comprehensive manner to maintain the spirit, principles, and purpose of that Law.

In addition, the representatives noted that the RPP should reflect the spirit, principles, and purpose of the country’s 1945 Constitution and be consistent with Law No. 7/1984 on the Ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and Presidential Instruction No. 9/2000 on Gender Mainstreaming in Development.

The following are the recommended changes to the RPP based on constitutional guarantees and other legislative guarantees for every person, including rural women and indigenous women, which are applicable in all villages.

1. A minimum quota of 30 percent for women at all levels of village governance, including Kades (*Kepala desa* or village head), village government apparatus, and BPD (Village Consultative Board), including in the election committee of Kades and BPD, list of candidates, and community groups engaged in the Village Consultative Forum where women’s participation is manifested through “women’s groups” but not limited as such.
2. A democratic, open, and accountable mechanism in accordance with applicable laws for ensuring that the Perdes (village regulations), Perdat (indigenous village regulations) and indigenous justice system are not in contradiction with the law, including on protecting every person from discrimination on any grounds.
3. A 30 percent allocation of the village budget for gender-responsive priorities and a ceiling for public spending for education, health care, civil registry services, and community empowerment.
4. Natural resource management arrangements for indigenous villages that guarantee full rights for women and men based on local knowledge and wisdom, including of the local women.
5. Explicit arrangements on women’s access and control in rural development planning, implementation, and supervision, and equal access to services for women.
6. Specific provisions on developing local women cadres.
7. A gender-responsive village information system that guarantees transparency and disclosure is in place.

This is a summary of recommendations made by the participants of the Indonesian Women’s Movement Convention on May 2–3, 2014, in Jakarta. To read the full document and the list of signatories, see <https://accountabilityresearch.org/publication/movementbuildingforaccountability/>.

The new Village Law, and its opportunities for women's participation, was one of the factors that led PEKKA to emphasize leadership training through the Paradigta Academy, as part of a strategic focus on its district- and village-level implementation. In areas where PEKKA has a strong presence on the ground, PEKKA's in-depth knowledge about the intricacies of the Law and potential support for its implementation has impressed some local officials, who have sought out participation by PEKKA members in the Law's planning and budgeting processes. For example, in West Kalimantan, where PEKKA training and advocacy focused on participatory budgeting and transparency, the district head responded positively to its proposals and allocated

approximately 10 percent of the budget for women's empowerment.

Leadership training is part of PEKKA's multi-level approach, since local advocates go beyond the village to advocate for participatory budgeting and public accountability at the district level as well. Sometimes, district heads help to persuade village heads to listen to women—and they are more responsive than the Ministry of Village Affairs. PEKKA is involved in local government planning processes from village to district levels in 76 districts across 20 provinces, and 6 members have now been elected as village heads (see Box 6).

#### **Box 6. Petronela Peni—The First Female Village Chief in East Flores**

Petronela Peni Loli, or Nela as she is better known, is a widow. She decided to run for office as the village head of Nusa Nulan at the behest of traditional elders when two out of three candidates representing nearby hamlets withdrew from the election. It was not a serious offer of support, as they were merely using her to fill the void in nominations. As a woman, most thought it was unlikely (or even impossible) for her to be elected village chief.

However, she decided to run for village headship, only to be bombarded with insults, jeers, scornful words, and even anonymous letters implying that women are unsuitable leaders. One letter asked, "Is Lewotamah to be led by a woman of dubious background?" Thanks to the unfaltering support of PEKKA and her family, Nela regained her confidence. "These anonymous letters are made just by a few people who disagree with you. So, don't be too serious in reacting. You need to press on, face the elections and make it a worthwhile experience," said Dede, a PEKKA field worker who encouraged Nela. At her first opportunity to deliver her vision and mission statements, Nela said, "I am not alone in my commitment to Lewotamah. If we want change for Lewotamah, let us sit and discuss together, act together! I believe there will be change, not only physically, but the people must also be developed." At the elections, Nela secured the most votes.

Nela has faced numerous challenges throughout her tenure as village head. She said the key to coping with everything is discussing it with influential figures to identify the root causes of problems and seek solutions. Through cooperation with the local people, her leadership has brought about favorable outcomes from development projects implemented in Nusa Nulan village, including the construction of village roads and the Koli-Sagu trans highway, the installation of pipelines to improve access to potable water, power supply for the village, decent housing, two *posyandus* [health clinics], clearing and managing rural land for agriculture, and issuing a village regulation on simplifying death rituals and funeral customs.

