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ASEAN Institute for  
Peace and Reconciliation

ASEAN-IPR RESEARCH

# The Aceh Case: Peacebuilding and Post Tsunami Recovery



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# **The Aceh Case: Peacebuilding and Post Tsunami Recovery**

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ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation

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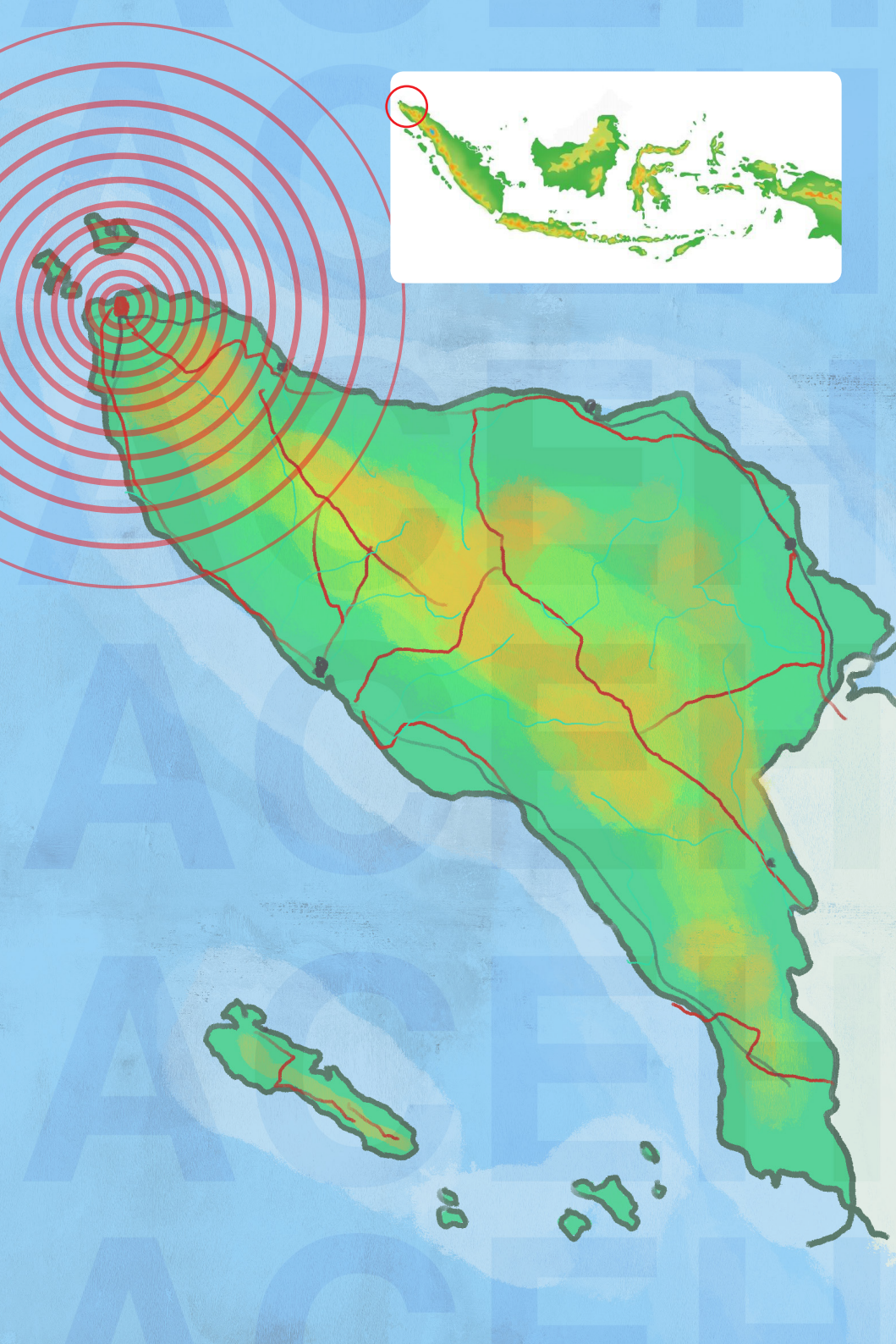
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# Foreword

*We have ended a year-long journey on the ASEAN-IPR Research on Aceh Case: Peacebuilding and Post-Tsunami Recovery. I believe it has been a valuable experience for us as the research's implementing agency and the research team in their work process and the development of the manuscript.*

*This research aims to illustrate how humanitarian assistance – in response to massive and paralyzing natural disasters – could significantly contribute to building the foundation of durable peace, as is the case in Aceh.*

*As a background, there are two main reasons why we have chosen to do this research project. The first is to present how a natural disaster could accelerate a peace process, while some cases happened to the contrary. Secondly, it was a valuable and rewarding experience to have the presence and involvement of third parties and other ASEAN member states in the reconstruction and rehabilitation process.*

*Existing and past studies mainly were conducted within a single nexus, e.g., humanitarian or peace. The triple nexus used as the framework for the research examines the interrelation between peace, humanitarian assistance, and development. Perhaps this is the main difference between this research and those performed in the past.*

*Our interaction and experience working with everyone involved in the Aceh rebuilding process -- the government of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), and all the agencies and donor countries -- are valuable lessons that we would like to share with others hopefully can pick up lessons learned from this book.*

*It is also paramount to recognize that the will of the Acehnese people – especially the roles women play in communities – became the driving force for sustainable peace in Aceh.*

*I would like to extend my appreciation to the Mission of Japan to ASEAN for making this project possible and also the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund and the able team for their valuable support.*

*I would also like to thank Dr. Kuntoro Mangkusubroto; Dr. N. Hassan Wirajuda; A special gratitude to Ambassador Umar Hadi, the Indonesian Representative to the ASEAN-IPR Governing Council for his support in concluding the Research; H.E. I. Gusti Wesaka Puja, Executive Director of the ASEAN-IPR; the Director for ASEAN Political and Security Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia. A special gratitude to Ambassador Umar Hadi, the Indonesian Representative to the ASEAN-IPR Governing Council for his support in concluding the Research.*

*A special tribute goes to the Research Team for their hard work and dedication namely, Dr. Delsy Ronnie country director Non Violent Peace Force (NP), Mr. Arfiansyah, lecturer at the State Islamic University of Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh/Researcher at the International Centre for Aceh and Indian Ocean Studies; dr. Dirna Mayasari Jacob; as well as to the Reviewer Prof. Kamarulzaman Askandar; the proof reader and editor, Mr. Victor Tjahjadi for their contribution in finalizing the manuscript.*

