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# THE 1968 LAMONGAN FLOOD: SOLIDARITY BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY IN FACING DISASTER

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## Abstract

This study discusses the Lamongan flood disaster in 1968, which was the largest disaster in the history of Lamongan Regency. This event had a huge impact on the people of Lamongan, both in terms of material and non-material losses. This study aims to determine the impacts and forms of cooperation between elements of society in dealing with the 1968 flood disaster. This study uses historical methods consisting of heuristics, criticism, interpretation, and historiography, supported by the availability of adequate primary sources through newspapers. The results of the study reveal that the floods that hit the Lamongan area demonstrated the resilience of the community through mutual cooperation, independent resource management, and seeking assistance from surrounding areas. These findings illustrate how social solidarity and community strength were the main factors that supported their resilience in the midst of extreme environmental pressures.

Keywords: Flood; Lamongan; Solidarity; Block.

## INTRODUCTION

"*Wong Lamongan nek rendeng gak iso ndodok, nek ketigo gak iso cewok*."

(The people of Lamongan cannot squat during the rainy season, and cannot wash themselves during the dry season)

The above saying is an expression of the Lamongan community regarding the conditions they experience when it rains for days on end, which then causes flooding. Conversely, when the dry season arrives, Lamongan experiences drought, to the extent that the above saying analogizes that there is not even enough water to wash oneself (Lusiana, 2021, p. 7). These conditions occur almost every year, which has fostered social awareness among the community. This social awareness is a reflection of the resilience and humanitarianism that has grown among the local community (Husain, 2017, pp. 81–82; Pandi et al., 2022, p. 84). The sense of humanity that has been built into social capital continues to grow among communities struggling and surviving amid floods and droughts (Harini & Wijayati, 2025, p. 180).

The reality described in this proverb not only shows the geographical and ecological conditions of Lamongan (Hadiatmadja, 2019, p. 24). It also illustrates the impact of these conditions on social, economic, and environmental aspects (Gunawan, 2010, p. 2). Flooding is a natural phenomenon that is integrated into the daily lives of the community (Gunawan, 2020, p. 230). As a result of flooding, community activities are disrupted, infrastructure is damaged, and material losses are significant (Rosyidie, 2013, p. 247). Flood disasters are not only an environmental issue and a contemporary problem caused by climate change and poor regional management, but also have a long historical process in human life (Ishak et al., 2014, p. 57).

Floods are not merely natural disasters, but are also caused by human activities that result in environmental degradation (Sukarna, 2021, p. 86). The interaction referred to is human activities that often exploit natural resources excessively without considering the consequences (Fitriyati &

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Mukhtar, 2024, p. 72; Sudaryono, 2002, p. 155). However, natural factors still play a role in triggering floods, such as unpredictable climate change, regional topography, and soil type (Arvi et al., 2025, p. 3). In Indonesia, floods can be classified into several types. The first type is caused by high rainfall and is referred to as a local flood. Second, floods caused by rising sea water to land areas are called tidal floods (Mutiara, 2024, p. 1). Third, floods caused by water flowing from upstream areas that cause sudden flooding are called flash floods (Dewiyanti et al., 2024, p. 52).

Areas located around river basins have a high potential for flash flood disasters (Saputro, 2012, p. 11). A significant increase in rainfall causes the volume of water to exceed the capacity of the river. This condition triggers river water to overflow onto land areas, potentially causing flooding (Ekawaty et al., 2018, p. 33). This situation is further exacerbated by river siltation due to sedimentation, narrowing of river channels due to construction along riverbanks, or inadequate drainage systems in surrounding areas (Husain, 2016, p. 68). Similar conditions also occur in areas along the Bengawan Solo River, which has been prone to flooding every rainy season (Indiyanto & Kuswanjono, 2012, p. 188; Kusairi, 2024, p. 21). To understand the flood risk in the Bengawan Solo River Basin (DAS), it is necessary to understand the division of the river basin.

