

# Acheh after Tsunami: The Reconstruction Agenda

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## Abstrak

Kertas ini membincangkan beberapa isu penting berhubung dengan agenda pembangunan semula di Aceh ekoran daripada bencana tsunami yang melandanya. Selepas menggambarkan kekayaan sumber alam Aceh dan kemusnahan akibat tsunami yang tak ternilai dan yang lagi mengharukan, penulis membincangkan isu-isu yang timbul daripada bantuan antarabangsa dan agenda pembangunan semula Aceh. Beliau telah menyimpulkan bahawa sekiranya bantuan ini tidak dimanfaatkan dengan baik dan pembangunan semula tidak ditangani dengan bijak, beliau khawatir cita-cita perdamaian di negeri itu tidak akan tercapai. Selain masalah politik dan birokrasi, terdapat isu-isu seperti iri hati sosial, jurang antara pembangunan wilayah yang dimusnahkan tsunami dan yang tidak dan beberapa lagi yang perlu diatasi. Keberkesanan bantuan yang disalurkan kepada pembangunan wilayah setakat ini dan keberkesanan pembangunan semula Aceh perlu dipantau.

## Introduction

Acheh (also known as Aceh, Atjeh or Achin) is a region in the northern part of the island of Sumatra, and is located between the Indian Ocean and Straits of Malacca, the Indonesian archipelago and the Malay Peninsula. In terms of geography, it is an area of 57,365.57sq. km, comprising of more than one hundred islands off its western coast. Its population at present is around four and a half million. Before it was united into a single state following the Portuguese intrusion, the Nanggroe Aceh (The Sultanate of Aceh) was the site of several kingdoms, such as the kingdom of Peureulak, the kingdom of Samudra Pase, the kingdom of Beunua (Temiang), the kingdom of Lingge, the kingdom of Pedier, the kingdom of Jaya, the kingdom of Daya, the kingdom of Aru and the kingdom of Aceh.

In the context of international relations Aceh is regarded as an area which has a strategic value due to its location between the Indian and the Pacific Oceans. It is Aceh's position as a point of entry to the Straits of

Malacca that gives it easy access to international trade routes. Due to its central position in the region's main air and sea routes, Aceh has also acquired a strategic position in the world communication system.

Aceh's main income earners currently are petroleum and natural gas, fertilizer, estate produce and agriculture. Great potential natural resources are in the mining and industrial sectors. The two sectors contributed 68% of the total GRDP. Nowadays, non-agriculture sectors such as mining, industries and energy develop rapidly. However, the growth of the agricultural sector, including plantations, which covers approximately 60% of the area, is estimated to keep pace with the development of non-agricultural sectors.

Along with the policy to diversify development sectors, the government of Nanggroe Aceh has divided the Aceh region into two investment development zones based on its configuration, potential resources and limitations. Most regions with unexplored forest areas may be rich in oil and gas.

Other main resources include forests, mining, industries, fisheries, and plantation sectors with its main commodities such as palm oil, rubber, coconut, clove, coffee beans, coco beans, tobacco, tea, sea and fresh water fisheries, metals, coal, gold and other minerals. The main foreign investors in Nanggroe Aceh at present are: Exxon Mobil, cement producer Lafarge S.A. (LR) of France and a Toronto based insurer Manulife Financial Corp (MFC).

### **Aceh before the tsunami**

In the Indonesian context, Aceh before the tsunami could be regarded as a "wealthy province" in terms of resource availability. Most of the people lived in their own homes and had access to land. Economic activity was focused largely around traditional farming and fishing, as well as logging with 47% of Aceh's workforce engaged in these sectors. Many others were small traders or civil servants or worked in the service sectors. Nevertheless, this is not to say there was no poverty in Aceh. Government data shows that in September 2004, 53.3% of families in Aceh were living below the poverty line.<sup>1</sup>

At the time when the tsunami swept ashore, the war of independence had been raging in the province for almost 30 years, resulting in an estimated 15,000 deaths. Many thousands more were tortured or imprisoned, or simply disappeared. The social and economic fabric of Aceh's society was considerably weakened, leaving many communities with impoverished social services and economies that had long ceased to function.

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<sup>1</sup> National Family Planning Coordination Agency, 30 September 2004.