*Last but not least, a big thank you to the ASEAN-IPR Indonesia Team for their untiring support in overcoming the many challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic for the timely completion of this project.*

*In line with the quote “peace is a question of will” by former Aceh peace mediator and Nobel laureate Martti Ahtisaari, the tsunamis – despite its sheer power that changed Aceh forever – is the unexpected but long-awaited blessing in disguise that brought permanent peace to the region.*

*Jakarta, June 27, 2022*

### **Artauli RMP Tobing**

Indonesian Representative to the ASEAN-IPR  
Advisory Board/Implementing Agency

# Message

*Warmest congratulations upon the final publication of the ASEAN-IPR Research on Aceh Case: Peace Building and Post-Tsunami Recovery!*

*For almost five decades, Japan has been working closely with ASEAN to promote peace, stability and prosperity in the region with the strong support for ASEAN centrality. Japan supported the development of ASEAN countries, and ASEAN countries helped Japan recover from the unprecedented earthquake and tsunami disaster in 2011. Since the establishment of Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF) in 2006, Japan has supported various projects in ASEAN. In recent years, Japan promotes projects particularly in line with the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP). The Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami in 2004 caused an enormous impact on the history of humanitarian assistance, and led to shaping today's disaster relief and post-recovery process in the regional and international community. Remarkably, however, ASEAN-IPR Research on Aceh Case does not linger on how to respond to the emergency of disasters, but instead focuses on how humanitarian assistance in response to natural disasters could lead to building the foundation of sustainable peace. Aceh was one of the rare cases in the world that proved humanitarian assistance, such as health, education, economic empowerment, and institutional strengthening, have simultaneously addressed the root cause and consequences of longstanding armed conflicts. The Government of Japan is delighted to have supported this project through JAIF. I am sure that the methodology developed will deal with ongoing conflicts elsewhere on the globe.*

*Japan and ASEAN will celebrate the 50th Year of Japan-ASEAN Friendship and Cooperation next year. It will be a great opportunity for us to look into the future and to embark on the next half century of our partnership. Japan will always stand by ASEAN, and continue to promote cooperation in a wide range of fields, including in conflict resolution and peace building.*

## **Ambassador Chiba Akira**

Ambassador of Japan to ASEAN  
Mission of Japan to ASEAN



## Message

*Let me congratulate ASEAN-IPR, ASEAN-IPR Indonesia and The Research Team for the Publication of The Aceh Case : Peacebuilding and Post-Tsunami Recovery.*

*Warmest gratitude is also conveyed to the Mission of Japan to ASEAN and also the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund for their invaluable support to this research.*

*The recovery process of Aceh, after an enormous tsunami hit the province 18 years ago, received attention from scholars within Indonesia and from abroad. Not only because of the sheer scale of the damage but also the fact that the tsunami had worsened the living conditions of the people in Aceh.*

*The devastation and misery caused by natural disaster prompted the solidarity of the international community to assist Aceh's relief and recovery efforts.*

*Through the spirit of mutual cooperation, synergy and collaboration from national institutions, friendly countries, regional and international organizations, including ASEAN, the recovery efforts were quickly implemented. These collaboration have complemented the efforts made by the Government of Indonesia and its peoples.*

*The swift response of the government of Indonesia in overcoming the massive social and humanitarian impact of the post-tsunami Aceh was internationally appreciated.*

*The implementation of good governance in managing humanitarian assistance to help overcome the social–humanitarian problems of the Acehnese is also considered as a good example for the international community to manage similar cases.*

*The humanitarian action as a catalyst in the peace process in Aceh has provided vital human needs while ensuring the people to feel more secure. It also ensured access to basic needs and services as well as helped enhancing the resilience and preparedness of the people. It led to the opportunity for the conflicting parties to sit together to address more pressing issues.*

*In this regard, the research project conducted by the ASEAN – IPR indeed has its advantages. The focus of the research is not only discussing post-disaster management, but also its*

*interrelation with conflict resolution, the realization of peace in Aceh, particularly between the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka / GAM) and the Government of Indonesia, and the development in Aceh.*

*This book describes Aceh's Post Tsunami Recovery success in building trust which is manifested in the work system as indicated by the simplification of the bureaucratic system, building a transparent and accountable financial system, the involvement of actors from the political layers, and also the inseparable role of women in various peacebuilding processes.*

*I hope that the publication of this research could serve as a reference and useful resource to anticipate and address future related challenges by relevant parties and other international communities. Indonesia would further encourage ASEAN-IPR to also conduct contemporary issues or future challenges and opportunities in the research projects to come.*

**Mr. Rolliansyah Soemirat**

Director for ASEAN Political Security Cooperation (APSC)  
Directorate General for ASEAN Cooperation  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia

# Acknowledgement

*In the name of Allah the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. Praise be upon You, for guiding us and giving us constant blessings and favors. Our dear prophet Muhammad SAW, peace be upon you. You are the blessing for the entire universe.*

*The research Aceh Case: Peacebuilding and Post Tsunami Recovery is finally completed. We are humbled to be given the trust and the opportunity by ASEAN-IPR to carry out this research project. As Acehnese, we are proud that the narrative of Aceh can be shared to the world and become a lesson learned for conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and post-disaster recovery.*

*Conducting research about the linkage of peace, humanitarian response and development in Aceh and writing a book about it was not easy. We studied many literatures from a range of topics from peacebuilding to health, from emergency response to education sector recovery, from civil society to women participation in crisis. We learned a lot from the people we met and interviewed for this research. As we weaved stories, events, data, and reports, we came to better realize how much suffering the people of Aceh endured during conflict and tsunami, the sacrifices, the dedication, the hard work of all the people to make peace in Aceh a reality, and we became even more grateful for the peace and development we enjoy today.*

*We would like to express our gratitude to everyone who helped us in completing the research and the writing the book. To our family, we thank you for your continuous love and support. To our beloved children, we dedicate this book to you. You are the hope and future of the world. To our dear friends thank you for your support and encouragement, that really means a lot to us.*

*To Ibu Artauli Tobing, we are truly grateful for your guidance, advice, and support. To Bapak Rezlan Ishar Jenie, we highly appreciate your continued support to our research project. Thank you too to the entire ASEAN-IPR team for your kind assistance in supporting this research project. Our outmost gratitude to Bapak Kuntoro Mangkusubroto for your inputs and support. Your leadership and humility are exemplary. You are truly an inspiration*



*to all of us. Bapak Noer Hassan Wiradjuda, and Bapak I Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja we are grateful to have the opportunity to meet and learn from you. Thank you for your story and for shedding some light on the arduous peace process in Aceh. To Bapak Said Faisal Baabud, thank you very much for the insight you shared with us. We learned a lot from you.*

*We would like to express our gratitude to all contributors, including organizations and individuals who have assisted us in this research project; ICAIOS, Flowers Aceh, Nonviolent Peaceforce, Indri Maulidar, Mohammad Khairi, dr. Ashra Vina, Sehat Ihsan Shadiqqin, Arif Ariadi, Professor Kamarulzaman Askandar as Reviewer, Fakhruddin (Redelong Institute), and Mr. Victor Tjahjadi as Editor and Proof Reader. Finally, to everyone participating in this research, we thank you very much. Your story, knowledge and insights are truly valuable for this research.*

*June 18th, 2022  
Research Team*



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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Aceh, Indonesia's northernmost province, is a territory of complexity. Before the December 2004 tsunami, Aceh had suffered in the protracted armed conflict between the Free Aceh Movement or Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM) and the Government of Indonesia (GoI) that lasted for almost 30 years.