The Bengawan Solo River Basin is divided into three administrative areas, namely Wonogiri as the upstream area; Karanganyar, Sukoharjo, Klaten, Surakarta, and Sragen as the middle area; and Madiun, Ngawi, Blora, Bojonegoro, Lamongan, Gresik, and Tuban as the downstream area (Kurniawati, 2016, p. 39). If there is heavy rainfall in the upstream to middle regions, it will cause the water discharge to overflow (Dewiyanti et al., 2024, p. 11). If the overflow is not properly contained, it is certain that the areas in the middle and downstream regions of the river will experience flooding (Mardiatno & Marfai, 2016, p. 80). Lamongan Regency, as one of the downstream areas of the Bengawan Solo River Basin, has a high potential to be affected by these floods (Arofah & Puspaningtyas, 2023, p. 80).

A river basin (DAS) is a complex ecosystem built on physical, biological, and human systems (Khafida et al., 2024, p. 40). These three components are interconnected and interact with each other to form an ecological unity (Maryono, 2018, p. 10). If there is an imbalance or problem in one component, the other components will also be affected (Anna et al., 2018, p. 196). The geographical condition of Lamongan, which is divided by the Bengawan Solo River, causes ecological changes to have a significant impact on the occurrence of floods (Pratama, 2016, p. 86). In the 1950s, ecological damage occurred, where 23 million m3/year of sedimentation was dredged from the bottom of the Bengawan Solo River. In fact, the rate of sedimentation accumulation reached 5-15 meters per year (Kusyairi, 2012, p. 70). These deposits caused the river to be unable to hold water, making flooding inevitable (Mudjib & Lasminto, 2013, p. 253). This condition shows that improving the river ecosystem is very important to avoid disasters (Alfaris & Nur, 2025, p. 47). Given this situation, the government has attempted to mitigate flooding by building embankments along the Bengawan Solo river basin (Wirawan & Koswara, 2021, p. 20). However, the construction of these embankments did not have a significant impact, as flooding continued to occur in Lamongan, especially along the Bengawan Solo river basin (Lusiana, 2021, p. 10).

Research on flooding has been extensively studied by several historians, including Gunawan (2010), Husain (2020), and Kusairi (2024). These three studies have different spatial focuses, namely flooding in Jakarta, Surabaya, and Tulungagung. However, all three literatures focus on efforts to mitigate structural flooding occurring in the study areas. Then there are studies conducted by Budimansyah (2018) and Ridhoi (2022) which describe regional flooding that occurred in Dayeuhkolot (Bandung) and Sampang. These two studies focus on disaster mitigation efforts that are adapted to the geographical conditions of the research area. Most of these studies still focus on large urban areas or well-known regions.

Flood events in small towns rarely receive attention in scientific studies. Most of the literature only focuses on disasters that occur in large cities, causing the suffering of people in small towns to be drowned out by the overflowing river currents. This means that local experiences and

collective memories cannot be properly documented, as is the case with the floods that occurred in Lamongan. Given this reality, this study aims to complement the existing literature.

Flood disasters have indeed become an annual occurrence in Lamongan. However, in 1968, the floods were not like those in previous years, which had almost submerged the entire city of Lamongan and several surrounding areas. According to the daily newspaper Nusantara, this flood was caused by the collapse of embankments in several areas and high rainfall in the upper and middle reaches of the Bengawan Solo River (Antara, 1968k). This situation then raises questions about the impact of the 1968 Lamongan flood and how the government and community worked together to deal with the disaster.

## RESEARCH METHOD

An event can be called a fact if it is supported by historical evidence. To determine whether historical evidence is a fact, historical research methods are needed to confirm the facts (Gottschalk, 1985, p. 28). This study uses historical research methods consisting of four stages: heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography (Kuntowijoyo, 2003, p. 1). The first step is heuristics or the collection of historical sources. At this stage, researchers search for and collect primary and secondary sources relevant to the research topic (Wijayati, 2009). Primary sources were obtained through contemporary newspapers such as *Nusantara, KAMI, Kedaulatan Rakjat, Suara Merdeka, and Krantenbank Zeeland*. Various types of newspapers were obtained through the National Library of Indonesia, the National Press Monument in Surakarta, the *Suara Merdeka* Archive Depot in Semarang, and through websites such as delpher.ln, mpn.komdigi.go.id, and opac.perpusnas.go.id. Meanwhile, images and photos were obtained through the Pojok Lamongan website. In addition, this research also used secondary sources in the form of related books and journals to support the research. After collecting the data, the researcher conducted a source critique to test the credibility and authenticity of the historical sources. The next step was to interpret the historical facts that had been collected in the previous stage. The historical facts, which were still fragmented, were then combined into a coherent whole in the form of a chronological and systematic historical account in the historiography stage.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Lamongan Affected by Floods

