

Ambon Conflict Leaves 10.72 Hectares of Land Damaged


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YOGYAKARTA - Social conflict in Ambon between 1999-2003 destroyed many human settlements and other established lands. Total damage in 2002 covered an area of 261, 51 hectares. However, up to year 2009, the figure has reduced down to 10.72 ha or a reduction of about 250, 79 ha. The land has been mostly converted to residential area, covering 183.73 ha, which is mostly found in villages of Hatiwe Kecil, Pandan Kasturi, Waihoka, Poka and rumah village. Thus was explained by Mohammad Amin Lasaiba, Lecturer of Geography from Pattimura University of Ambon, in the open examination of his doctorate at UGM Faculty of Geography, Tuesday (14/2).

According to Lasaiba, as he is familiarly called, the former agricultural lands which were abandoned due to social conflicts have increased the use of land for plantations as vast as 71.90 ha and dry field area of 26.58 ha, which are mostly found in Hatiwe Kecil, Soya and Batu Merah. Most of this is converted to residential area spanning 59.34 ha while the 19.71 ha of dry field is converted to residential area.

In his presentation, Lasaiba confirmed the reduction of damaged land is due to security condition of Ambon city which is becoming more conducive with developing settlement activities and the handling of housing program for refugees who occupy damaged lands.

He further added that social stability and security after the Ambon conflict had caused migration from rural areas to Ambon city. This led to an increase in the population after the social conflict, which was an average of 3.43 percent in 2008 or higher than the national population growth of 2.6 percent per year. Compared with the figure during the 1999-2003 conflict, the population growth rate was only 1.91 percent. "This is because the refugees have returned from refugee camps, both inside and outside the city of Ambon," said the man born in Ambon on 16 May 1967.



Nevertheless, he added, the increase in population tends to concentrate in certain areas with high density and population inequality. Before the conflict, people lived together, but after the conflict they are separated by religious segregation. "Frequently, the former settlement land had to be sold because there was no guarantee of security, then they build a new settlement as offered by the developer in their respective religious communities," he said.

In the dissertation entitled *Land Use Change in Ambon City Years 2002-2009*, he explained the change of land use in the city of Ambon during the period 2002-2009 covered an area of 919.675 hectares or 2.84 per cent. In general, the change of land use has led to an increase in residential and agricultural activities. Mostly it led to the reduction of mixed plantation and damaged areas due to social conflict. This reduction also occurs in forests, groves and bare lands.

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