## Earthquake and tsunami

The extent of damage the tsunami had inflicted on Aceh shocked even the most experienced disaster specialist. In the immediate aftermath of the tsunami, the military and teams of volunteers raced to bury the tens of thousands of bodies that littered the streets. Across Aceh, 130,788 people were killed and 37,066 people missing; more than 100,000 bodies had been buried in mass graves.<sup>2</sup> Among these were thousands of individuals whose skills would have been vital to the emergency relief effort: health personnel, police, military, and local government officials and civil servants.

Meanwhile, with around 123,000 houses destroyed,<sup>3</sup> some 514,150 people fled to refugee camps, with an estimated similar number moving in with relatives or friends or building makeshift huts.<sup>4</sup> Some of the more remote camps lacked food and many were short of potable water and sanitation facilities.

As the waters receded, it became evident that hundreds of thousands of livelihoods had been destroyed. Thousands of fishing boats were damaged or lost, along with half of the existing fishing industry infrastructure. 25,840 out of 36,614 hectares of fish ponds were damaged.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, fields and plantations disappeared under water. In the agriculture sector, 57,758 hectares of irrigated land, and 29,948 hectares of non-irrigated agricultural land were damaged and in need of minor or extensive repair. In total, more than 240,000 families traditionally involved in the agriculture sector lost their livelihoods, and rice production in 2005 decreased by 397,504 tons from the previous year.<sup>6</sup>

The province had also suffered terrible damage to its institutions, which is critical to its long-term reconstruction. The provincial government and many local level administrations were devastated, suffering substantial loss of personnel, experience and infrastructure:

In February 2005, it was announced that 2,992 out of a total of 77,530 registered civil servants in Aceh were killed, with a further 2,274 still missing.<sup>7</sup> The district, sub-district and village levels of governance were also weakened; many current Camat (sub district heads) and village heads have been appointed post-tsunami.

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<sup>2</sup> Data from United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), June 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Data from Department of Urban Resettlement, Banda Aceh, August 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Bakomas PBP, Daily Update, 14 March 2005.

<sup>5</sup> FAO/WFP Food Supply and Demand assessment for Aceh Province and Nias, 5 May 2005.

<sup>6</sup> Aceh Department of Agriculture, *Community Empowerment Policy in NAD and Nias Post-Tsunami*, 27 September 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Data from Sekretariat Daerah Provinsi NAD, 28 February 2005.

The damage to the health and education sectors was also substantial. More than 500 health workers died or are missing, 8 hospitals and 114 health centers were damaged. In education, over 300 schools were destroyed, and 954 damaged, and more than 2,000 teachers are dead or missing. The Department of Religious Affairs also reported that 209 of its religious schools and 155 traditional Islamic boarding schools were damaged. The state Islamic Institute (IAIN), sustained substantial damage; the director-general of higher education reported that as many as 200 university lecturers across the province were killed. The local media infrastructure was also ravaged. Banda Aceh also lost 16 radio stations, while in Meulaboh on the west coast, all four local radio stations were either completely or partially destroyed.

### **Humanitarian response**

In the first few days after the disaster, Aceh remained closed to the outsiders, as it had been during the martial law and the subsequent civil emergency. On the afternoon of 28 December 2004, the Indonesian government formally requested the help of the United Nations and others for the relief effort. In particular Muhammad Yusuf Kalla, Indonesian vice President, invited the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA) to coordinate the international relief effort and international aid workers.<sup>8</sup>

When the province was opened on the evening of 28 December 2004, international NGOs and foreign government relief teams streamed in. Meanwhile, foreign military arrived in Aceh with helicopters, transport aircraft and ships to facilitate the movement of logistics and key personnel to the areas that were cut off. By 17 January 2005 we noted that 4,478 foreign troops were already in Aceh.<sup>9</sup> It soon became evident that massive international funding would be necessary across the tsunami-affected regions not only for the emergency relief effort, but also for longer term reconstruction efforts.

Within only a few hours of news of the tsunami, the European Union (EU) through its humanitarian department ECHO released three million euros (\$3.6 million) in immediate assistance for the region, with a further 20 million euros committed later that week. The UNDP also released funds of \$ 500,000 on the same day,<sup>10</sup> and by 27 December, Australia had already dedicated A\$10 million (\$7.5 million) to tsunami-affected regions; many others scrambled to respond quickly.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Micheal Elmquist, deputy to chief of UN OCHA, interviewed 26 January 2005.