In the early hours of March 31, 1968, a flood disaster struck Lamongan, caused by the collapse of embankments in the villages of Truni and Karangbinangun (Merdeka, 1968c) . As a result of the embankment collapse, almost all of Lamongan was flooded, turning residential areas and rice fields into lakes (Antara, 1968i, 1968k). The collapse of the Truni and Karangbinangun embankments was caused by excessive pressure from the Bengawan Solo River, which the embankments were unable to withstand. The serious damage to the embankments caused the river to overflow and flood residential areas (Antara, 1968l). In addition, heavy rains for almost a week in Central Java and East Java were also one of the factors that caused the Lamongan floods. The continuous heavy rain caused the Gajah Mungkur reservoir in Wonogiri Regency, which is the headwaters of the Bengawan Solo River, to be unable to properly contain the water. This situation led to flooding in the downstream areas of the Bengawan Solo River (Antara, 1968k).

The flood that submerged almost the entire Lamongan area occurred so quickly that within just a few hours, the road between Gembong and Babat was impassable. People who wanted to cross this route had to switch from land transportation to boats (Antara, 1968m). The disruption of the Gembong-Babat route also caused the routes to Bojonegoro, Tuban, and Gresik to be cut off (Antara, 1968h). The disruption of these land routes caused significant losses, as transportation and economic activities came to a standstill. In fact, as a result of this flooding, the railway was completely paralyzed for 13 days, during which the train connecting Surabaya and Bojonegoro could not run (Mahasiswa Indonesia, 1968d) and the railway line between Babat and Cerme was flooded for 40 km, disrupting the connection between Pasar Turi Station-Jakarta was also cut off (Merdeka,

1968b). The disruption of inter-city connections trapped people in the floods for a long time, disrupting their daily activities (Antara, 1968s).

Flooding in Lamongan can be so chronic and prolonged due to the topography of the Lamongan region, which is mostly swamps or former swamps with an altitude of between 0-25 meters above sea level. Therefore, if the river embankments are unable to contain the water, either due to limited capacity or damage caused by water erosion, flooding is certain to occur in this area (Suhud, 2018, p. 41). In addition, most of the Lamongan region has a relatively flat slope gradient of between 0-8%, which increases the risk of flooding (Pratiwi, 2020, p. 3). The increasingly dense population has also triggered the expansion of settlements and agricultural areas, thereby reducing forest vegetation that functions as a means of water absorption. This condition prevents rainwater from being absorbed optimally and tends to cause flooding, even flowing into residential areas (Hasan, 2015, p. 243).

**Impact of Flooding**

On April 22, 1968, the flood showed no signs of abating and instead continued to spread. Not only did it affect Lamongan, but the flood also reached several surrounding areas such as Bojonegoro, Tuban, Gresik, and Surabaya. Damage to embankments also occurred on the other side, such as the Regil embankment in Tuban and the Kalitidu embankment in Bojonegoro (Antara, 1968k).

The flood disaster that submerged Lamongan caused significant losses to the affected communities. The total losses from the Lamongan flood disaster, as recorded by the Lamongan Regional Government, are as follows:

