

## **Efforts to Realize Inclusive Justice through Restorative Justice in the Natuna Islands Community**

**Neilpon Yulinar Marquez<sup>1</sup>, Abdullah Sulaiman<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Universitas Borobudur, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup> Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah, Indonesia

Email: yulinarmarquezneilson@gmail.com<sup>1</sup>, absulafdy@gmail.com<sup>2</sup>

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### **Abstract**

Just law enforcement in an archipelago such as Natuna faces various challenges, especially related to limited access to the formal justice system. This study aims to analyze efforts to realize inclusive justice through a restorative justice approach in the Natuna Islands community. Using a normative juridical method, this study examines relevant laws and legal literature that support the application of restorative justice as an alternative dispute resolution. The results indicate that the restorative justice approach can be an effective solution to create more equitable and humanistic justice, emphasizing restoring social relations between perpetrators, victims, and the community. Amidst the limited formal legal infrastructure in the archipelago, this model can provide access to justice that is more easily accessible and follows local values. The application of restorative justice in Natuna can also strengthen community participation in the conflict resolution process while enriching customary law practices that have long been part of the community's social life. This study recommends formal integration between the national legal system and the restorative justice approach, especially in the context of 3T (frontier, outermost, and disadvantaged) areas, to realize inclusive and sustainable justice.

**Keywords:** Inclusive Justice, Restorative Justice, Island Community, Natuna

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Natuna Regency is an archipelago located at the northern tip of the Riau Islands Province. This area borders directly with several countries in the Southeast Asian region, such as Vietnam and Cambodia, making it a strategic area in the geopolitical context of the borders of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (Hidayat, 2024). Natuna Regency consists of a cluster of small islands spread across the North Natuna Sea, with regional characteristics in the form of hills, rocky mountains, and lowlands on the coast. These natural conditions are exacerbated by extreme weather factors, high sea waves, and limited inter-island transportation routes. Therefore, Natuna is categorized as a 3T region (*Underdeveloped, Frontier, and Outermost*) (Mirza & Aisyah, 2020; Rahayu & Junior, 2021; Razma & Sucipta, 2018). Limited infrastructure, including legal services and formal justice, is a major challenge in implementing the justice system in this area.

The Indonesian national legal system tends to be centralized and designed for areas with adequate infrastructure such as large cities on the mainland. This makes access to formal justice for people in archipelagic areas such as Natuna very limited. Law enforcement agencies such as courts, prosecutors, and police are generally only available in district or provincial capitals, so people on small islands have to travel long distances and at high risk to obtain legal services (Imelda, Gita Lentera). In Natuna Regency, there is only one district court located in Ranai, the district capital. As a result, people from the outermost islands have to take long and high-risk sea journeys to access the legal process, which in turn often causes delays in the resolution of cases, especially when the parties, both witnesses and defendants, come from different islands and are difficult to reach (Sinaga, 2021).

Reports from the Judicial Commission and the Legal Governance Study Institute show that transportation limitations and geographical obstacles cause many legal cases to be delayed for months. This condition reflects the inequality in the national legal system, which has not been able to reach all citizens evenly, especially in the outermost, most remote, and disadvantaged areas such as Natuna. The centralization of legal services centered in big cities is one of the main causes of this gap, so access to justice for people in the island areas is still far from ideal (Djadjuli, 2018).

The inequality of access to justice in island regions such as Natuna has a real impact on local communities (Purwanto, 2023). One of the main problems is the difficulty for residents to obtain adequate legal assistance. There, advocates and legal aid services are very rare, while the cost of bringing in legal counsel from outside the region is often a heavy burden that is difficult for many people to afford (Fattah, 2021). The case resolution process is often delayed because law enforcement officers and related parties have difficulty moving due to challenging geographical conditions (Ali, 2023). This delay not only slows the legal process but also prolongs the suffering of victims and hinders social recovery in society.