Nela hopes that in the future, more women will become leaders at every level. She believes that women should no longer wait, as they need to seize existing opportunities, particularly as the Law on Rural Areas now gives citizens the chance to participate in rural development, which will make the work of the village head much easier. "The most important thing is the delegation of authority and tasks, in addition to being closer to the people, and listening to each other. This will lead to all things good. I feel satisfied and happy to see that the local people are smiling, feeling safe and living in peace after six years of being together in joy and in sorrow. I thank God. I thank Lewotamah, my home," said Nela, ending the conversation.

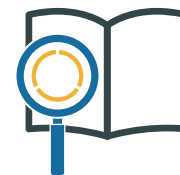




KLIK legal clinic in Sulawesi Selatan, where PEKKA-trained paralegals provide legal support to community members. Credit: PEKKA

PEKKA's engagement with village and district governments also includes a community-based monitoring and feedback mechanism that creates proactive public pressure for village-level accountability and beyond. Klinik Hukum, or KLIK, are legal clinics with trained PEKKA paralegals that provide a range of services to communities. While PEKKA paralegals are addressing specific community problems, they collect information on the types of problems they are seeing. The issues and problems that women face that arise through the KLIK are then raised at the district-level Multi-Stakeholder Forum (MSF), where PEKKA advocates for policy and budget changes with government agencies and the courts. In some districts, government agencies have asked if they can attend the KLIK as a way of providing information and services at village level in a more targeted way. Therefore, KLIK serves as a conduit for sharing

information from the village communities to courts and government agencies and provides a mechanism for courts and government agencies to work with PEKKA and provide services at the village level that would normally only be available by travelling to the sub-district or district capitals. With the help of PEKKA facilitators, information from KLIK is shared with relevant government representatives during the regular MSF meetings. Issues covered in these meetings include health care quality and staff attendance, poverty alleviation, government services (quality and processes), teacher attendance, as well as family law issues that need to be brought to the courts. Where good relationships exist, village officials feel supported by these efforts, since they help them better respond to community needs and demands.



## VII. Participatory Research Partnerships Encourage Official Data to Recognize Women-Headed Families

In 2000, when Indonesia's National Commission to Stop Violence Against Women invited Nani Zulminarni to document the lives of widows, she used the research project as the foundation for PEKKA. An initial motivation was to ensure that the work directly benefited Indonesia's most marginalized women. She achieved this by negotiating the design of the research with donors to involve women in the process of inquiry, rather than as mere research subjects. This initial experience set the scene for PEKKA's subsequent involvement in several other participatory research initiatives, particularly around access to justice.

In 2007, PEKKA members were surveyed for a study supported by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), *Access and Equity*, which highlighted several challenges in access to justice, particularly for rural Indonesians. For village women, the financial costs and social burden of accessing courts constituted major barriers to access; 9 out of 10 women heads of household surveyed had been unable to access the courts for their divorce cases as required under Indonesian law (Sumner 2010, 2011). In 2008, it was found that the average cost of pursuing a court case was four times more than the monthly per capita income of a person living on or below the national poverty line (Sumner 2011). During 2007 and 2008, PEKKA's National Secretariat advocated for a change in the system by sharing these findings with the Supreme Court of Indonesia and *Badilag* (Director General of the Religious Courts). This resulted in several policies that enabled wider access of women-headed households to family law resolution processes, including increased court budgets to fund the waiver of court fees for women facing financial hardship and circuit courts to remote areas to bring court services closer to women. In some areas, PEKKA invited the courts to hold circuit courts in their own PEKKA centers or were actively involved in the filing of marriage legalization and other cases with the courts as part of their legal clinic (KLIK) services. This further

increased the standing and prestige of PEKKA groups in village settings as they demonstrated their ability to liaise with courts and other government departments for the delivery of services at village level (Sumner and Zulminarni 2018).

In 2009, PEKKA entered a deeper partnership with the Australia Indonesia Legal Development Facility and the Family Court of Australia to carry out a second *Access and Equity* research project with the General Courts and Religious Courts in Indonesia (Sumner 2010). This involved PEKKA members in actually carrying out the research, and included court user satisfaction surveys, legal professional surveys, and case file analysis. PEKKA was involved in a poverty and legal access survey of 600 women heads of households. This research process was specifically designed to serve two purposes: to gather data to make the case for the legal recognition of women-headed households and to advance the analytical skills of PEKKA members. Thus, the participatory action research simultaneously built the organization's skills and credibility and advanced an advocacy agenda important to its members.

"This research process was specifically designed to serve two purposes: to gather data to make the case for the legal recognition of women-headed households and to advance the analytical skills of PEKKA members. Thus, the action research simultaneously built the organization's skills and credibility and advanced an advocacy agenda important to its members."