<sup>9</sup> Indonesian Armed Forces press release, TNI Information Center(puspen), 17 January 2005.

<sup>10</sup> UNDP, UNDP Releases Emergency Fund in Response to Earthquakes and Tsunami in Asia. Crisis Prevention and Recovery Experts Deployed Throughout Region; UN to Launch Flash Appeal, 27 December 2004.

<sup>11</sup> Alexander Downer, Australia's \$10 Million for Indian Ocean Disaster Relief, 27 December 2004.

A few days after the tsunami, the international community had already pledged half a billion dollars of support to the affected countries in the region. That figure jumped to more than \$800 million by the end of December 2004, when the United States increased its pledge. In January 2005, the UN Secretary General launched a Flash Appeal for the affected regions. At a meeting in Geneva on 11 January 2005, donors pledged 77% of the \$977 million requested for immediate relief (\$371 million of which was for Indonesia). By 6 April 2005, a midterm review of the Flash Appeal adjusted the amount needed across the tsunami affected regions upward to \$1.087 billion. The allocation for Indonesia alone had increased to \$396 million.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to the above amount, the outpouring of private charitable donations worldwide was unprecedented; eventually reaching \$2.5 billion.<sup>13</sup> In Britain alone, the public pledged twenty million pounds sterling in less than 48 hours after the UK Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC), an umbrella group for a dozen British charities, launched its Tsunami Earthquake Appeal on 28 December 2004.<sup>14</sup>

American private donations for tsunami affected countries were estimated at around \$1.3 billion; Australian private donations to NGOs totaled A\$375.3 million (\$281.1 million).<sup>15</sup> On 26 February 2005, after raising more than \$ 526.8 million, the Red Cross organization and others stopped taking donations.

### **New peace agreement and the reconstruction efforts**

The positive effect caused by the tsunami was that GAM (Free Aceh Movement) and the GoI (Indonesian government) returned to the negotiating table for further talks on how to reach a peaceful solution to the long conflict in Nanggroe Aceh. After five rounds of dialogue in Helsinki and in the post-tsunami environment, finally a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on 15 August 2005 that was wide-ranging and aimed at sustainable peace and continued dialogue. Although the agreement leaves many issues unresolved, it does convey "a greater measure of political good will" than the previous CoHA agreement of May 2002.

GAM has fulfilled its commitment to decommission a pre-agreed number of weapons. In return, the GoI has withdrawn a significant number of its troops from Aceh. The implementation of the MoU has certainly calmed what was a volatile post-tsunami security environment, making it much easier for donors to travel around Nanggroe Aceh, and paving the way for a less troubled implementation of the reconstruction programmes.

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<sup>12</sup> Catherin Skonhofs, Donor and NGO Relations Officer, UN OCHA and Daniel Nicol, Associate Humanitarian Affairs Officer, UN OCHA. Interviewed 23 November 2005.

<sup>13</sup> As Reported by the EU, 9 June 2005.

<sup>14</sup> *PR Newswire*, 30 December 2004.

<sup>15</sup> *ABC Australia*, 19 March 2005; *New York Times*, 27 November 2005.

## Donors for reconstruction of Nanggroe Aceh and Nias-North Sumatra

The generous donations enabled both the Indonesian government and the international community to move rapidly to determine the country's need. The National Development Planning Agency (BAPPENAS) was tasked with documenting the loss and damage of assets and the anticipated costs of reactivating local government and social services. Total damage and loss to Aceh and the affected areas of Nias was estimated at \$4.5 billion-97% of Aceh's pre-tsunami annual gross domestic product(GDP),<sup>16</sup> After a subsequent earthquake on 28 March 2005, the damage and loss figure increased to \$4.8 billion. The total estimated needs for long-term recovery and rebuilding of Indonesia's tsunami-affected regions were \$5.5 billion.<sup>17</sup>