This inequality creates a deep sense of injustice among Natuna residents, who feel as if they are marginalized from the legal protection that should be equal for all citizens. When the formal justice system is difficult to access, many legal problems end up being resolved informally, which risks ignoring basic rights, especially for vulnerable groups such as women and children (Paripurna, 2021). In the long term, this condition has reduced public trust in the legal system, because the law is considered not present in their lives (Zahra, 2025). This sense of distrust is a major challenge for the state in realizing a just and equitable supremacy of law throughout the country.

The Natuna Islands region consists of many small islands spread across the North Natuna Sea with quite a long distance between islands. The weather conditions are often very severe, such as strong winds, high waves, and storms, especially in certain seasons (Putri, 2024). All of this makes access to transportation, both sea and air, very difficult because these routes are the only connections between islands. The mobility of law enforcement officers and the public to undergo the legal process is very limited, both when they have to attend trials, conduct investigations, or when they need legal assistance (Maramis, 2024). Communication is also often hampered by unstable networks on many islands so that legal coordination and administrative affairs become less smooth.

In Natuna, formal legal facilities are very limited, with only a courthouse in Ranai, the district capital, while other islands do not have a prosecutor's office, adequate police force, or adequate detention centers. This makes the community highly dependent on legal services from the district or even the provincial center. Residents who live far from Ranai must make long journeys that are often difficult and expensive, so many end up choosing not to use legal channels when facing problems. The number of legal personnel such as judges, prosecutors, police, and advocates in Natuna is very small (Amin, 2023). Many law enforcement officers are reluctant to be placed there due to limited facilities, difficult access to transportation, and high workloads with minimal administrative support. Opportunities for training and capacity development are also limited because legal education institutions are usually located in large cities. As a result, the professionalism and capacity of legal personnel in Natuna often lag behind other regions.

Due to the difficulty of accessing formal law, the Natuna community often resolves conflicts informally through customs or family methods. Although this method prioritizes local values and maintains social harmony, customary resolution sometimes ignores the principle of justice, especially for vulnerable groups such as women and children (HM, 2023). Without clear legal rules, customary resolution can lead to unfair or discriminatory decisions and does not guarantee that victims' rights are properly restored (Zaidan, 2022). In the long term, this condition can weaken the role of national law and increase the inequality of legal protection between regions. The urgency of this research lies in the need to formulate alternative strategies for realizing inclusive justice for people in island regions such as Natuna, who have so far experienced limited access to the formal justice system. Geographical inequality, minimal legal infrastructure, and gaps in legal human resources have given rise to legal inequality that threatens the principle of substantive justice (LA, 2024).

Therefore, the restorative justice approach is necessary to be studied more deeply as a solution that is not only adaptive to local conditions but also able to strengthen community participation in resolving conflicts peacefully and with dignity (Aminah, 2023). This research is urgently needed to encourage integration between the national legal system and restorative justice practices to realize equal access to justice, especially for the 3T region which is often marginalized from the attention of national legal policies.

Previous research has explored the challenges of legal access in remote areas, particularly in island regions like Natuna. For example, Djadjuli (2018) emphasized the gap in access to formal justice, highlighting the centralization of legal services in major cities, which exacerbates inequality for those in the outermost regions. Similarly, Zahra (2025) discussed the growing distrust in the legal system in Natuna due to the difficulty in accessing justice, leading people to resolve disputes informally. However, both studies primarily focus on the structural challenges without addressing specific solutions such as restorative justice. This research fills the gap by examining the potential of restorative justice as a solution that could be adapted to local conditions in Natuna, providing an inclusive and community-centered approach to conflict resolution.

This study aims to analyze the implementation of restorative justice in Natuna as an alternative strategy for overcoming legal access challenges in island regions. By integrating restorative justice with the national legal system, the research seeks to offer a viable solution to ensure equal access to justice in marginalized areas. The findings of this research will help inform policies that can bridge the legal gap, promote peace, and provide a fairer justice system, especially for vulnerable groups like women and children in the 3T regions.