| Unit | Type | Amount | Description | Total Losses (in Rupiah) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rice fields | Owned by residents | 42,109 Ha | Flooded | 1,575,000,000 |
| Houses | Residential homes | 80,000 | Flooded | 1,080,000 |
| | Residential homes | 8,000 | Damaged | |
| | Residential houses | 180 | Flooded | |
| Livestock | Cattle | 4,087 | Flooded/lost | 77,307,400 |
| | Buffalo | 2,191 | Flooded/lost | |
| | Goat | 2,148 | Floating/lost | |
| | Sheep | 815 | Floating/lost | |
| | Horse | 8 | Floating/lost | |
| Fish ponds | Land ponds and wet ponds | 281 Ha | Destroyed | 107,902,200 |
| | Rice paddies | 6,278 Ha | Destroyed | |
| | Fish ponds | 505 ha | Destroyed | |
| Road | Owned by PUK | 73.4 km | Damaged | 1,500,000,000 |
| | Owned by DPU | 16.5 km | Damaged | |
| Tegal | Palawija | 10,904 Ha | Destroyed | 325,000,000 |
| Total | | | | 3,586,289,600 |

**Table 1:** Total losses in the 1968 Flood in Lamongan

Source: Data compiled from *Harian Nusantara*, April 11, 1968; *Suara Merdeka,* April 13, 1968; and *Harian KAMI,* April 23, 1968

The losses recorded in the table are the total losses reported to the local government. Other losses not reported to the local government are not included.

The physical vulnerability of the Lamongan region, which was not balanced with adequate disaster management, resulted in far greater social impacts. For example, on April 2, 1968, there

was an overflow of refugees at several evacuation centers. At the Sukodadi Evacuation Center, the number of refugees increased from 25,000 to 31,000, and at the Duduk Sampejan Evacuation Center, which was previously only a monitoring post, there were now 1,000 refugees. Due to the limited capacity of the refugee camps, some residents chose to evacuate outside Lamongan, such as in Gresik, where 7,500 people took refuge, and 22,730 refugees in several areas in the city of Surabaya, such as Bangunrejo, Bangunsari, and Kremil (Antara, 1968t). The increasingly alarming flood conditions led to school buildings being converted into evacuation centers starting on April 3, 1968. (Antara, 1968n). On April 11, there were 81,000 refugees and 50,000 people were still being evacuated to refugee camps (Algemeen Dagblad, 1968; Antara, 1968p; Nederlands Dagblad, 1968). As a result of the surge in the number of refugees, the refugee camps were full, and thousands of refugees set up emergency shelters on the sides of the highway (Antara, 1968j). The increase in the number of refugees was due to the expansion of the flood-affected area, where the entire Karanggeneng District and part of the Sukodadi District were submerged in water. This flood expansion was accompanied by damage to flood barriers in several subdistricts, such as Kedungboko, Sugio, Lamongan, Dedeg, and Turi (Rakjat, 1968). On April 4, 1968, in the Babat area, the center of the flood disaster, the water level reached 712 cm (Antara, 19680). The floodwaters inundated low-lying areas, reaching heights of 1.5 to 2 meters (Merdeka, 1968c).

**Figure 1:** Emergency evacuation shelters

Source: Suara Merdeka, April 19, 1968

The image shows the condition of refugees who cannot be accommodated in official shelters. This situation forces them to build their own shelters. The structures are made of bamboo taken from the remains of houses that were washed away by floods in Lamongan. This condition not only shows the limited availability of shelters. But also illustrates the refugees' efforts to survive in the face of adversity and limited resources in the midst of a disaster (Wirantono, 1968).

The Lamongan flood showed no signs of receding, causing the number of victims to skyrocket. When categorized, there were 153,622 people with severe injuries, 672,565 with moderate injuries, and 343,265 with minor injuries. These categories are based on the physical condition, place of residence, and whether the victims' rice fields or farms are ready for farming again or not. With this number of victims, food stocks are severely insufficient, with each victim receiving 300 grams of food per day for 2-3 months. If we calculate the food requirements for severe victims alone, 4,147,794 kg of food is needed for 3 months, but in reality, food aid is only provided according to the available food stocks. Therefore, it is acknowledged that the existing aid is still insufficient (Antara, 1968f).

**Figure 2:** Conditions of flood disaster victims in Lamongan, 1968

Source: Pojok Lamongan (https://share.google/4Zadft01yFPhLvNXH)

From the image above, it can be seen how the victims were living, with many of them lacking clean clothes. The condition of the command posts or emergency shelters was also inadequate, forcing the victims to share cramped spaces with a large number of other victims (Antara, 1968x). These conditions caused discomfort among the refugees, especially with the limited daily supplies such as bedding, blankets, clean clothes, and adequate food. This made the refugees vulnerable to disease.