The early participatory partnership with Australian and Indonesian courts and PEKKA was broadened to include the influential SMERU Research Institute,<sup>11</sup> to ensure the legitimacy of the data for advocacy use and the quality of the analytical and information-gathering skills gained by PEKKA staff and community members. The data also validated the women's own experiences and supported

their direct involvement in advocacy (e.g., Akhmadi, Budiyati, and Yumna 2010). PEKKA has consistently sought partnerships with applied researchers to bolster its technical credibility with policymakers.

PEKKA has also engaged with the Indonesian census, advocating for new questions and categories that would produce a more accurate portrait of women-headed families. In 2011 and 2012, in a further collaboration with SMERU, a team of PEKKA National Secretariat researchers conducted a survey of 89,960 households—15,644 (17 percent) of them headed by women—in 111 villages through the Community-Based Welfare Monitoring System (SPKBK) (PEKKA National Secretariat and SMERU Research Institute 2014). Of the 950 enumerators, 83 percent were women and most were also PEKKA members. PEKKA used these data to support policy advocacy with the BPS to shift the government's focus on the (male-defined) 'household' to the more gender-neutral 'family' as the key unit for eligibility for social programs. PEKKA also advocated for the inclusion of questions that would more accurately identify if a woman was the head of the household or the head of the family in both the 2011 and 2015 Updating Surveys for the Unified Database PPLS (Data Collection for Social Protection Programmes), which has important implications for anti-poverty programs.<sup>12</sup>

Census results were recently released, and PEKKA is now in the process of requesting and analyzing the more precise data needed to identify trends involving women-headed households. This additional analytical work is needed because while the census now recognizes women-headed families, its definition is limited

to widows and officially divorced women. In contrast to PEKKA's approach, the census category does not include single/unmarried women who are mothers or responsible for parents and siblings; nor does it include women whose husband migrated and has not returned for many years. Yet PEKKA's policy dialogue with the census did lead the government to collect information on whether a woman's husband had been away for more than six months, so PEKKA will be able to combine that data with the official category of women-headed families.

Indeed, PEKKA's long-term, sustained engagement with national government technical agencies, which involves significant collaboration to generate field-based data, has not led to full access to key official data that would show how women's access to government social programs has changed as the result of efforts to expand the right to identity. This limits PEKKA's capacity to document the impacts of its work. PEKKA cooperatives do collect data from village members in some key areas, including health care delivery and the number of identity papers authorized. However, linking this local data-gathering with monitoring of national trends is quite a challenge. PEKKA does not know, for example, how the granting of identity documents has affected the number of women who have been able to access the government's large-scale anti-poverty programs. Only national government agencies have the power to change who is registered to gain access to social programs, which underscores the challenge of linking local-level monitoring with national-level advocacy efforts. Looking ahead, PEKKA faces the dilemma of how much time and effort it can put (or should be putting) into a monitoring process.



## VIII. Defending Women's Rights through Legal Empowerment

Through the gradual, intensive process of developing cooperatives and building members' sense of personal and collective power, PEKKA organizers learn about the varied issues affecting women's lives. Many center on problems in the legal system that limit women's ability to access public services or the family law system. Whether *jandas* or not, poor rural women face multiple forms of discrimination embedded in belief systems, religious authorities, and legal policies and practice. People from rural areas live far from courts and struggle to afford official fees, making it difficult to obtain identity papers needed to qualify for services, or to deal with domestic violence and divorce. Women entering court were often intimidated and uninformed on the processes or their rights.

To address these issues, PEKKA made legal empowerment a strategic priority, building on its basic education program for members to select and train teams

of community paralegals that could accompany and support women in court (see Box 7). PEKKA's work on women's legal empowerment provided training for village paralegals that focused on domestic violence and family law. It also held district forums to bring together judges, prosecutors, police, NGOs, and government officials to raise awareness of gender issues (World Bank 2012). This approach also facilitated more efficient court proceedings, which earned PEKKA support from important government officials; at the same time, day-to-day involvement with the courts enabled PEKKA to gather and share evidence of the widespread need for a more accessible court system.

PEKKA successfully mounted advocacy efforts with the judiciary that contributed to reforms, which included increased funding for mobile courts, waivers of court fees, and legal advisory services at courts (*Pos Bantuan Hukum*). Starting in 2011, the Religious Courts received



In collaboration with a religious court in Cianjur, West Java, PEKKA organized a Mobile Court Service to help women gain legal identity documents. Credit: PEKKA 2010

budget funding to enable independent legal aid posts to be established in certain courts to provide women and men with free legal advice on matters pertaining to the family, such as domestic violence, divorce, and legal status. In 2017, 135 Religious Courts received a budget to provide free legal advisory services and more than 185,000 women and men were assisted in that year (Sumner and Zulminarni 2018).