The violent conflict, claimed as one of the longest post-colonial insurgency in Indonesia, had caused tragic loss of lives and immeasurable human suffering. It eroded the economy, diminished the social cohesion, and destructed many of Aceh's imminent infrastructures and public services. The Porch of Mecca, as what the province is dubbed, was isolated from the outside world for years.

Aceh faced double vulnerabilities. Its position on the volatile "ring of fire" makes it highly prone to various geological hazards. Furthermore, the negative impact of the prolonged conflict had further heightened its vulnerability to the threats of natural events, amplifying the implication of crisis and emergencies.

Aceh was a war zone deprived of security and socio-economic development when the tsunami struck. The enormity of the disaster had made the province's misery seem like an eternity. The massive devastation of the tsunami had awakened the eyes of the international community about the province that had long suffered from conflict and isolation. As a result, billions of dollars of aid response came from different parts of the world, and hundreds of humanitarian organizations, volunteers, and military streamed into Aceh to help in relief and recovery.

At the same time, Aceh had been going through an arduous journey to achieve peace and the tsunami had somehow pushed through the peace process. The winding road to peace came to an end with the signing of a peace agreement between GAM and the GoI on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2005 in Helsinki, Finland – marking a new

chapter in history and a journey to sustaining the long-awaited peace.

Undoubtedly that the local communities, civil societies, and women in Aceh played a significant role and contributed substantially throughout the almost 30 years of conflict and the devastating tsunami. Their role was central in achieving and sustaining the peaceful and prosperous Aceh to the present day.

The post-tsunami humanitarian relief and recovery have indeed greatly assisted the disaster-affected communities in Aceh to recover from the crisis. However, it also raised the question whether the humanitarian aid for the tsunami affected community also benefits the community affected by conflict and how it contributes to peacebuilding? This is the main question to examine in this research.

Findings and lessons learned from post-tsunami humanitarian response and peacebuilding efforts in Aceh are beneficial to strengthen current and future policy, strategy, and program on humanitarian response and peacebuilding for ASEAN member countries and beyond.

## **1.2 Objective**

The overarching objective of the research is to understand the role of tsunami humanitarian assistance in building and sustaining peace and development in Aceh and how the humanitarian assistance concretely contributes to peace and development. The research explores strategies, activities, characteristics and entry points of the post-tsunami humanitarian assistance – from relief to rehabilitation and reconstruction – that promote the nexus of humanitarian, development, and peace, including how humanitarian and peacebuilding efforts can be better linked and integrated.

Furthermore, the study seeks to understand the role and capacity of community, including women to cope with and recover from the crisis and be able to contribute in rebuilding Aceh in peace. The research team also identified barriers and promising practices that allowed them to understand the linkage between humanitarian efforts and the required steps – positive takeaways and unfulfilled targets – to achieve sustainable peace in Aceh.



Ultimately, the findings and lesson learned from this study will be shared with the ASEAN member states and other countries facing similar humanitarian crisis. Aceh is indeed a laboratory of both disaster response and peacebuilding in Southeast Asia. Therefore, the lesson of Aceh can serve as valuable knowledge to create a more prosperous and peaceful world.

### 1.3 Research Questions and Methodology

The study was conducted to answer the main research question: What are the roles of post-tsunami humanitarian actors with their different humanitarian assistance in peacebuilding and how they concretely contribute to sustainable peace in Aceh. The additional research questions include:

- What are the strategies and activities of post-tsunami humanitarian assistance and their significance in contributing peace in Aceh?
- What are the key features and characteristics of the post-tsunami humanitarian assistance that follow the peacebuilding line and catalyst that promote sustainable peace?
- What are the attitudes and perceptions of humanitarian actors in Aceh peacebuilding process and its relation to post-tsunami relief and recovery efforts?
- How do humanitarian actors – including women activists – carry out coordination and perform better engagement in peacebuilding, and what are the required changes to integrate humanitarian, development, and peace efforts?
- What are the plausible entry points for practengagement for humanitarian actors in peacebuilding work, and how do they concretely contribute to sustainable peace in Aceh?

The standard qualitative methodology was used to answer the research questions. An intensive desk review was conducted to understand the concept of humanitarian aid, peacebuilding, sustainable peace, triple nexus, the geopolitical context of Aceh, the history of conflict and the tsunami crisis and other relevant issues to the study.

An in-depth interview and focus group discussion (FGD), both online and offline, were conducted with various humanitarian and peacebuilding actors, and community members from September 2021 to January 2022 in Aceh (Banda Aceh, Central Aceh, Bener Meriah, Meulaboh) and Jakarta. At least 70 people participated as key informants in the study who were approached using purposive and snowball approaches. These informants included Dr. Noer Hassan Wirajuda, Prof. Dr. Ir. Professor Kuntoro Mangkusubroto, M. Eng., H.E Ambassador I Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja, and Said Faisal Baabud.

## 1.4 Research Framework

The linkage between humanitarian response, from relief to reconstruction, with peacebuilding was examined within the Triple Nexus framework. Triple Nexus is a concept interlinking humanitarian, development, and peace in protracted and repeated crisis in one region, to achieve one common outcome. This concept was developed from the “linking relief, rehabilitation, and development” notion.<sup>1</sup>

The concept refers to the transition and overlapping between humanitarian assistance delivery and long-term development assistance. This overlap and the continuum assistance are expectedly leading to continuum peace. With such a working system, all humanitarian and development actors should cooperate in a multiyear timeframe regardless of the situation in the field.