In response, donor pledges were generous. According to the United Nations Special Tsunami Envoy, as of December 2005, the total funds pledged by the international community for Indonesia's long-term recovery came to \$6.1 billion. Of the funds pledged, approximately \$3.6 billion is from multilateral and bilateral donors and international financial institutions, with another \$2.5 billion from NGOs, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and others.<sup>18</sup>

In June 2005, the Indonesian Parliament approved an increase in the National Budget allocation for Aceh from \$1.15 billion to \$1.4 billion to contribute to the rehabilitation and reconstruction process.<sup>19</sup> Of the \$1.4 billion, \$948 million came from funds released by international creditors debt moratorium and the rescheduling of foreign loans; \$420 million in the form of grants from foreign governments, and \$420,000 from re-allocation of project loans.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> World Bank, *Rebuilding a Better Aceh and Nias: Preliminary Stock taking of the Reconstruction Effort Six Months after Tsunami*, July 2005.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.tsunamispecialenvoy.org/country/Indonesia.asp> accessed 10 December 2005.

<sup>18</sup> Office of the Secretary General's Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery: *Taking Stock after 12 Months*, 22 December 2005, p.5.

<sup>19</sup> Annual Work Report of Indonesian Department of Finance, October 2004-September 2005, 19 October 2005, p.112.

<sup>20</sup> Annual Work Report of Indonesian Financial Department, October 2004-September 2005, 19 October 2005.

## How were the funds channeled to the reconstruction works in Aceh?

The international assistance was vital to the relief effort in Aceh, providing food, water, shelter and medical care for hundreds of thousands of tsunami victims. In moving from relief to rehabilitation, and finally to the reconstruction and development phases, the international community, and in particular the five donors (MDTF, World Bank, ADB, EC, AIPRD), have made enormous contributions to the reconstruction projects in Nanggroe Aceh.

Some of these donors, such as the ADB and World Bank, work closely with the Indonesian government and channel the majority of their funding on-budget via the Indonesian Ministry of Finance. This has led to delays in disbursing funds; in fact most of the ADB programmes planned for the first year have been delayed until 2006. Both donors have expanded existing programmes, and established new ones to assist in reconstruction efforts.

The ADB and World Bank are involved in the medium to long-term reconstruction and rehabilitation process, contributing not only money, but much-needed technical assistance to Indonesian government departments and mechanisms.

In contrast, the Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Reconstruction and Development (AIPRD) usually implements programmes via managing contractors, using these companies to disburse funds directly to the project in the field. Their rationale for this approach is that it partly allows for quicker implementation of programmes.

Similarly, the European Community's Humanitarian Aid department (ECHO) responds to emergency situations via a system of long-standing partner organizations. Its funds can be disbursed swiftly and off-budget; although primarily emergency focused, ECHO can continue to fund secondary emergencies for several years in one disaster zone.

Meanwhile, the European Commission has put its reconstruction faith in MDTF, committing all its longer-term rehabilitation and reconstruction assistance to the Trust Fund to manage. As the single largest donor to the Trust Fund, the EC is the co-chair and is able to have substantial policy input into both on and off-budget grants from the funds.

The MDTF itself was established by the Indonesian government and the World Bank; its 15 members have contributed more than \$350 million.<sup>21</sup> The fund was initially established to support large-scale on-budget programmes using Indonesian government mechanisms, but more recently has turned to some direct funding to partner organizations.

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<sup>21</sup> Figures are in U.S. dollars unless otherwise noted. Where national/community currencies are converted to U.S. dollars, exchange rates of 6 February 2006 are used.

### **The Reconstruction agenda in post-tsunami Aceh**

It is important to know that the state of the pre-tsunami infrastructure in Aceh was poor, due to years of under-investment by the government and a lack of private investment due largely to Aceh's volatile security environment. The reconstruction efforts present a unique opportunity for the improvement of sewage and drainage systems, roads, schools, clinics and other public infrastructure, as well as for the establishment of new facilities such as libraries, pre-school facilities, or employment centres. But such improvements, which require careful planning, need a longer period of time.

The reconstruction works in post-tsunami Aceh can be divided into several sectors:

#### **(1) Building the houses for those whose homes have been destroyed.**

In the enormous outpouring of public, corporate and government sympathy that drove the tremendous financial response, there was an immediate and pressing sense of obligation on the part of the donors and implementers, to show that results could be fast, visible and wide ranging. Hence, tremendous pressure arose to disburse large amounts of resources very quickly and led to obvious tension between the desire for quick results and the need for interventions to be done in a correct and sustainable way, which inevitably requires a longer planning period.