One of the more recent innovations has been the Supreme Court's agreement to work with the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Ministry of Home Affairs and offer integrated services for legal identity documents at village level, known as integrated and mobile services. The three agencies provide up to three services at the same location, starting with the Indonesian courts, which legalize a prior religious marriage, the Office of Religious Affairs, which provides the marriage certificate, and the Civil Registry Office, which provides birth certificates for the children from the marriage. These initiatives to make the right to identity more accessible became national policy through a Regulation of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Indonesia in 2015 and a Directive of the Director General of the Religious Courts in 2016 (Sumner and Zulminarni 2018).

By training more than 2,700 women paralegals to identify relevant cases and provide pro bono legal assistance to community members (men and women), PEKKA has actively worked with the mobile courts in Indonesia (Sumner with Zulminarni 2018). These trained villagers, of whom half were still active in 2017, have assisted in more than 125,000 cases related to family issues, and supported more than 65,000 children to receive birth certificates—a formal requirement for school registration, sitting national examinations, and entry to university.<sup>13</sup> Yet there is still work to be done: for women to be listed as the head of a family on a family card still requires legal proof either that the husband is dead or the marriage is over, which continues to pose a major hurdle for many. For more on the relationship between legal empowerment and social accountability, see Box 7.

### Box 7. Links Between Legal Empowerment and Social Accountability

There is an emergent interest in the relationship between legal empowerment and social accountability (Maru 2010). Social accountability initiatives involve citizen-led processes that seek accountability from governments outside of formal electoral systems, using voice and information, while legal empowerment strategies provide information about legal rights and available avenues to seek justice for rights violations, with the help of legal intermediaries, such as community paralegals. As Joshi (2017:160) puts it: “The two approaches have much in common—a strategy of awareness-raising and mobilization, an orientation toward state-granted rights, and a concern with improving services, creating active citizens, and establishing sustainable changes in governance structures.” In spite of this potential synergy, relatively few initiatives weave these two approaches together at scale—and PEKKA is one of them.



Two PEKKA members displaying their legal identity documents acquired through KLIK PEKKA Consultation and Information Services Clinic in South Sulawesi in 2014. Credit: PEKKA



## IX. Communications for Empowerment and Education

**P**EKKA's media work combines dual goals of empowering women and educating and influencing officials. In this approach, women learn how to create videos on their phones on key issues and use social media and PEKKA's community radio stations to highlight their work to gain support from decision-makers.<sup>14</sup> This movement-building and influencing process also expands women's confidence and PEKKA's reach, while ensuring that the framing of the communications reflects the women's perspectives. PEKKA's community media also helps solidify its position as integral to community life and a respected voice for women's dignity, health, and participation.

Though commercial media outlets are not PEKKA's outreach primary target, they are often responsive to calls for coverage of PEKKA's advocacy strategy. They are invited to cover many of PEKKA's public events and

efforts on priority policy concerns, including the launch of a research effort, PEKKA's festivals and cooperative assemblies, panel discussions, and training sessions. This coverage contributes to promoting accountability when PEKKA sponsors events at which public officials are asked to publicly go on record supporting a PEKKA initiative or reform. PEKKA has also at times attracted external media—for instance, when Japanese television and Al Jazeera filmed PEKKA businesses in the same week in December 2011.

Visitors to cooperatives are welcomed and publicized as part of a strategy to gain legitimacy and political currency for PEKKA programs and advocacy issues. Other villagers notice—"Oh, those PEKKA women have visitors"—and this helps to break the social exclusion and bias that isolates and denigrates poor, single or widowed women, and brings them greater political legitimacy and power.



Radio broadcast at PEKKA's community radio in Aceh, Indonesia. Credit: PEKKA



## X. Strategic Lessons for Women's Movement-building

**P**EKKA's foundational grassroots organizing, combined with multi-level, multi-pronged policy advocacy work, have been central to its evolving journey since 2001. PEKKA members tackle exclusionary social norms, conservative religious ideas about women, and strategically engage visible powers that economically and politically exclude and marginalize women-headed households. This section highlights some of the key takeaway lessons from this broad-based women's movement-building experience.

### 1. Address underlying institutional and cultural causes of social exclusion to create the confidence and space needed for women to exercise their voices and take collective action.