In doing so, actors of humanitarian, development and peace are required to cooperate with national, regional and with local organizations to ensure sustainability and durability of development and peacebuilding program. Clearly, to ensure both sustainability and durability, triple nexus aims at evolution rather than revolution approach. This also requires merging different

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<sup>1</sup> ICVA, “Learning Stream: Navigating the Nexus Topic 1: The ‘Nexus’ Explained,” June 2019, [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/dp-humanitarian-development-peace-nexus-260619-en\\_0.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/dp-humanitarian-development-peace-nexus-260619-en_0.pdf).

established discursive, institutional, and attitudinal which have been difficult to be reconciled.<sup>2</sup>

The United Nations and the World Bank first introduced the triple nexus at the World Humanitarian Summit of global policy makers in 2016. Both organizations include peace into UN's Sustainable Development Goals and consequently into their New Way of Working (NWoW). This NWoW merges peace, which was long divided from, into humanitarian-development works.<sup>3</sup>

Adding peace as the last leg of humanitarian and development work aims at curing the underlying rather than symptom of the situation. Conflicts, in which two-thirds worldwide go beyond for years, are a leading cause of human pain and suffering.<sup>4</sup> The less conflict exists, the less humanitarian relief is needed. This goal makes sustainable peace the top priority of the UN, EU, and the World Bank in all their humanitarian and development missions in the repeated and continuous crisis areas.

## 1.5 Summary of Findings

In the unique context of Aceh, through its suffering from long-running armed conflict, chronic poverty, and the devastation of the tsunami, durable peace does indeed require tremendous, multi-faceted, and persistent efforts.

The peacebuilding in Aceh was a collective and multi-dimensional action. Humanitarian aid had significant role in building peace in Aceh. The contribution of post-tsunami

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<sup>2</sup> Jon Harald Sande Lie, "The Humanitarian-Development Nexus: Humanitarian Principles, Practice, and Pragmatics," *Journal of International Humanitarian Action* 5, no. 1 (2020): 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ralf Südhoff, Sonja Hövelmann, and Andrea Steinke, *The Triple Nexus in Practice: Challenges and Options for Multi-Mandated Organizations* (Berlin: Centre for Humanitarian Action, 2020), 8, [https://www.chaberlin.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm\\_uploads/2021/06/2020-11-12-chavocado-update-21-for-web.pdf](https://www.chaberlin.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2021/06/2020-11-12-chavocado-update-21-for-web.pdf); ICVA, "Demystifying the Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus," ICVA (blog), accessed April 1, 2022, <https://www.icvanetwork.org/elearning/demystifying-the-humanitarian-development-and-peace-nexus/>.

<sup>4</sup> Louise Redvers and Ben Parker, "Searching for the Nexus: Give Peace a Chance," *The New Humanitarian*, 2020, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2020/05/13/triple-nexus-peace-development-security-humanitarian-policy>.

humanitarian assistance to peacebuilding philosophically was through the alleviation of sufferings. This is the common ground of post-tsunami humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding.

The presence of post-tsunami humanitarian assistance such as health, education, economic empowerment and institutional strengthening have also simultaneously addressed the root cause and consequences of the longstanding armed conflict in Aceh. The strategies and activities include but not limited to the reconstruction of housing and schools, improving access and quality of healthcare, provision of skill training and small business cooperation, all of which have given people in Aceh a new hope to start their new life and to thrive.

The presence of BRR as the leading agency for rehabilitation and reconstruction had enabled a coordinated effort of humanitarian assistance and allowed for a more comprehensive support that benefited both tsunami-affected communities and conflict-affected communities – which also contributed to building peace and pushing forward positive peace messages through various rehabilitation and reconstruction projects.

Despite having no mandate in peacebuilding, BRR implemented the notable strategy of engaging former GAM members in its rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts. This initiative provided ex-rebels to participate and have better opportunity to increase their income-earning skills and for many, this was an empowering process that raised self-confidence.

This initiative is also in line with the reintegration aspect of the ex-GAM combatants as stated in the Helsinki peace agreement. The presence of BRR had supported the reintegration of ex-GAM into the society and delivered funding for vocational training opportunities for the ex-GAM combatants. Combined with an increased capacity to earn a better income, the participation, training, and education of the former rebels also minimized grievance and their risk of turning or returning to conflict.

Following the peace agreement, democratization has allowed for the increased participation of civil societies in the public sector and the government that played a crucial role in promoting peace. Institutional strengthening programs and training organized by various international and national organizations and agencies also further enhanced the capacity of the former combatants in their reintegration into society.

Through a partnership with the government, civil societies have not supported the local government's capability on wide-ranging issues but also served as a check and balance to ensure good governance -- which puts forward justice, transparency and corruption free principles – that enabled local officials to gradually improve governance capability as one of the essential bases of achieving long-term development and sustainable peace.

Humanitarian assistance for the devastated province not merely focused on recovery programs but simultaneously opened the opportunity for the Gol and GAM to reach a mutual understanding that improving access to quality education and healthcare, fair economic opportunities, social services and good governance would pave the way for a prosperous Aceh – and prosperity is a key investment to reduce conflict and attain peace.

Human capital investment through improving access to quality education has enabled many Acehnese to grow and contribute to the long-term development and peacebuilding in the province. Intellectual investment through education has improved social cohesion, increased skills and job opportunities that simultaneously also addressed inequality and personal confidence – all of which are key ingredients to sustain peace in Aceh.

The implementation and distribution of humanitarian relief programs for Aceh rooted in the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence also catalyzed peace. The same principles were also implemented in the post-tsunami rehabilitation and reconstruction and benefited not only to tsunami-affected communities but also other conflict-and-poverty-hit regions in Aceh that simultaneously addressed the gap in assistance.

Participatory approach-based relief programs that recognized the community needs in Aceh were able to optimize the capacity of and empower its people and increase the potential to succeed. These become the key features and characteristics of humanitarian assistance that promote and contribute to peacebuilding.

The positive attitude of relief workers toward peacebuilding, which acknowledges that trust is paramount in humanitarian and peace efforts – despite not having the mandate to implement peace programs – also triggered an understanding that they would have not been able to rehabilitation and reconstruction of Aceh without sustainable peace. Strong humanitarian leadership and coordination significantly contributed to the success of

humanitarian response and peacebuilding in Aceh.

Women also played a significant role in humanitarian response and peacebuilding through various means and activities. Meaningful participation ensures humanitarian response is effective and sensitive to the needs of women and other vulnerable groups of the population. Moreover, their insight, participation and actual actions are valuable assets in humanitarian response and peacebuilding.