The lack of supplies at the refugee camps was caused by a series of subsequent floods, which led to a renewed influx of refugees (Zeeland, 1968b). As of June 4, 1968, the number of refugees recorded was 124,474 in Lamongan and 54,000 in the municipality of Surabaya. The significant increase in the number of refugees overwhelmed the government, prompting it to seek donations and assistance from philanthropists to meet the daily needs of the flood victims (Merdeka, 1968i). In addition, the Governor of East Java submitted a request to the Ministry of Social Affairs to extend the provision of food aid to 178,474 refugees for another 1 ½ months until August (Antara, 1968ae). This was done because there were already around 400 flood victims in Lamongan who were experiencing symptoms of starvation (Antara, 1968ad).

**Government Action**

The flood that hit Lamongan on March 31, 1968, spread and caused devastating consequences. This situation urged the government to take immediate action. The first step taken by the government was to form the Natural Disaster Management Command (Kopebenal) (Antara, 1968aa). This agency was chaired directly by the Regent of Lamongan, Suparngadi, and was formed on April 17, 1968, with the inauguration by the Governor of East Java, M. Noer (Antara, 1968w). The establishment of this agency had three main ideas that had to be implemented, namely, first, the care of refugees on a large scale, second, the rehabilitation of the livelihoods of people who had been victims of disasters, and third, technical rehabilitation, including first aid by closing broken embankments and dredging sediment or deposits in the Bengawan Solo River (Antara, 1968v).

The Ministry of Social Affairs received reports of flooding in Lamongan and immediately provided assistance in the form of Rp. 600,000 to the East Java Provincial Natural Disaster Management Coordination Team (Kopebenal) to help the victims. In addition, the Ministry of Social Affairs also sent two observers to assess the flood situation in Lamongan firsthand. The National Logistics Agency (Bulog Nas), which is tasked with ensuring national food security, also contributed 100 tons of rice to maintain food stability for flood victims (Nusantara, 1968d).

Following up on the flood conditions in Lamongan, which had reached a very dangerous stage, the government took decisive action by reviewing the situation on the ground on April 4, 1968. The Governor of East Java, Moh. Noer, used two rubber boats. The Governor of East Java and his entourage departed for the location of the broken embankment, which was the main gateway for water to enter the land. During the inspection, the boat carrying the Governor of East Java was almost swept away by the flood currents while crossing the reservoir in Rawasemando, Suruhan Hamlet, Lamongan. The rubber boat departed from the village of Kebalandono, which is 8 km away from the main location of the embankment breach in Truni, Babat. However, because the flood at that time was accompanied by waves with a speed of 2 meters per second, the boat could not be controlled and was trapped in the flood current. Due to this incident, the inspection was not continued to Babat and it was decided to return to the original base in Kebalandono Village (Merdeka, 1968a). From this inspection, it can be seen that the flood conditions in Lamongan are very dangerous, where the flood current speed of 2 meters per second is equivalent to a person walking fast, which carries a high risk of being swept away, drifting, and drowning in the current (Purwanto et al., 2017).

Figure 3: Inspection of flood conditions in Babat District

Source: Pojok Lamongan (https://share.google/4Zadft01yFPhLvNXH)

Following the assessment on April 8, 1968, the flood spread further until the entire Lamongan was submerged (Antara, 1968r). Babat and Karangbinangun subdistricts were no longer visible, having merged with the Bengawan Solo River. There were 11 subdistricts recorded as being flooded, covering 223 villages with a population of 500,000 (Merdeka, 1968c). To facilitate the evacuation of flood victims, the Eastern Region Command Corps (KKO) of the Indonesian Navy provided rubber boats and lifeboats. In addition to evacuating victims, the KKO also provided boats for transportation between villages in Lamongan affected by the floods to facilitate communication and periodic monitoring of the flood disaster (Antara, 1968q).