- a. As some of the most marginalized, even ostracized, people in their communities, PEKKA's members face multiple barriers of patriarchal culture, religion, and social prejudice—forms of invisible power that deeply undermine their ability to gain a public voice. PEKKA helps to free women from the internalized effects of stigma through its use of feminist popular education, and it works to shift the public's view of women household heads so that they gain greater social inclusion and acceptance. In this regard, the support of ALIMAT and the voices of its liberal Islamic scholars have helped to counteract the influence of fundamentalist groups and critics of PEKKA's support for women's empowerment.
- b. PEKKA collaborated with donors and allied researchers to carry out participatory research processes that identified systemic legal-administrative obstacles that prevented women household heads from exercising a wide range of other rights (e.g., in the areas of social welfare, family support, legal proceedings, and interpretation of the law). This produced agenda-setting results and developed the skills and confidence of members as data gatherers and analysts, alongside professional researchers.

These research processes informed PEKKA's sustained advocacy focus on gaining the right to identity and legal standing. Working with allies inside and outside government—including scholars, religious leaders, officials, and international donors—PEKKA gained advocacy traction in a context in which powerful conservative forces could have blocked its progress.

### 2. Use economic empowerment to build social foundations for autonomous voice and civic engagement.

- a. PEKKA centers its work on supporting the development of economic stability for its members based on savings cooperatives. For women largely excluded from the formal economies of their communities, this is a vital foundation that offers both an income stream and a supportive organizational community. In fact, the economic benefits of the cooperatives for their members are so attractive that PEKKA is regularly approached by other women who are not heads of households, asking if they can join too.
- b. Membership in PEKKA fosters systematic training and a range of experiences that provide two other sets of skills critical for a member-led organization, but which also enable civic empowerment:
  - i. Collaboration, negotiation, conflict resolution, and budgeting, as practiced in their cooperatives.
  - ii. Experience in public leadership and civic processes—from engaging village leaders, to providing legal support within provincial courts, to lobbying at national ministries.

These capacities not only build the confidence and skills of members, but also open up space for the participation and better treatment of other women in public and civic arenas.

**3. Build countervailing power through action strategies that scale up member voice, leadership skills, and opportunities for participation in all aspects of the work.**

- a. Externally driven, “projectized” social accountability initiatives often attempt to induce citizen voice and action without investing in building autonomous, membership-led organizations. In contrast, PEKKA’s approach is a long-term organizing and community development process, which from the outset builds the skills, confidence, knowledge, solidarity, and leadership of its members with the specific aim of enabling their public participation and voice. Its feminist popular education approach creates supportive, challenging and fun spaces of learning that tap the wisdom and energy gained from women’s multiple sources of knowledge and experience—the mind and intellect as well as the heart and body. In these safe spaces, understanding and developing power is critical. Women examine how certain kinds of power operate to silence them on the one hand and, on the other, how they can develop their own forms of personal and collective power to transform their lives and communities. Each meeting, collective effort (such as participatory research), and training includes elements of collaborative decision-making, skill development, and action that enhances their voice and ability to engage. PEKKA’s structures are also tiered to enable women to grow in leadership and levels of involvement and power. PEKKA’s transition to becoming a fully member-led organization creates a context in which these kinds of capacities and qualities are necessary.
- b. PEKKA’s focus on grassroots organizing and women’s inclusion engages with governance at multiple levels. Linking its village-level cooperatives in a federated network operating at local, provincial, and national levels has created an organization whose scale affords its members a degree of respect and protection in a fairly conservative context. Grounded in PEKKA associations’ long track record of village- and district-level advocacy, now elected association leaders speak for their members with national policymakers.

- c. Investment in leadership development requires an organizational infrastructure that includes both staffing support and training capacity, which in PEKKA’s case includes the Paradigta Academy. With the tools and experience members gain from their engagement with this civic infrastructure, they enter the public realm with a foundation of confidence and knowledge in addition to that which they derive from running their own economic enterprises.

**4. Produce diverse forms of evidence for diverse audiences to advance advocacy strategies and maximize impact.**

- a. Given that one of PEKKA’s central goals is to build economic, social, and political inclusion and stability for its members, its agenda for impact goes beyond any single advocacy target. At different points, it needs to have an impact on the thinking and choices of leaders at multiple levels, in different sectors, with different concerns. For each, the evidence and information that matters is different. While carefully collected (and academically validated) survey data may sway technocrats or court officials, having an Islamic scholar legitimize PEKKA’s agendas may be more persuasive for local authorities and officials. Meanwhile, donors want ‘change stories’ and evidence of impact on women’s lives; video and radio programs about PEKKA’s activities build community-level support for the membership. In each case, PEKKA consciously tailors the information that is needed to reach the intended audience, both countering existing norms and biases and offering fresh ways of understanding the needs and realities of its members.