There are several entry points for the practical engagement of humanitarian actors in peacebuilding. The main entry point for this effort was coordination and collaboration and, more importantly, close engagement with the community to build trust and confidence. The complexity of humanitarian issues in Aceh requires comprehensive implementation. Coordination and collaboration allowed this to happen despite the various mandates, expertise, and objectives of organizations working across the region. Additionally, humanitarian actors enhanced the people's capacity and social cohesion by improving community engagement and participation, thus creating peace and resilience.



## CHAPTER II

# WAR AND PEACE

The Aceh conflict, arguably one of Indonesia's longest post-colonial dissensions, has left unforgettable historical footprints for the predominantly Muslim province and for the country itself, with thousands of losses of life, suffering and

Indeed, Aceh's 30-year journey from war to peace was a lengthy and uphill battle. This chapter portrays the story of the protracted armed conflict in Aceh and the arduous road to peace, providing an understanding to the context of the research.

### 2.1 The History of War

The roots of insurgency in Aceh started in September 1953 when Darul Islam (DI), a movement led by prominent religious leader (ulama) Teungku M. Daud Beureuh to establish an Islamic State in Aceh, gained traction among the Acehnese. The main impetus of the movement was a controversial policy of President Sukarno to merge Aceh into the province of North Sumatra. The four-year armed conflict between DI and the Government of Indonesia (GoI) ended in April 1957 when both parties signed a peace agreement that paved the imposition of a special province status – that allowed Aceh to have broader autonomy for religion, education and customary laws – in May 1959 under the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia. However, this special province status was never fully and properly implemented during the last few turbulent years of Sukarno's administration and particularly during the 32-year of ruling by his predecessor President Suharto.

In 1976, Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM), or the Free Aceh Movement, proclaimed a separatist movement. Led by Muhammad Hasan di Tiro, this insurgency emerged in place of contested centralistic governance, economic and politico-cultural grievances, but foremost among these were economic grievance.



The dredging of natural resources in Aceh -- mainly the exploration of liquefied natural gas (LNG) in the Lhokseumawe area of North Aceh -- was, in fact, one of the reasons for the conflict.

In 1974, Aceh had contributed one-third of Indonesia's national revenue. In the 1980s, Aceh contributed between 2-3 billion USD annually. In 1990s, Aceh contributed around 30percent of export revenue through oil and gas while Indonesia contributed about 40percent of LNG in the world.<sup>5</sup>

The ongoing exploitation of natural resources under Suharto's regime had minimal economic benefits for the province, and many Acehnese lived impoverished. In addition, corruption, gambling, prostitution, and other social behaviors that contradicted Aceh tradition and Islam were brought mainly by employees of LNG that became the concerns of local religious elites.<sup>6</sup>

Hasan Tiro was fully aware of this precarious situation and took advantage of political discontent and transformed it into a political movement. Tiro instilled the pride of Aceh through a campaign that Aceh politically deserved the right to self-determination. He also reminded the Acehnese people of its historical glory as an independent state, internationally known as an Islamic Sultanate, before the Dutch colonial war in 1873.

As the insurgency in Aceh escalated, in 1978-1979, the Gol launched the Operasi Nenggala military campaign that successfully captured many GAM leaders, except Hasan Tiro, who fled the country with some of his followers and established a government in exile in Sweden that successfully recruited many supporters in Aceh.

With increasing followers and power, GAM leadership received support from Libya and in 1986 managed to send about 1,000 of its members for military training there. The training in Libya enabled GAM to be much more organized and well trained, therefore posing an even more significant threat to Indonesia.

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<sup>5</sup> Tim Kell, *The Root of Acehnese Rebellion* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1995), 13–28.

<sup>6</sup> Michael L Ross, "Resources and Rebellion in Aceh, Indonesia," in *Understanding Civil War: Evidence and Analysis*, ed. Paul Collier and Nicholas Sambanis (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2005), 44; Kirstene Schulze, "Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency: Strategy and the Aceh Conflict, October 1976-May 2004," in *Verandah of Violence: The Background to the Aceh Problem*, ed. A. J. S. historicus zuid-oost Azie Reid (Singapore: Singapore University Press in association with University of Washington Press, Seattle, 2006), 257.

The return of the Libyan-trained fighters to Aceh increased GAM's fighting capability in the late 1980s, which subsequently led to the declaration of Aceh as a military operations area in 1989. In July 1990, the government launched eight-year repressive measures against GAM by deploying a significant number of troops through Operasi Jaring Merah, ending in August 1998.

Between 1998 and 1999, a myriad of political and economic upheaval in Indonesia that stemmed from the 1997 Asian financial crisis, culminated by President Suharto's resignation in May 1998, had given GAM the advantage to consolidate its power through more considerable support from the Acehnese people and expand its military operations almost across the province.

By then, GAM had seized about 70 percent of control of the province's countryside. To respond to the increasing insurgency and deteriorating security situation, additional armed forces were deployed to Aceh.

In 1999, the first ever peace dialogue between the GoI and GAM commenced. Initiated by President Abdurrahman Wahid or popularly known as Gus Dur and facilitated by the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HDC), a Swiss-based private diplomacy organization, the dialogue resulted in two agreement interludes: the Humanitarian Pause in 2000 and the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement CoHA in 2002.

However, CoHA only lasted for a year after Indonesia and GAM failed to reach an agreement during a meeting in Tokyo in May 2003 to discuss ways to salvage the fragile peace in Aceh. Before the Tokyo meeting, Jakarta already had prepared to deploy a sizeable number of troops to end the continuing armed skirmishes with GAM permanently.

The cease-fire breakdown had driven the imposition of a state of military emergency (martial law) in Aceh by President Megawati Sukarnoputri which extended the military operations for another six months.

The deployment of thousands of additional troops under the martial law practically sealed off Aceh from international media and humanitarian organizations from operating on the ground. Under this military operation, GAM was severely disabled. Moreover, they lost their power as their commanders were killed and captured. Nevertheless, the insurgency persisted until the tsunami struck the province in December 2004.

## 2.2 The Impact of Conflict

Throughout the 30 years of conflict, an estimated 15,000 people have lost their lives, the majority of whom were civilians<sup>7</sup>. History also recorded serious human rights violations during the armed conflict in Aceh. A survey conducted in several districts in Aceh in the year 2008 revealed that 39percent of all communities in Aceh considered themselves as the victims of conflict.<sup>8</sup>

Conflict related mental and physical health condition and/or household breakdown was frequently mentioned in the survey. The conflict had left a traumatic experience to many of the Acehnese. According to the Aceh Provincial Health Office data, 80 percent of all mental health and psychological disorder cases in Aceh are due to conflict-related trauma.<sup>9</sup> They experienced serious violence during the lengthy conflict or witnessed the tortures and killings before their eyes. Until now, some Acehnese are still living with the trauma of conflict.

