

General Indonesian Fieldtrip Report

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On 4th July 2006, I left Auckland for a one-month fieldtrip to Banda Aceh, Indonesia, the worst affected area during 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami. This trip was sponsored by CARE International and my major aim as set out in the terms of reference as to assist Dr. Regan Potangaroa (structural engineering consultant to CARE) and under his direction, to investigate the present methods and processes of procurement, especially timber procurement for house construction “with a view to providing alternatives that streamline and facilitate the construction of housing numbers set by CARE (CARE June 2006) ”.

During the 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami, some 130,000 people were killed in Aceh alone and 37,000 remain missing. 3 months later, another big earthquake on March 28 2005 added 1,300 to the death toll in Nias, Simeulue and southern coastline of Aceh. On Day 14 afternoon of this fieldtrip (July 17, 2006), I was shocked to be informed that a second tsunami was triggered by a 7.7 magnitude earthquake in south of Java Island 2 hours ago, which several days later resulted in a reported death toll of more than 600, with around 150 others still missing. These consequent tragedies caused immense economic, social and environmental devastation to Aceh and surrounding areas that were already under poverty line due to the long-lasting war between GAM¹ and central government military. It is estimated in an official report (BRR April, 2006) that approximate 123,000 new houses are needed for re-establishment, relocation and resettlement² of Acehese tsunami victims, let alone accompanying tremendous reconstruction of infrastructure.

The whole world was shocked and united. The most common scene in Aceh streets today is various 4WDs with UN or NGO logos carrying their staffs or materials shuttling from different offices and construction sites, which was never seen before in this formerly isolated part of Indonesia. There are approximately 290 NGOs and donor organizations operating in Aceh and Nias in 2006 managing as many as 828 projects. This number differs markedly if compared to the one recorded in May 2005 which was 490 organizations. In order to generally coordinate and manage the reconstruction effort in an overall prospective, the Agency of the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction for Aceh and Nias (BRR) was established under the Indonesian Government Regulation No. 2/2005 on 28 April 2005, 4 months after the Tsunami. Similar roles would be taken by Ministry of Civil Defense and Emergencies Management and various city councils if in

¹ GAM: The Free Aceh Movement (Indonesian: Gerakan Aceh Merdeka or simply GAM), also known as the Aceh Sumatra National Liberation Front (ASNLF), was an armed separatist group seeking independence for the Aceh region of Sumatra from Indonesia. The Indonesian government called the group the Aceh Security Disturbance Movement.

² 3Rs: Re-establishment – housing on the original site; Relocation – housing not on the original site but close by and certainly in the same neighborhood; Resettlement – housing distant and certainly outside the original village.

New Zealand context.

It is estimated that at least US\$5.8 billion will be needed in recovery phase for Aceh and Nias. The current situation is that more than US\$4.4 billion³ has already been allocated to different projects, and people of Aceh and Nias may have a chance to build back their livelihood better with total pledges of US\$9 billion (3 billion more than least budget required). The major issue is becoming how to spend this money wisely and to most needed.

The Master Plan by Indonesian government for rehabilitation and reconstruction insists on two decisions that may initially delay the whole reconstruction process: the first one is the formation of above mentioned BRR as a coordinating body to the whole process; the second one is that communities take the lead in their own recovery. This was evidenced in the constant process of community-participation along the design to construction and overall contracting relationship between BRR, agencies and village development committee. The reconstruction in Aceh and Nias is now at the end of a critical transformation from initial response to the beginning of long-term recovery. People from remote areas such as Nias and Simeulue Islands are understandably frustrated by the chaos of formation of another agency rather than immediate reconstruction and bureaucratically slow progress (about 50,000 in barracks and 67,500 remain in tents at the beginning of this year, estimated in BRR's official one year report).

Another major problem faced by all the agencies involved in Aceh reconstruction would be the procurement of legal and sustainable timber resources. This is evidenced by the confused and sometimes conflicting information regarding Indonesian timber policies I got from different meetings and interviews within BRR and from other organisations. It generally reflects the uncertainty and inconsistency in Indonesian timber policies and failure in execution of established standard regulations, which may be understandable given the "Timber Mafia"⁴ situation and unprecedented emergency supports immediately required in board Indonesian territory. However, BRR is now preparing a standard timber procurement guideline and coordinating with relevant departments (e.g. Forestry, Police) to clean the way for timber supply. More positive changes to current problems are expected in this year as BRR been given additional powers to contract directly for housing reconstruction and set out its first priority as "to clarify its mission, build its staff and develop a set of standard operating procedures".

My major interests and activities of this fieldtrip are summarized as below: analysis of organisational structure of CARE Indonesia and information flows within the organisation; general procurement process in reconstruction; contracting relationship model and standard conditions of contracts been used; timber procurement and supply chain logistic; standard guidelines or policies regarding procurement procedures issued by BRR; quality control methods used by CARE in reconstruction; timber stress grading regime for timber procurement; possibility

³ US\$4.4 billion: The Government of Indonesia has allocated 1.1, NGOs 1.5 and official donors 1.8 billion in US dollars.

⁴ Timber Mafia: this term is used to describe a consortium of government officials, army, police, businessmen, etc. who allegedly conspire together to gain large profits from illegal logging of forest estate.

and procedure of alternative sources of timber procurement (local and international); CARE's image in local media; eye witness accounts of tsunami survivors survey and use of this result in village planning and community disaster mitigation plan. Most of these points will be covered in details in final report using materials collected during the fieldtrip. Some will be analyzed with relevant comparisons with New Zealand circumstance in the future study.

People of Aceh and Nias are suffering greatest sorrow of losing their livelihood and loved ones, one of the drivers in Aceh told me that he lost 17 members of his family during the deadly tsunami, similar stories are heard along the trip. On the other hand, people are glad to have the options to choose their own houses in the future, another friend in Aceh told me that he is grateful that he can come out at night, which was forbidden before due to the curfew issued during the war. A lot of changes are taking places on this land, "everyday is different" and people are acting positively to these changes. Although there are negative feelings about the bureaucratic progress in reconstruction, the general impression that Acehese people gave to me is that they are naturally-resilient people, somewhat conservative in religion, but friendly to foreigners coming to help and optimistic to their future. This fieldtrip is certainly rewarding and more than my expectation, things learnt and materials collected will benefit not only my future research into reconstruction procurement, but also the understanding of whole picture in disaster relief.

BRR. (April, 2006). Building a Land of Hope: One Year Report. Executing Agency of the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency for Aceh and Nias.

CARE. (June 2006). "LETTER OF AGREEMENT - CARE AUSTRALIA VOLUNTEER PERSONNEL."