**5. Cultivate allies and relationships inside and outside government, and at multiple levels, to expand impact and deflect opposition.**

- a. Because PEKKA’s membership is challenging the status quo for excluded women, even while treading lightly, their collaborative engagement approach to working with allies and champions is crucial to provide the legitimacy and “cover” needed to address the risk of backlash. PEKKA cultivates relationships with allies in many sectors over time and sustains them, rather than just courting tactical supporters



for each new initiative. Allies at the World Bank and international donor aid agencies helped to validate PEKKA's model and attract resources. PEKKA's long-term relationship with the Ministry of Home Affairs led to PEKKA being invited to host consultations

on the implementation of the Village Law. In addition, in the face of rising fundamentalism, the progressive Islamic scholars' network, ALIMAT, has also been a persuasive countervailing voice in support of women's empowerment.



Ceremony during the establishment of the PEKKA Association in North Sumatera in 2013, which is strengthening women's movements in economic, educational, social, cultural and political spheres. Credit: PEKKA

## XI. Conclusions

**P**EKKA uses colorful imagery and language to embody its vision and overarching goal—the creation of a strong and supportive social fabric, a tapestry woven together by the creativity, solidarity, and contribution of women and their allies working together to further the common good and the healthy future of the earth. This imagery and focus encourage a holistic, interactive, and clearly value-based interpretation of some of the narratives of 'horizontal' and 'vertical' found in TPA analysis. This multi-colored weave is made up of horizontal threads—women coming together in cooperatives and multi-tiered networks and ultimately a constituency-driven movement to improve their lives. They build relationships strategically to influence and ensure the responsiveness and accountability of the vertical threads of democratic governance and public decision-making—working with allies inside and outside government to impact decisions and gain accountability.

When woven well, these different threads guarantee the vibrancy, rich diversity and long life of the entire social and community fabric—the structures, norms, relationships, beliefs, and systems of power that result in greater wisdom, well-being, reciprocity, and justice.

Guided by a long-term transformational goal of creating a more egalitarian, inclusive, and democratic society, PEKKA understands that good governance and accountability are key factors in this vision and their realization depends on an active and organized citizenry. Developing countervailing power and social movements committed to promoting good governance and accountability depends in large part on whether a group can go from responding to an immediate issue, to galvanizing and nurturing people's energies and passions for a broader agenda of change.

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# Endnotes

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1. PEKKA is affiliated with an international network with shared approaches, Just Associates (JASS). See <https://justassociates.org/>.
2. See <https://namati.org/>.
3. This work has been supported for over a decade through consecutive law and justice programs supported by the Australian Government Aid Programme, most recently the Australia Indonesia Partnership for Justice. Similarly, PEKKA's first decade of work was funded by very flexible, predictable, sustained support from the Japanese government and the World Bank's Kecamatan Development Project (KDP). The Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (MAMPU) and the Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Community Cooperation and Public Services for Prosperity (KOMPAK) have also been essential to making PEKKA's work possible.
4. In 2016, the Minister for Home Affairs issued a regulation stating that a man and woman with a valid religious marriage could sign a Statutory Declaration stating that they were the child's parents and that the family card evidenced the religious marriage. However, many couples with a religious marriage whose family card does not evidence the fact that they are married under religious law will not be able to obtain a birth certificate for their children with both the father and mother's names on it. The absence of the father's name from the certificate can have significant and damaging social and legal consequences in Indonesia.
5. For PEKKA, participants are all women reached and who stay active in groups, but are not actual formal members of grassroots organizations. PEKKA provides capacity building and technical assistance, then groups form their own associations. Participants are newer and some are not ready for membership. Some have been traumatized by their experiences with other membership organizations.
6. PEKKA's relationships with JASS, the Institute of Development Studies, the Coady Institute, and others have allowed it to explore and adapt power analysis concepts for its organizing and leadership work.
7. A comprehensive analysis of mainstream research on social accountability initiatives found that many external interventions were limited to providing information at the local level and did not promote grassroots organizing. Most of these "tactical" efforts led to little or no improvement in public sector performance. In contrast, more strategic, multi-pronged, multi-level initiatives—like PEKKA's approach—were significantly more promising (Fox 2015). See also Halloran and Flores (2015) on movement approaches to accountability, and Acheron and Isaac (2016) and Zulminarni and Miller (2015) on multi-level advocacy campaigns.
8. For more on ALIMAT, see <http://alimatindonesia.blogspot.com/>.
9. PKK was created in 1984 by a decree of the Minister of Home Affairs and has been involved in numerous maternal and child health programs. Most PKK members are married women, and its leadership structure is determined by their husband's position in the village government.
10. With support from PEKKA and JASS, young women have formed their own group, FAMM Indonesia, which organizes young women activists through feminist popular education, aiming for the sustainability of an independent and gender-equal grassroots women's movement.
11. The SMERU Research Institute is an independent institution for research and public policy studies, founded in 2001. SMERU is a leader in poverty and inequality research in Indonesia, conducting qualitative, quantitative, and

mixed-method studies. See <http://www.smeru.or.id/>.