The size and the quality of the house a beneficiary receives vary significantly depending on the provider. Most houses are Type 36 (36 metres square) and cost between Rp 32 million (\$3,436) and Rp 50 million (\$5,370). Some are much larger and can cost as much as Rp 100 million (\$10,740) or even more. For example, CRS is providing Type 45 houses (45 square metres) in some project areas; meanwhile GAA plans to build Type 45 in Simeulu and Type 42 in Jeunib.

Not only does the size of houses between villages differ, but without a 'one provider, one village policy', the size of houses in one village can also vary. Depending on the materials used, the different quality of houses built in one village can also exacerbate tensions. Furthermore, many houses are still being constructed without basic amenities such as running water and sanitation facilities.

In addition to this, the level of public infrastructure varies from community to community, as some agencies build only the physical structure of the house, while others repair access roads, repair or build schools and clinics, and provide other amenities.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> World Bank, *Rebuilding a Better Aceh and Nias: Stocktaking of the Reconstruction Effort*. Brief for Coordination Forum Aceh and Nias, October 2005, p.80.



Another issue related to the housing project is 'housing for the landless and ex-renters'. The land in some tsunami-affected areas such as in the Ulee Lheue area of Banda Aceh and many areas of the west coast has literally disappeared. These communities are still living in tents, with no information forthcoming on re-housing plans, and many whose homes were rented do not qualify for a new home. There is no common policy in Aceh to deal with this problem.

To resolve the issue of landlessness, many district governments are planning to purchase land elsewhere to build low cost housing. For example, for those in Ulee Lheue the municipal government has bought land in several locations in Banda Aceh and will build houses there for people who are willing to relocate. A local senior government official said: "The people at Ulee Lheue might be offered flats to rent at a subsidized rate. We might even decide to offer the flats rent free for the first few years."<sup>23</sup>

In Aceh Jaya, land has already been identified in three sub-districts for a similar initiative, but the local head (Bupati) is still unsure when the process of resettlement will begin. Budgets have not yet been disbursed, so implementation is slow. It will be necessary to engage in consultation not only with those being resettled, but with those into whose areas those resettled will move, to ensure the solution to one problem does not in fact become a problem in itself.

## (2) Socio-economic development plan

As we know, Aceh's economy, which included a substantial number of small businesses and informal economic activity components, was dealt a massive blow by the event of 26 December 2004. To address this, several livelihood intervention strategies have been put in place in a bid to alleviate poverty and to start the local economy moving forward, generating income and promoting employment. These include small grant schemes, soft loans, microfinance, and preliminary discussions about bank guarantee schemes for local businessmen. However, not all these models are appropriate to all areas of Aceh.

In a post emergency situation, although cash-for-work schemes are well-targeted and employ local people but such schemes do not represent long-term employment. Non-cash alternatives and other livelihood initiatives such as tools for farming, fishing, infrastructure improvements, training etc. are often more appropriate, thereby helping people secure resources that will help them to rebuild a sustainable livelihood.

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with Mawardi Nurdin, Walikota, Banda Aceh, 18 December 2005.

Some communities or individuals receive grants, while others receive loans or temporary employment. However, the tsunami victims in Aceh in particular, and many local people in general favour grants and cannot see the benefits of loans. Due to unfamiliarity with the broader benefits of revolving credit schemes and other forms of credit, and in the absence of agency staff capable of explaining, some communities have a zero-sum view: no requirement to repay is good, required repayment is bad. This is the case in some of the Asian Development Bank (ASDB) funded micro-enterprise schemes.

The European Commission (EC) through its 'humanitarian assistance' (ECHO) gave the agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED) \$970,658 for emergency support to livelihood recovery through fishing boat construction and equipment for tsunami affected communities in Nagan Raya and west Aceh district.<sup>24</sup> With Help Germany, an FAO boat-building programme has also created two training workshops for boat makers, one in North Aceh (Lhokseumawe) and the other one in West Aceh (Meulaboh).