## METHOD

The research method used in this study is the normative legal method, which is based on literature studies to examine applicable legal norms and principles of justice that are relevant to the application of *restorative justice* in the archipelago, especially in Natuna. The approaches used include a *statute approach* to examine various regulations governing the criminal justice system and alternative dispute resolution, as well as a *conceptual approach* to comprehending the notion of *inclusive justice* and the relevance of *restorative justice* in the socio-cultural context of the 3T community. Secondary data were obtained from legal literature, laws and regulations, scientific journals, and related policy documents.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### *Implementation of the Restorative Justice Approach in the Natuna Islands*

Restorative justice is an alternative approach to resolving criminal cases that emphasizes restoring losses and improving relations between perpetrators, victims, and the community (Sugama, 2024). This approach is different from the justice system which only focuses on punishment because restorative justice prioritizes dialogue, mediation, and joint efforts to find fair solutions for all parties (Flora, 2023). According to the Regulation of the National Police of the Republic of Indonesia Number 8 of 2021 concerning Handling of Criminal Acts Based on Restorative Justice, criminal cases can be resolved through mediation involving perpetrators, victims, and other related parties, even from the investigation and inquiry stage. If the requirements for restorative justice are met, the legal process can be stopped, especially for minor cases, so that the perpetrators are not immediately criminalized and justice can truly be felt by all parties involved.

The principle of restorative justice has also been recognized by Law Number 1 of 2023 concerning the Criminal Code. In it, perpetrators of criminal acts can be subject to additional penalties in the form of an obligation to pay compensation to the victim or undergo supervision that is educational and remedial in nature. That way, victims are not only spectators in the legal process but also have the right to participate and receive real recovery (Pratama, 2024). The legal system is no longer just punishing, but also trying to repair social relations that have been damaged by criminal acts. This restorative justice approach is in line with the idea of progressive law, namely law that lives and develops according to the needs of the community (Wahid, 2022).

In areas such as the Natuna Islands, where access to formal courts is limited due to geographical conditions and infrastructure, restorative justice becomes very relevant. Instead of relying on complicated and difficult-to-reach legal processes, this approach can be a more flexible solution to the needs of the community. By involving community leaders, local officials, and customary officials, justice can be more easily accessed and truly felt by residents, by the values that live among them. The Natuna Islands community strongly upholds the values of deliberation and family in resolving various problems. In daily life, especially in coastal communities and small islands, consensus, peace, and mutual respect are the main foundations for maintaining harmony. When a conflict occurs, whether a violation of social norms or a dispute between individuals, it is usually resolved informally through a traditional forum or family deliberation. This method emphasizes restoring relationships and peace rather than simply giving punishment, which is in line with the concept of restorative justice.

The resolution of customary disputes in Natuna involves respected community figures, such as traditional elders, mosque imams, or village heads. They are believed to be able to be fair and wise mediators. In the forum, the perpetrator is asked to admit his mistake, apologize openly, and provide a form of restitution to the victim, either in the form of compensation or symbolic such as a traditional apology. The victim is also given the opportunity to convey his losses, and the results of the agreement are always based on the principles of justice and balance. This mechanism reflects the essence of restorative justice, namely the active involvement of all parties and a focus on recovery, not revenge.

Because these local values are deeply rooted, the implementation of the restorative justice approach in Natuna has great potential to succeed. Involving traditional leaders and local communities as facilitators is very strategic because they have social legitimacy and a deep understanding of the local context, much better than formal officials from outside the region. This approach is also able to bridge the gap between state law and customary law while strengthening law enforcement that is more humane and responsive to the needs of the community. In this way, restorative justice in Natuna is not only theoretically appropriate but also realistic to the culture and social conditions of the local community. The implementation of restorative justice in Natuna greatly helps people living on remote islands to more easily access justice. Due to difficult geographical conditions and limited legal facilities such as courts or prosecutors' offices on each island, formal legal processes often take a long time and are expensive. With restorative justice, communities can resolve legal problems locally with relevant parties in their environment, so that the process is faster, closer, and following local social conditions.