In rural areas in particular, health services were hampered due to security constraint, lack of access and poor infrastructure because of conflict. Government buildings and hundreds of houses were torched. Half of the province's rural infrastructure were damaged.<sup>10</sup>

The education sector was also severely affected by the conflict. Between 1992 and 2002, data from the Aceh Education Department showed that approximately 1,158 burned down schools had prevented Acehnese children who lived in rural-and-conflict-hit areas from attending school and studying free of fear.<sup>11</sup> Aceh was already poor before the conflict because of the uneven

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<sup>7</sup> Edward Aspinall, "Aceh/Indonesia Conflict Analysis and Options for Systemic Conflict Transformation" (Berlin: Berghof Foundation for Peace Support, August 2005).

<sup>8</sup> Cameron Noble et al., Multi-Stakeholder Review of Post-Conflict Programming in Aceh: Identifying the Foundations for Sustainable Peace and Development in Aceh (Banda Aceh) :MSR: Banda Aceh :MSR, 2009), 20.

<sup>9</sup> Detiknews, "80 Persen Orang Gila di Aceh Akibat Trauma Konflik," detiknews, November 2004, <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-235688/80-persen-orang-gila-di-aceh-akibat-trauma-konflik>.

<sup>10</sup> Patrick Barron, Erman Rahmant, and Kharisma Nugroho, The Contested Corners of Asia; Subnational Conflict and International Development Assistance (Jakarta: The Asia Foundation, 2013).

<sup>11</sup> Detiknews, 611 Sekolah yang Dibakar di Aceh Segera Dibangun," <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-162903/611-sekolah-yang-dibakar-di-aceh-segera-dibangun>

development in Indonesia. The lengthy battle aggravated the existing structural poverty and eroded Aceh's economy. Aceh had been the only province with increased poverty rate after the year 2000, as the conflict entered its most ruthless stage, making it one of Indonesia's poorest provinces.

The other consequence of the Aceh conflict was human displacement, which saw thousands of people lose their homes or be forced to move within the province. Many had fled the violence in Aceh, mainly for Medan and other cities in the neighboring North Sumatera province.

This forced displacement had disrupted people's livelihoods and deprived access to economic opportunities. In addition, the financial implication of the conflict was tremendous. Throughout the 30-year of confrontations, the estimated cost of conflict in Aceh exceeded Rp 107.4 trillion or US\$ 10.7 billion.<sup>12</sup>

### 2.3 The Long and Winding Road to Peace

*“Pat ujeun nyan han pirang, pat prang nyang hana  
reuda”*

*“There is no rain that does not stop, there is no war  
that does not end”*

*Hadist Maja (An Acehnese proverbs)*

The hadist maja illustrates the great expectation of Aceh people to peace. But the journey from war to peace in Aceh was long and arduous. Lasting for almost six years from 1998 to 2005, the difficult path to peace reflects the changes in Indonesia's politics and transformation of GAM from a rebel group to a political party. Eventually, a sustainable peace was what was longed for in Aceh.

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<sup>12</sup> Noble et al., Multi-Stakeholder Review of Post-Conflict Programming in Aceh, 17.

The succession of Suharto by B.J Habibie as the country's third president brought the spirits of reform and democracy that preceded the path to Aceh's conflict resolution. Under his presidency, the military ceased operations and gradually pulled its non-organic personnel out of Aceh. Habibie's one-and-a-half-year administration also allowed the release of 39 GAM political prisoners.<sup>13</sup>

Habibie promised to grant the special status for Aceh in accordance with Act 4/1999 concerning the Special Status of Aceh. This law legalized Aceh as an ethnic entity with the privilege of managing its internal affairs, which included all sectors except foreign affairs, defense, monetary, fiscal, security and judicial affairs. Habibie also showed his willingness to re-establish a good relationship between Aceh and the central government.

Habibie's successor and well-known humanitarian and pro-democracy figure, Abdurrahman Wahid, who was in office from 1999 to 2001, continued to carry out the reform agenda for Aceh. Interviewed for this book, former Indonesian foreign affairs minister and chief negotiator of the GAM conflict resolution from 1999 to 2001, Dr. Hassan Wirayuda, said that Wahid deserved the most credit and significant commendation for his efforts to end the Aceh conflict through peaceful negotiations.

To resolve the conflict in Aceh permanently, Wahid offered two solutions: first, establishing autonomy for Aceh previously discussed during Habibie's presidency, and second an open dialogue with GAM. In early 2000, Wahid had sought assistance from HDC to mediate the negotiation process with GAM. HDC had approached the Indonesian government since 1999 after their mission in East Timor ended. Wahid also preferred to work with Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) rather than international state actors as a facilitator to avoid the impression that Indonesia was trying to internationalize Aceh conflict.

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<sup>13</sup> Daniel Pascoe, "Legal Dilemmas in Releasing Indonesia's Political Prisoners," *Indonesia Law Review* 7, no. 3 (2017): 315–40; Ahmad Naufal Dzulfaroh, "Kiprah Habibie Untuk HAM, Pembebasan Tapol Dan Pencabutan DOM Di Aceh," December 9, 2019, <https://www.kompas.com/tren/read/2019/09/12/161504365/kiprah-habibie-untuk-ham-pembebasan-tapol-dan-pencabutan-dom-di-aceh?page=all>.

At the same time, with recommendation from the central parliament, Wahid also offered the special autonomy option including the implementation of Islamic (Syari'ah) Law for Aceh. The government believed that the implementation of this law would be one of effective measures for resolving conflict in Aceh, knowing that the majority of Acehnese are Muslims. Wahid then further showed his political will by releasing more GAM political prisoners o

The first peace talks between Gol and GAM in Bavois, Swiss, in January 2000 gave birth to the Joint Understanding on Humanitarian Pause for Aceh. This agreement intended to open humanitarian access to the war-affected parts of Aceh and start the trust-building process between GAM and Indonesia. However, the Humanitarian Pause fell apart in 2001 and security in Aceh worsened following a series of attacks against ExxonMobil's LNG facilities in North Aceh, allegedly carried out by GAM. Consequently, the Gol declared its withdrawal from the Humanitarian Pause. The government launched a major security operation in Aceh in April 2001, and additional military personnel were deployed to Aceh to counteract GAM's insurgency.

After President Wahid's downfall in July 2001, his successor Megawati Sukarnoputri continued the peace efforts by signing the special autonomy deal for Aceh. However, this deal was rejected by GAM out of hand, asserting that the special autonomy deal was not the aim of their independence struggle.