In early May, the flooding subsided, but on May 17, 1968, there was a subsequent flood and the Bengawan Solo River overflowed again, inundating the highway between Lamongan-Babat (Antara, 1968d). This subsequent flood did not disrupt highway traffic, with a water level of +/-25 cm. The East Java Provincial Water Management Agency stated that this subsequent flood did not have the potential to rage like the first flood (Mahasiswa Indonesia, 1968a). However, because the floods had caused the people of Lamongan to evacuate for months, they were anxious and chose to leave their homes and set up tents in higher places (Antara, 1968b). Finding that the floods had not subsided, the Minister of Home Affairs, Basuki Rahmat, conducted an inspection in the Wonogiri area, which is the headwaters of the Bengawan Solo River. This inspection was conducted before visiting Lamongan to directly assess the flood disaster and decide on immediate response measures (Masyarakat, 1968a).

With the flood conditions becoming increasingly alarming and the number of flood victims continuing to rise, on April 17, 1968, a TPK2BA meeting was held at the Ministry of Social Affairs to follow up on the handling of the disaster. It was decided that the Lamongan flood would be declared a National Natural Disaster (Nusantara, 1968d). Declaring a disaster a national disaster facilitates the acquisition of resources from the central government in the form of financial assistance, logistics, personnel, and more coordinated and integrated natural disaster management (Antara, 1968x). In addition, it also facilitates the mobilization of assistance from various parties and encourages the acceleration of long-term disaster recovery (Law (UU) Number 74 of 1957 concerning the Revocation of "Regeling Po De Staat Van Oorlog En Beleg" and the Stipulation of "State of Emergency," 1957).

In response to the emergency situation in Lamongan and after the Lamongan floods were declared a national disaster, the government sought assistance from the United Nations (UN) and obtained approval from the World Food Programme (WFP), a global food aid organization under the auspices of the UN. This food aid agreement was signed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ismael Thajeb, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Indonesia, and the World Food Programme (WFP), represented by Dr. Aly Gritly, President Representative of the UN/FAO Development Programme. The agreement was signed at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pejambon, Jakarta . The aid consisted of social economic development projects and emergency food supplies in the form of 2,268 tons of wheat, 404 tons of salted fish, 252 tons of cooking oil, and 303 tons of

powdered milk (Nusantara, 1968b). The aid provided by the WFP is worth more than 1 million dollars, available to 112,000 flood victims, and will continue until August 16, 1968 (Zeeland, 1968a).

**Synergy between the Government and the Community**

The worsening flood situation has raised concerns. The East Java Provincial Government, in addition to continuing to report flood developments to the central government, is also making various efforts to alleviate the suffering of the people. These efforts are far from sufficient, as the threat of flooding continues and the number of refugees continues to grow. (Merdeka, 1968d) . In order to overcome this danger, solidarity from all levels of society is needed to provide any donations that can ease the burden on flood victims. It is known that many of the flood victims have to take shelter as best they can on the side of the road (Antara, 1968o).

The condition of flood victims who have lost almost all of their possessions causes serious psychological distress. Given this situation, Kopebenal, together with a number of volunteers, is working to reduce their mental burden by providing entertainment as a form of post-disaster trauma healing to build mental strength and reduce stress caused by the material and non-material losses they have suffered (Antara, 1968u). This mental pressure occurred as a result of sudden changes that had a significant impact on the mental condition of the victims. Therefore, providing entertainment at the evacuation posts allowed the victims to forget their mental burdens for a moment.

The Lamongan flood, caused by the inability of the Bengawan Solo river embankment to withstand the pressure of the water, caused deep sorrow and suffering for the people of Lamongan and several other areas that were also affected by the flood. This situation also caused other communities to feel the suffering experienced by the victims. Donations continued to arrive to ease the burden on the victims. On May 27, a convoy of 17 trucks arrived carrying 17 tons of rice, 11.5 tons of corn, 400 kg of sugar, 79.5 kg of bulgur, 500 kg of powdered milk, used clothing, mats, and medicines. These donations came from the Surabaya municipal community, the Surabaya Red Cross, the Indonesian Doctors Association (IDI), and the Senate of the Faculty of Medicine at Airlangga University. In addition to basic necessities, the people of Surabaya municipality also donated a sum of Rp. 1,837,437 (Antara, 1968c). The Indonesian Red Cross (PMI) also provided assistance by sending 24,342 cans of food and 320,000 vitamin tablets (Antara, 1968af).