This approach also opens up opportunities for perpetrators and victims to have direct dialogue, something that is often overlooked in the regular justice system (Setyowati, 2020). Perpetrators are not only punished but are also given space to understand the impact of their actions and make real amends to the victim (Arief, 2025). Meanwhile, victims can express their feelings and get a more meaningful recovery, both emotionally, socially, and materially. In this way, conflicts can be resolved more humanely, and damaged social relationships can be repaired in a family atmosphere.

Restorative justice helps reduce the burden on the formal justice system which has often been overwhelmed, especially in handling minor cases. Many small cases can be resolved peacefully without having to go to court, thereby reducing the queue of cases and speeding up the legal process. This also reduces the costs that must be incurred by the community and legal institutions. Thus, restorative justice is a real solution for Natuna which faces geographical challenges and limited legal resources, while creating a fairer and more responsive justice system.

The strategy for implementing restorative justice in island areas such as Natuna needs to be supported by flexible regulations that are by local conditions. One important step is to create derivative regulations, such as Regional Regulations (Perda) or Regent's Decrees (SK), which regulate how restorative justice mechanisms are implemented at the village or sub-district level. With these regulations, the community and law enforcement officers will feel more confident and have a strong legal basis to carry out the process of resolving cases peacefully and not through the courts.

Improving human resource capacity is the main key to success. Community leaders, village officials, and law enforcement officers such as the police and prosecutors need to be given training on the principles of restorative justice, mediation methods and approaches that prioritize dialogue and recovery. With this knowledge and skills, they can facilitate problem-solving fairly and actively involve all parties. This training also helps build legal awareness in the community and strengthens the role of citizens in maintaining social order.

Close cooperation between formal law enforcement and local figures must continue to be built and maintained. The police and prosecutors can work with traditional leaders or religious leaders to determine minor cases that can be resolved through restorative justice. This

synergy is also important to monitor and evaluate the mediation results so that justice is truly upheld without sacrificing the rights of victims or perpetrators. With strong cooperation, restorative justice can be an effective and sustainable tool to create more humane justice in island regions such as Natuna.

### ***Restorative Justice Approach in Realizing Inclusive Justice***

Inclusive justice is an approach that does not only focus on punishing perpetrators of crimes, but also actively involves all affected parties, including perpetrators, victims, and the surrounding community (Sari, 2024). In this process, all parties are considered important and interrelated, so that the main goal is not just to resolve the case legally, but also to restore social relations and ensure that every voice is heard and treated fairly.

This inclusive approach avoids social exclusion, especially for perpetrators who commit minor or non-violent crimes, and often come from vulnerable groups. Instead of just punishing, this system allows perpetrators to take responsibility, correct their mistakes, and return to being a productive part of society. In other words, inclusive justice opens up space for social change and recovery, not just distancing perpetrators from their social environment.

Inclusive justice also pays close attention to the rights and needs of victims. Victims are given space to express their feelings, ask for accountability, and receive emotional and material recovery. This process creates a dialogue that builds empathy between perpetrators and victims, thereby strengthening social ties within the community. In essence, inclusive justice goes beyond formal legal rules and prioritizes the spirit of community recovery and empowerment, where all parties play an active role in maintaining social order and shared justice.

The restorative justice approach has an important role in encouraging legal inclusion, especially for community groups that have historically been marginalized in the formal justice system. Indigenous communities, poor groups, and residents in remote areas often have difficulty accessing justice due to limited resources, high costs, and procedural complexity. By providing a space for resolution outside of litigation, restorative justice opens up opportunities for broader legal participation, where perpetrators and victims from various social backgrounds can be directly involved in the recovery process.

Restorative justice creates a resolution system that is more accessible and faster because it is based on deliberation that involves all parties equally. This process can be carried out at the community level, with the help of facilitators such as community leaders, religious leaders, or village officials, without having to wait for a time-consuming and expensive court process. This deliberation-based resolution is very much in line with the local values of many communities in Indonesia, which prioritize peace and harmony in resolving conflicts.

Restorative justice encourages the creation of participatory and non-hierarchical justice as in the formal litigation system. All affected parties, including victims, perpetrators, and the surrounding community, are given space to express their views, formulate agreements, and determine a fair form of restitution. This fosters a sense of shared responsibility for resolving conflicts and strengthening social ties within the community. Thus, restorative justice is not only an alternative for resolving cases but also a vehicle for building a more inclusive and socially just legal system.