### **(3) Building local government capacity**

A sustainable reconstruction of Aceh must rest on the foundation of a functioning local government structure and the skill of its staff; and the international donors and the implementers are also aware that most of the relief agencies and the reconstruction groups will stay in Aceh only for a period of three to five years. After that the responsibility for the implementation of the reconstruction programmes will be handed over to a local community that currently lacks both technical expertise and a general skill base.

Aceh's local government, weakened by years of lack of resources and suffering from the rebellion conflict, was already in poor condition when the tsunami hit the province. Many government offices had been burned and destroyed during the conflict; government officials often kidnapped, killed and tortured by Indonesian government security forces who accused them of being sympathetic to GAM and the struggle for independence. As a consequence, in most local government departments, capacity is very low. However, few donors at present are working to build local government capacity beyond the level required to implement current rehabilitation programmes.

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<sup>24</sup> OCHA's financial tracking system, <http://ocha.ch/lts/index.aspx>, updated on 21 November 2005.

One of the European Commission's (EC) positive steps in this regard was its contribution of \$3.6 million to 'Aceh Local Government Action Programme (ALGAP)' which was implemented by the German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ) since October 2005. The programme is designed to strengthen the capacity of local government, in terms both of institutional infrastructure and management of the rehabilitation process, through training and provision of basic equipment.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to EC contributions, the Australian-Indonesian Partnership for Reconstruction and Development (AIPRD) also contributed \$2,239,000 for the project. The AIPRD governance programme is building village offices (Meunasah) in Baitulssalam, and capacity-building components for local governance structures at the village and sub-district levels, but its implementation is too slow. Nevertheless, such programmes will be vital to the eventual successful handover of many of the projects being implemented across the province.

### The Anticipated problems:

#### A. The bureaucratic delays

The inefficient bureaucracy has had significant impact on the rolling out of many projects. While there was no shortage of funds for post-tsunami needs, the money has not been flowing to projects as quickly as expected. The fact that the Indonesian government lacked a coordinating agency for tsunami aid until April 2005 meant that in many cases projects were largely determined unilaterally.

Due to the huge amount of funds, the Indonesian government's financial mechanisms, were also unable to cope with the sudden influx of money. This need for extensive bureaucratic requirements, including a newly devised programme planning and expenditure document have caused long delays, with grant disbursement approval often stuck in the Ministry of Finance.<sup>26</sup>

Under the coordination of the relevant ministries, new working units put in place to submit draft activity and budget plans also caused delays; according to an official from the ADB: "Staff were slow to understand the new mechanism, which was in fact itself poorly developed."<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Silvia Dian Anggoro, EU Project Officer, interviewed 29 November 2005.

<sup>26</sup> The programme planning and expenditure document is called a DIPA, and is designed by sectoral government working units. The DIPA can be used as implementation document and a tool for control, reporting and evaluation, and as a document to support the government book keeping activity.

<sup>27</sup> Pleter Smidt, ADB Extended Mission Sumatra, interview 16 December 2005.

It is not unusual to hear officials of some large on-budget donors complain about the lack of capacity within these government ministries to deal with their own mechanism. As one senior diplomat remarked: "Indonesia is an incredibly over-bureaucratic country. But if we try to interfere in that bureaucracy, the wheels will turn even more slowly."<sup>28</sup>

#### **B. Disconnect between priorities**

As usual, starting major infrastructure projects while the locals are living in tents sometimes can create public relations problems. For that reason priorities imposed from the top-down are sometimes inevitable, their rationale is not always immediately clear to locals. This problem could be overcome by better coordination among donors and implementers to make sure that communities agree to and appreciate the urgency of public infrastructure to the broader reconstruction process. At the same time, agencies should ensure basic needs are being met by the time other longer-term projects are being carried out.