12. The BPS's Unified Database was updated for a second time in 2015 (PPLS) using a comprehensive survey conducted through a census process. BPS researchers visited and collected data from 25.7 million households (old ones already in the database and new ones identified). Indonesia's Basis Data Terpadu (BDT, known as the Unified Database, or UDB) can be classified as a social registry that unifies information for poverty targeting across the country's largest social assistance programs. Source: <https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/integrating-data-information-management-social-protection-a-1-indonesia.pdf>.

13. See Sumner with Zulminarni (2018) and <http://www.worldcongress.co/our-partners/pekka/>.

14. For some of PEKKA's early videos, see: <http://www.pekka.or.id/index.php/en/component/allvideoshare/video/latest/struggling-with-shadows-weaving-a-future.html> and <http://www.pekka.or.id/index.php/en/component/allvideoshare/video/latest/surviving-amidst-the-storm-bertahan-di-tengah-badai.html>.

# Annex 1: Understanding Power Dynamics So We Can Challenge and Transform Them

PEKKA draws on a widely used power analysis framework that was co-developed and adapted by JASS in conjunction with the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) (VeneKlasen and Miller 2002; IDS 2009).

PEKKA's organizing and education strategies have focused on building forms of **transformative power** that are life enhancing and liberating—and, when harnessed collectively, become forces for social change. Drawing on feminist thinking and practice, PEKKA has made the development of personal power—confidence, self-worth, or **power within**—an inseparable part of processes that simultaneously support women in developing **power with** others: that is, their collective power. These forms of power converge and reinforce one another as women discover their **power to** act and transform their lives across different realms—from the most **intimate and personal** to the most **public and formal**.

This foundation of personal and collective power allows women to make change across their community and society in contexts that are challenging and sometimes very risky. Yet, even with a strong foundation, women are often up against forms of power that work to keep them subordinate and silent while at the same time protecting the authority and interests of elites. In feminist analyses, this type of power is often called **power over**—the power of the stronger over the weaker. It comes in many forms: the power of violence and fear, of manipulation and demonization, of enforced social norms and ideology, of structural privilege, of the influence of money in politics and policymaking. All are tools and dynamics exploited by powerful interests, including anti-democratic forces, to control decisions and resources and maintain the status quo.