Small units such as Strato Amateur Radio also provided assistance by collecting aid from the Surabaya community and managed to collect 400 pieces of used clothing and Rp. 6,180 in cash, which was then spent on biscuits and hundreds of bottles of eucalyptus oil (Mahasiswa Indonesia, 1968c). Even the smallest amount of aid can ease the burden felt by flood victims, and with more help from various groups, new enthusiasm will be created for the victims to persevere in the midst of the floodwaters.

Although many sympathizers have arrived, assistance is still greatly needed, as stated by Ilham Sudjono, Executive Board (BPH) of Kopebenal Lamongan, that the socio-economic conditions of the flood refugees are quite sad. This is due to the lack of continuous assistance, which has caused food supplies for the refugees to dwindle, while the number of refugees continues to grow. Due to these conditions, evacuees whose evacuation posts lack food are forced to consume walur (Antara, 1968ac). Walur itself is a type of wild tuber which, if not processed properly, can cause irritation and severe itching (Utomo & Utami, 2024, p. 53).

The critical situation became increasingly clear from the flood refugees when the aid convoy arrived from the Central Java 17th Brigade Multipurpose Veteran and Demobilized Battalion. The refugees immediately surrounded them and asked, "Will you give us aid? Did you bring food?" (Merdeka, 1968f). These questions illustrate the magnitude of suffering experienced by flood victims in Lamongan. Then, with great enthusiasm, the victims helped unload various aid items, including 4 tons of corn and 4 quintals of salted fish. (Merdeka, 1968e).

**Figure 4:** Flood victims working together to unload food aid

Source: Pojok Lamongan (https://share.google/4Zadft01yFPhLvNXH)

Aid from outside East Java came not only from Semarang but also from the Wonogiri Regency Government as the first convoy from Central Java to provide assistance to flood victims in Lamongan by sending 20 tons of corn worth Rp. 360,000 (Masyarakat, 1968b). The Indonesian Catholic Student Association (PMKRI) also provided assistance to the victims of the Lamongan flood disaster (Merdeka, 1968h). In addition, the Surakarta Municipal Government also provided 4,241.5 kg of rice obtained from a food control operation transported by train out of the Surakarta area (Merdeka, 1968g). Furthermore, the people of the capital city of Jakarta also helped by holding a charity event at the Sarinah building, which was attended by many famous bands and artists at that time, such as The Sky Rhythm, The Singer's, Bing Slamet, and Eddy Soed (Nusantara, 1968a).

**Figure 5:** Flood victims in Lamongan queuing to receive food donations

Source: Pojok Lamongan (https://share.google/4Zadft01yFPhLvNXH)

The designation of the Lamongan flood as a national disaster also attracted international sympathy, such as from the United States government, which donated US$25,000 worth of medicine and 1 million rupiah in cash (Harian KAMI, April 18, 1968). The Australian government also donated AUS$10,000 in cash (Mahasiswa Indonesia, 1968e) . The Japanese government provided US$3,000 in cash and US$1,700 worth of medicine (Nusantara, 1968c). Furthermore, the Aomori Youth Chamber of Commerce also provided 61 kg of medicines (Indonesian Students, 1968a). The West German government also provided two Toyota cars, while the Asian-African Islamic Organization provided 25 boxes of medicines (Indonesian Students, 1968b).

In line with international assistance, the Indonesian government is also working to address the impact of flooding, particularly on the agricultural sector, which has suffered significant losses. Short-term assistance has been provided in the form of rice seeds for the dry season rice and secondary crop planting season, amounting to Rp. 2.5 million, as well as guarantees for pest and disease control. The government has also allocated Rp. 6 million to reorganize agricultural land for the rainy season (Rp. 1,500/4000 ha) (Antara, 1968ab). In addition, Kopebenal also contributed by providing assistance in the form of rice and corn seeds worth Rp. 2 million and fish seeds for ponds worth Rp. 1 million (Mahasiswa Indonesia, 1968a). This was done as a first step to revive rural life, which had previously come to a halt due to flooding. Based on data, 16,000 hectares of rice fields

could be immediately reworked, with 6,620 hectares for gogo crops (a type of rice grown on dry land) and 10,000 hectares for other types of crops. Meanwhile, around 17,000 hectares of ponds in the Lamongan and Surabaya areas could be immediately reoperated (Antara, 1968g).