The restorative justice approach provides important protection for vulnerable groups, especially women and child victims. In the formal justice system, the process is often confrontational and can exacerbate the victim's trauma, especially if they have to meet the

perpetrator directly in a stressful trial atmosphere. With restorative justice, the resolution is carried out in a more humane and private manner, so that victims can safely express their feelings and needs. This approach focuses on the emotional recovery of victims and provides a more meaningful form of restitution, not just a verdict against the perpetrator.

Restorative justice also protects perpetrators, especially children or those from poor groups, from the risk of excessive criminalization. Conventional legal systems often ignore the social background of perpetrators, leaving them with a long-term stigma. Through a restorative approach, perpetrators are allowed to take responsibility and correct their mistakes without having to serve a prison sentence that could ruin their future. It paves the way for social reintegration, increased legal awareness, and the restoration of social relationships that ultimately help prevent future criminal acts.

The integration of progressive legal principles in the restorative justice approach reflects the view that law should not be rigid and stop at formal texts, but must live in society and answer real human needs. Progressive law rejects the view that justice can only be realized through standard procedures and strict punishment, but rather emphasizes the substance of justice, human values, and social benefits. In this context, restorative justice becomes an adaptive legal tool to adjust conflict resolution to the social and cultural context of the local community.

Restorative justice displays the face of the law that is empathetic, inclusive, and dialogical. It provides space for the parties to express their aspirations, heal social wounds, and seek constructive peaceful solutions, rather than maintaining procedural formalities that sometimes distance society from a sense of justice. This is in line with the spirit of progressive law that sides with humans, not just maintaining the system. Therefore, restorative justice is not only an alternative method of resolving cases but also a real manifestation of progressive and humanist law.

The application of restorative justice in a local context such as in Natuna can be seen in the resolution of cases that do not involve serious crimes, such as minor theft, family conflicts, or fights between youths. For example, in cases of minor theft, the parties involved—both the victim and the perpetrator—can be invited to meet in a mediation forum led by community leaders or village officials. In this meeting, the main focus is on finding a solution that benefits both parties, not just punishing the perpetrator. The perpetrator can be asked to return the stolen goods or make compensation, while the victim is allowed to express the pain or loss experienced, with the aim of restoring broken social relationships. In fights between youths or family conflicts, the restorative justice-based mediation process can involve the family, traditional leaders, and village officials as facilitators. This approach focuses on restoring social relations between the parties involved, by providing space for them to understand and talk to each other. Community leaders play an important role in ensuring that the mediation process takes place fairly, openly, and according to local values. In this way, not only the perpetrators can make improvements, but also the victims and the community can gain a deeper understanding of the importance of resolving conflicts peacefully and based on family.

## CONCLUSION

The *inclusive justice* and *restorative justice* approaches offer more humane, empathetic, and sustainable solutions to resolving legal conflicts. By prioritizing the restoration of social

relations, this approach actively involves all affected parties, including perpetrators, victims, and the community, to jointly seek fair and constructive solutions. *Restorative justice* provides space for the social reintegration of perpetrators and the emotional recovery of victims without marginalizing those from vulnerable groups. This approach is in line with the principles of *progressive law* that prioritize humanitarian values and social benefits so that it can strengthen social ties and create more inclusive justice in society, as applied in various local contexts in Indonesia. The *restorative justice* approach is an effective alternative to realizing *inclusive justice*, which involves all parties—perpetrators, victims, and the community—in social recovery and conflict resolution. By prioritizing dialogue, deliberation, and restoration of relations, *restorative justice* offers a more humane solution and does not only focus on punishment. This approach is relevant in local contexts such as Natuna, where family and peace values are highly respected. Through the involvement of community leaders and local facilitators, *restorative justice* can be an effective tool to create a more adaptive, inclusive, and humanitarian-based legal system, providing protection for vulnerable groups, and paving the way for social improvement without damaging the perpetrator's future.

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