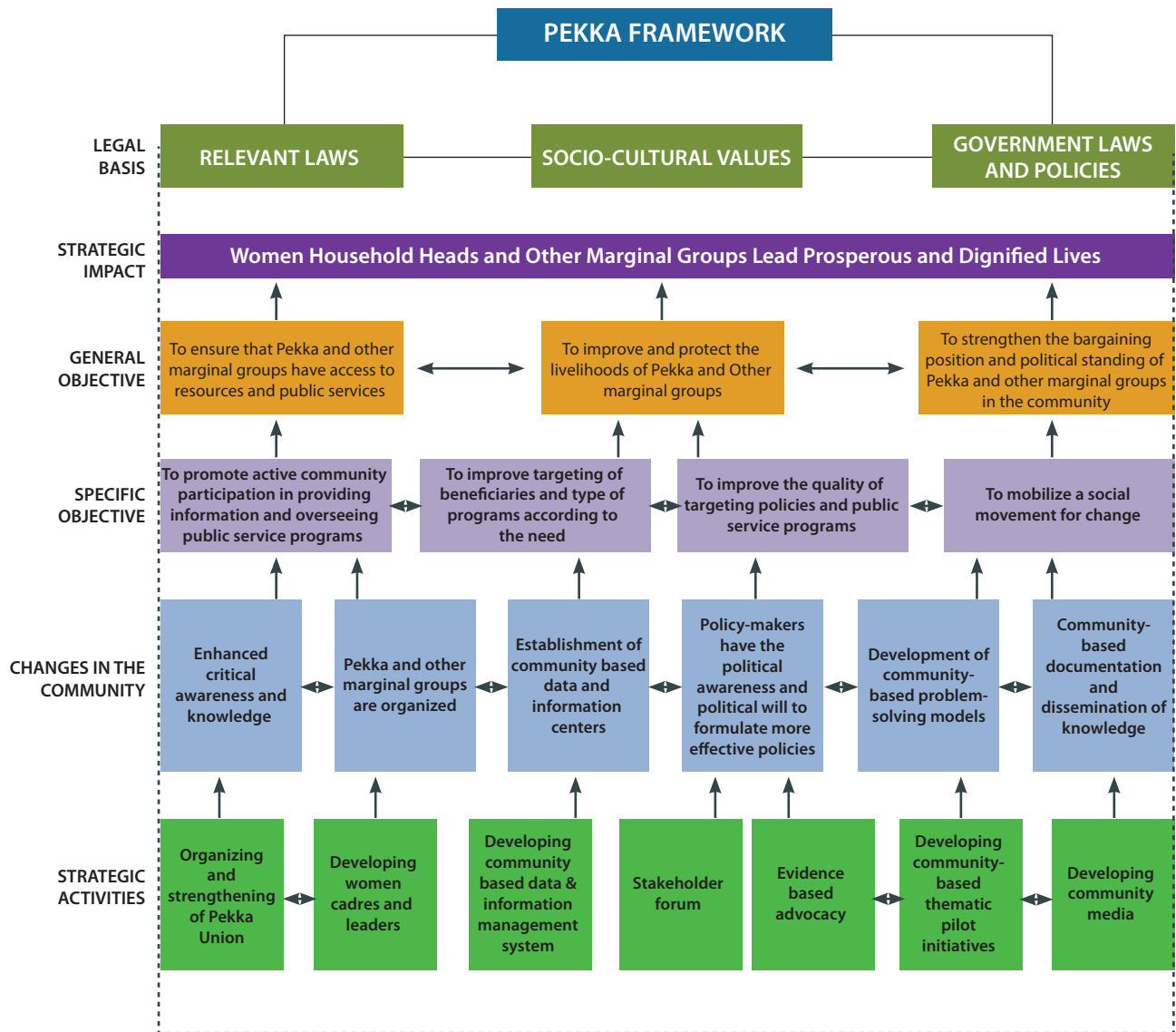
In mapping the ways that **power over** undermines women's voices and curtails their public participation, PEKKA has developed a framework (Annex 2) that is helpful in understanding its interactive dynamics: the forces that produce and reinforce women's subordination and marginalization.

**Visible or formal power:** refers to formal structures and processes of governance and decision-making—including courts, laws, policy, budgets, and regulations. The ways in which official government policy and law have failed to recognize and provide services to women household heads is one example. Another is the lack of rights or enforcement of rights for women in the court system.

**Shadow power:** refers to the array of powerful non-state interests such as corporations, religious entities, or drug cartels operating behind the scenes to influence and control the public agenda. They use a range of tactics including bribery and other forms of corruption, media control and manipulation, and threats and violence. As an example, religious leaders, local chiefs, and moneylenders try to undermine PEKKA to prevent its members from developing political clout or holding government accountable.

**Invisible power:** refers to belief systems, ideologies, and norms that shape how people see the world and their place in it. Promoted and reinforced by powerful interests, these ideas get internalized as something natural, not to be questioned—for example, the beliefs of patriarchy and fundamentalist religions that validate the privileges and power of men and assert the inferiority of women; the same beliefs that legitimize the social exclusion of *jandas*.

# Annex 2: PEKKA's Framework



Source: PEKKA

## Accountability Research Center Publications

### Accountability Notes

- Samir Garg, Suchi Pande. 2018. "Learning to Sustain Change: Mitanin Community Health Workers Promote Public Accountability in India" *Accountability Note 4*.
- Elana Berger. 2018. "How a Community-Led Response to Sexual Exploitation in Uganda Led to Systemic World Bank Reform" *Accountability Note 3*.
- Walter Flores. 2018. "How Can Evidence Bolster Citizen Action? Learning and Adapting for Accountable Public Health in Guatemala." *Accountability Note 2*.
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- Abdulkarim Mohammed. 2017. "Following the Money in Ghana: From the Grassroots to the Hallways of the IMF." *Accountability Note 1*.

### Learning Exchange Reports

- Brenda Rodriguez Herrera, Rebeca Salazar Ramírez, and Mariana González Moyo. 2018. "First Meeting of Auxiliary Watershed organizations: Good Practices, Limitations, Lessons, and Prospects. Rapporteur's Report." *Learning Exchange Report 4*.
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### Working Papers

- Francis Isaac, Danilo Carranza and Joy Acheron. 2017. "From the Ground Up: Multi-Level Accountability Politics in Land Reform in the Philippines." *Accountability Working Paper 2*.
- Suchi Pande and Rakesh R. Dubbudu. 2017. "Citizen Oversight and India's Right to Work Program: What do the Social Auditors Say?" *Accountability Working Paper 1*.

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