For the implementers, there is a need to adopt a more holistic approach, whereby the basic needs such as food, water and temporary shelter is secured before community consultation over supplying village infrastructure begins. Few international agencies are as successful in their projects of village rehabilitation as the ' Salvation Army' in West Aceh, CARE International's ambitious Beudoh (Recovery) in Simeulu, Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar. It was due to their integrated approach towards shelter, water and sanitation, health and livelihood recovery that made their rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts achieve a very successful result in those areas.<sup>29</sup>

#### **C. Lack of communication and consultation**

The success of identification and design of reconstruction activities depend very much on the pre-project assessment. Consultation with all members of communities during all stages of project implementation should be done so that the affected people do not feel cut off from their own futures. The policy of "bottom-up consultation" is thereby more appropriate than the policy of "top-down need assessment". Obtaining information from the communities about the reconstruction project should be a 'priority' to the implementing agencies to help them conceptualise and prioritise the projects, as well as to lay out provisional budgets.

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<sup>28</sup> European diplomat, Jakarta, interviewed 19 September 2005.

<sup>29</sup> Dr Nasruddin , Bupati , West Aceh, interviewed 22 December 2005; Christophe Logrant, Director of Care, Aceh, interviewed 18 December 2005.

For that reason, consultation with beneficiaries over the project at all stages can help to ensure appropriate and sustainable outcomes. The failure to consult with beneficiaries also led to potentially highly successful projects going badly awry, leading to wasted funds and leaving beneficiaries frustrated and demoralised, while donors who do consult often have more congenial relations with local communities, and better project outcomes.

One of the organizations which have carried out projects successfully as a result of good consultation and communication with the beneficiaries is a French NGO, TGH, which contributed to local boat makers in Nagan Raya of West Aceh. The local boat makers feel that working with TGH staff, especially because of their 'open invitation' to visit the boat shed to check on the quality and progress of the boats being made for them has led to a sense of ownership in the process, and good relations between the donors(TGH) and local communities.

The same success was seen in the rebuilding of the Zainoel Abidin General Hospital (RSUZA) in Banda Aceh. The project was rehabilitated under a partnership agreement between the AIRPD, Indonesia and Germany which saw a "collaborative effort "between senior hospital staff and AIRPD representatives,; "I am very happy with the new hospital," said the head of the hospital. "We designed the layout ourselves, and the new equipment is exactly what we requested."<sup>30</sup> Staff will be trained in the use of the more advanced equipment before the new hospital becomes fully operational.

In order to avoid the feeling of helplessness among the beneficiaries the two- way flow of information is needed for the successful implementation of the reconstruction programmes. The UNICEF is one of the international agencies which is successful in its project of Child Centre Programme in Samatiga of West Aceh, due to its interactive method of communication with local recipients at the early stage of the project planning, and also in the retaining of a rolling mechanism of evaluation and discussion involving different levels of community at the centre, the village elders and centre staff.

It was said that UNICEF also conducted a two- week staff training course before the centre opened; negotiation, communication, and conflict resolution skills were high on the agenda. In an interview, the local staff explained: "This programme cannot be implemented without the approval and cooperation of the children's parents, usually the mothers, in the planning stage. Sometimes they say they don't agree with this or that, it's ok, we can adjust everything to suit local conditions."<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Dr. Rasmundar, Director , RSUZA, interviewed 13 July, 2005.

<sup>31</sup> Tambah Nur Asih, Child Centre in Reusak, Samatiga-West Aceh, interviewed 27 December 2005.

It is believed that more community involvement in project planning and implementation not only gives local people a sense of ownership, but also helps head off unanticipated issues such as questions of relevance, impact and appropriateness. By giving the local people the resources directly, they are able to access technical assistance, materials to build, and other help they might need to execute, complete and report on their community projects. At the same time, the donors must also adopt a more flexible, less self-interested attitude in terms of timeline and project budgets.

### **Conclusion**

In a destabilized community such as Aceh, which is reeling not only from the effects of the tsunami but years of civil war, development assistance sometimes has the potential to exacerbate existing social tensions. Among the most important potential sources of conflict within Acehese society at the moment are: social jealousy within the tsunami-affected zone, both within and between communities (over housing projects, etc); differences in economic opportunity between tsunami affected and non-tsunami-affected zones; and a dearth of programmes aimed specially at assisting the reintegration of former fighters Aceh-wide and their support communities. Donors should conduct area-specific joint conflict-vulnerability assessments to identify and prioritise potential causes of social conflict or threats to the peace agreement in Aceh, and determine not only how existing and planned reconstruction activities might be exacerbating the potential for conflict, but also how such activities can most effectively support local efforts to promote peace in Nanggroe Aceh.