The government continues to make efforts to repair the damaged embankments as soon as possible. However, the continued flooding of the Bengawan Solo River has hampered the repair work. This has resulted in an increase in the areas affected by flooding and a rise in the number of new refugees at evacuation centers (Antara, 1968e). In fact, the embankment in Truni has been damaged four times, with the latest damage recorded as having destroyed +/- 40 meters of the embankment. This could have happened because the Bengawan Solo River carried waves that exerted stronger pressure (Mahasiswa Indonesia, 1968f).

Seeing the previous failure in efforts to seal the leaking embankments, the local government attempted another approach by trying to dry out the breached embankments using burlap sacks filled with sand. At least 100,000 burlap sacks were needed to seal the leaks in the embankments. The availability of this large number of burlap sacks was responded to by 33 sugar factories in East Java, each of which was able to donate 10,000 burlap sacks to help repair the embankments (Community, 1968b). The rehabilitation of the Bengawan Solo embankment began in September when the water level of the Bengawan Solo River stabilized at below 300 cm (Antara, 1968b). This rehabilitation began from the Babat area to the Surabaya area boundary, covering a distance of 63 km, at a cost of Rp. 260,000,000. To anticipate further flooding, the embankment was rebuilt in two layers, namely the main layer and the secondary embankment. This layered design aimed to increase the embankment's resistance to the pressure of the Bengawan Solo River, which often overflowed suddenly. In addition, this construction allowed water passing through the first embankment to be held back by the second embankment, thereby minimizing the risk of the embankment breaking (Antara, 1968ag).

The embankment rehabilitation effort also faced a major obstacle in that the repairs required the government to relocate 400 families living in the villages of Terpen and Bedahan. The relocation process was not easy, as the communities had lived in the area for many years and had strong ties to their living environment (Antara, 1968a). In addition, the availability of adequate replacement locations and the provision of supporting facilities for residents posed a challenge for the government. Nevertheless, the relocation had to be carried out to ensure the continuity of the embankment rehabilitation and to guarantee the safety of the community from the threat of recurring floods.

The Minister of Home Affairs, Basuki Rachmat, also proposed the Bengawan Solo project as a national development project in the government's 5-year development policy to President Soeharto. This was done because the Bengawan Solo floods that hit areas in Lamongan had caused enormous losses (Antara, 1968y). In response to this, the Governor of East Java, M. Noer, prepared a short report on the Bengawan Solo project so that it could be taken into consideration by the central government when the project was implemented (Antara, 1968z).

## CONCLUSION

The flood that hit Lamongan on March 31, 1968, was a catastrophic flood that caused so much damage that it was declared a national disaster. Not only did it harm the people of Lamongan, but it also affected people in other areas close to Lamongan, such as Bojonegoro, Tuban, Surabaya, and Gresik. The flood, which submerged almost the entire Lamongan area, was caused by heavy rains that hit most of Central Java and East Java, causing the Gajah Mungkur reservoir to be unable to properly contain the water. In addition, the flooding was also caused by deforestation around the river, which prevented rainwater from being absorbed optimally. Due to the strong pressure of the river water and accompanying waves, the barriers that served to keep the river water from entering residential areas were broken, making the flooding inevitable. The material and psychological losses caused by this flood disaster evoked sympathy from the wider community, with aid coming not only from the people of Lamongan but also from outside the Lamongan region to help ease the burden on the flood victims. Although the response to this disaster was slow, with

the cooperation of various elements of society, the flood disaster was overcome and the victims received adequate assistance. This proves that solidarity is an important component in rebuilding the livelihood resilience of disaster victims. This paper can also be used as a basis for thinking and acting as a form of scientific and pragmatic contribution in handling the flood disaster that hit Sumatra in December 2025.

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