The dialogues between GAM and Jakarta gained momentum and in May 2002, both parties agreed to use autonomy as the starting point for negotiation. To support the ongoing negotiation, the Japanese government hosted the Preparatory Conference on Peace and Reconstruction in Aceh on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2002 in Tokyo. In December 2002, after receiving input from international actors such as Japan, the European Union (EU), and the United States, both Gol and GAM were ready to sign a cessation of hostilities as the first step to creating a peaceful atmosphere before both parties entered the political process.<sup>14</sup> On 9th December 2002,

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<sup>14</sup> DC, "Aceh Initiative: Internal Review" (Geneve: Centre for Humanitarian dialog, 2003), [http://www.hdcentre.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Our\\_work/Peacemaking/Aceh\\_Indonesia/Supporting\\_documents/Aceh-internal-review-HD-Centre.pdf](http://www.hdcentre.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Our_work/Peacemaking/Aceh_Indonesia/Supporting_documents/Aceh-internal-review-HD-Centre.pdf).

the Indonesian government and GAM finally signed the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) in Geneva. The main objective of CoHA was to create an atmosphere conducive to the peace process.

In general, CoHA focused on four sectors <sup>15</sup>:

1. Security, including cessation of hostilities and armed fire, identification of demilitarization zone, demilitarization, relocation of the Indonesian Military Forces or Tentara Nasional Indonesia (TNI), disarmament of GAM, and reformulation of the Special Police Force (Mobile Brigade) to regular policemen.
2. Humanitarian assistance for the displaced population of conflict
3. Reconstruction, including rehabilitation and reconstruction of infrastructures and buildings that had been destroyed by the armed conflict.
4. Civil Reform, which included managing the dialogue or all-inclusive dialogue to strengthen the democratization process in Aceh.

Following CoHA, the Joint Security Committee (JSC) was established, staffed by non-active Thai and Filipino military and specialists to facilitate the all-inclusive dialogue (AID). The CoHA gained success initially as it helped reduce violence in Aceh and created several areas assigned as peace zones. However, GAM often used the inaugurations of peace zones to organize rallies for Aceh's independence. GAM failed to consider the CoHA as an opportunity to negotiate on its core demands and fostered trust, instead it used the agreement to advance its political struggle. This tactic obviously angered Jakarta. The deal started to crumble and violations of the CoHA by both parties intensified.

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<sup>15</sup> Cessation of Hostilities Framework Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement," December 9, 2002, [https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/ID\\_021209\\_CessationofHostilitiesFrameworkGovofIndonesiaandFreeAcehMovement.pdf](https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/ID_021209_CessationofHostilitiesFrameworkGovofIndonesiaandFreeAcehMovement.pdf).

The efforts to maintain peace in Aceh stalled after both parties failed to come to terms. On May 18, 2003 a the peace conference in Tokyo, the CoHA was eventually disbanded, leading to the imposition of martial law status in Aceh. Approximately 35,000 military personnel were deployed to Aceh to suppress GAM's forces and entirely demolish the insurgent. After that, however, the war resumed and peace seemed unreachable.

The massive military operation had killed approximately 2,000 GAM fighters, including its high rank commanders, and the arrest and voluntary surrender of some 3,400 personnel. GAM admitted that in the military aggression, it had lost more than 50 percent of its forces. In an increasingly weakened position, GAM leadership realized it had to return to the negotiation table. Likewise, senior Indonesian officials, both civilian and military, believed that in the end, a sole military approach would not ultimately work to end the conflict.

Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who then served as the coordinating minister of political and security affairs in Megawati's cabinet, was among a few people in the government who favoured the peace talk. During an interview in early 2022, I Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja, a senior Indonesian diplomat and representative of Indonesia to series of Aceh peace negotiation and dialogues, stated that President Yudhoyono had been the engineer of the "integrated approach" in Aceh's conflict resolution, which combined military operation and peace dialogue and policy.

In September 2004, Yudhoyono won the presidential election by defeating Megawati. As a result, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Jusuf Kalla became Indonesia's first directly-elected president and vice-president. This change of leadership significantly strengthened the peace efforts through dialogue. Both Yudhoyono and Kalla firmly committed to implementing peace talks to end the conflict.

Amid GAM's declining military power, opportunities to resume the peace talks continued being explored, including through back-channel negotiation effort by vice president Kalla, who had assigned his confidant, dr. Farid Hussein and held informal discussions – including Hussein's effort to approach some of the relatives of the rebel leaders to gain their trust -- with GAM representatives in Aceh, Malaysia, Singapore and Sweden.

Both Indonesia and GAM later agreed to be mediated by the



Finland-based Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), led by former Finnish president Martti Ahtisaari. The involvement of Ahtisaari came at the recommendation of Juha Christensen, a Finnish philanthropist who had assisted Farid Hussein in Sweden. GAM and the Gol eventually agreed to meet in late December 2004, just three days before the Indian Ocean Tsunami struck.

The devastating tsunami following the 9.1 magnitude earthquake had generated an inconceivable catastrophe, that claimed more than 160,000 lives in Aceh alone and destroyed much of the province's infrastructure. President Yudhoyono declared the tsunami a national disaster and immediately opened access to the province for foreign humanitarian assistance. As a result, hundreds of international NGOs, relief agencies, and thousands of volunteers from all corners of the world streamed into Aceh. The tsunami had also provoked international interest in resolving the long-standing conflict in Aceh through peaceful means.

Already hindered by martial law and further devastated by the tsunami, GAM realized that its ambition for Aceh's independence had become more challenging. On 12th January 2005, the rebel group declared a unilateral cease-fire. Despite GAM's decision to lay down their arms, the sheer destruction of the tsunami had affected both GAM and Gol to resume peace negotiations.

Both sides realized that the peace agreement would help facilitate the stream of foreign aid, which was vital to rebuilding Aceh. Similarly, the Gol and GAM committed to stopping the fighting and allowing humanitarian assistance to access the population affected by the disaster.

Immediately after GAM declared the unilateral cease fire, President Yudhoyono dispatched a negotiation team to Finland to meet with CMI mediators and GAM leaders. The delegation consisted of Hamid Awaluddin, the Minister of Law and Human Rights, Sofyan A. Djailil, the Minister of Information, Farid Husain, Usman Basyah and I Gusti Wesaka Pudja. GAM negotiating team comprised of Malik Mahmud, Zaini Abdullah, M Nur Djuli, Nurdin Abdul Rahman and Bachtiar Abdullah.

Both sides finally came to terms and signed the Helsinki agreement on 15th August 2005 after almost six months and five negotiations that started on 27th January 2005. The peace agreement became a statement of commitment from both parties to a peaceful, comprehensive, sustainable and dignified settlement

of Aceh conflict.. It also detailed terms agreed by both sides and the principles that will guide the transformation process in Aceh. The agreement consists of the following parts:

1. The governing of Aceh, including political participation, economy, and the rule of law
2. Human rights
3. Amnesty and reintegration of former GAM members into the society
4. Security Arrangement
5. The establishment of the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) to monitor the implementation of the peace agreement
6. Dispute Resolution

The signing of Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) historically marked the end of the 30-year violent conflict, concluding the long and winding road in the pursuit of peace in Aceh.

## **2.4 The Role of the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) in Peacekeeping**

The AMM is an unarmed peace mission, deployed by the European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), to oversee the peace process and to assist GAM and the GoI with the implementation of the MoU and to contribute to a peaceful, comprehensive, and sustainable solution to the conflict. The Helsinki MoU included provisions to disarm and reintegrate rebel forces and transfer considerable power from the national level to Aceh. After the accord's signing, some 25,000 Indonesian military and police personnel gradually being redeployed out of Aceh along with the reintegration of some 3,000 ex-GAM combatants into the society.

The AMM commenced work in September 2005, after the peace deal was signed. Headed by Dutch diplomat Pieter Feith, the AMM reported to the European Council and was under the monitoring of the EU, Norway, and Switzerland, as well as five ASEAN countries – Thailand, Malaysia, Brunei, and the Philippines, and Singapore.

The specific tasks of the AMM are as follows:

1. Monitor the demobilization of GAM and the decommissioning of its weapons.
2. Monitor the redeployment of 'non-organic' Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI) and police.
3. Monitor the reintegration of GAM, the human rights situation, and legislative change.
4. Rule on disputed amnesty cases.
5. Investigate violations of the MoU.

- **Decommissioning.**

The AMM received, accepted, and destroyed more than 800 rebel weapons during the three phases of decommissioning in Banda Aceh. This task, however, almost collapsed with the sudden replacement of the GAM's representative on the decommissioning team, who declared that the rebels held no more weapons, despite a different observation by the EU monitoring team. Nevertheless, all parties agreed to a solution to the matter through discussions and negotiation. The AMM personnel then cut guns into three pieces at an assigned area, allowing GAM to keep one part of the weapon and transfer the other two to the AMM and Indonesia's military.

- **Redeployment.**

The four rounds of Indonesian forces redeployment took place from September to December 2005. By the end of the redeployment, more than 31,000 military and security forces had been withdrawn from Aceh. While the process went smoothly, the AMM noted two issues at the beginning of the process. The first was the continuing aggressive patrolling, allegations of harassments, violence, and extortion by security forces. The second was repeated reports about intimidation by ex-GAM members by TNI intelligence unit.



Both issues could have undermined the process. However, the problems were resolved after the AMM brought them to the attention of Major General Bambang Darmono, who at the time was in charge of military operations in Aceh. The AMM then monitored the remaining troops in different districts in Aceh and concluded that the Indonesian government had fully complied with the MoU.<sup>16</sup>

- **Reintegration.**

Following the decommissioning, the challenge of reintegrating former GAM combatants became a key priority. As a result, the Aceh Reintegration Board, or Badan Reintegrasi Aceh (BRA) – set up in February 2006 as a joint body between the provincial government and international agencies – received the mandate to determine which former GAM personnel were deemed qualified to receive funds to start a new life and rejoin the society.

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<sup>16</sup> Kirsten E. Schulze, *Mission Not so Impossible: The Aceh Monitoring Mission and Lessons Learned for the EU*, International Policy Analysis, 2007, 7.

- **Amnesty.**

To build GAM's confidence in the peace process, the amnesty had to be implemented early and quickly. One of the AMM's key function was to monitor the releases of more than 1,700 GAM prisoners. The first round of releases occurred only two days after the MoU.

- **Political Transition.**

While security issues were tackled efficiently, the political issues were resolved at a much slower pace. According to the MoU, the Law on Governing of Aceh (LoGA) was designed on the principle that it would exercise authority within all sectors of local public affairs. Pressured by the AMM, the Indonesian parliamentary, which missed its initial 31st March 2006 deadline, eventually endorsed the new legislation, which comprises 40 chapters and 278 articles, in July 2006.

On the national and international fronts, human rights organizations pointed out that the LoGA, particularly articles on the provision of Syari'ah Law, contradicted international conventions ratified recently by Indonesia on minority rights, religious freedom, freedom of expression, and gender equality.

The LoGA is also deemed to contravene the MoU's stipulation that "the legislature of Aceh will redraft the legal code for Aceh based on the universal principles of human rights provided for in the United Nations Covenants on Civil and Political Rights, and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights."

At the end of its mission, two other notable milestones stipulated by the Helsinki agreement that the AMM failed to deliver are the Human Rights Court and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The AMM argued that both were sensitive issues, and had they pushed further, it would have jeopardized its overall mission.

Five months after the issuance of LoGA, some 2.6 million Acehese became eligible to vote in the province's first direct local election for governor, deputy governor and 19 regents and mayors on 11th December 2006. The election became a historical mark that the peacebuilding in Aceh seemed to be inevitable.

The overall success of the AMM – despite a few shortcomings – saw Aceh’s transformation from a war-torn province into a democratic region in Indonesia. The unbiased judgment and confidence of the AMM that had inspired both GAM and the Gol to commit to decommissioning and reintegration process. AMM concluded its mission in Aceh on 31st December 2006.



## CHAPTER III

# THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT WAVE

The powerful earthquake registered at a magnitude 9.1 on the Richter scale, with an epicenter approximately 160 km off the west coast of Sumatera Island on 26th December 2004, had triggered the Indian Ocean tsunami that hit the coasts of several countries in South Asia and Southeast Asia.

Due to its proximity to the epicenter, Aceh suffered the most severe casualties. The disaster killed at least 227,000 people in all effected countries (WHO, 2022) and destroyed thousands of houses, farmland, fishing grounds as well as important public infrastructures. The tsunami has shaped the history of Aceh and become a legacy of a resilient society. This chapter uncovers stories of the tsunami and its devastating impact, the emergency relief and recovery efforts, including the role of community throughout all stages of the response.

Important success stories from the post-tsunami response, from emergency to rehabilitation and reconstruction, are also revealed in this chapter. Furthermore, this chapter also describes the characteristics of humanitarian aids, the strategies, the activities, and the entry points of humanitarian assistance that contribute to peacebuilding.

### **3.1 When the Waves Recedes and the Sea Begins to Drain**

The morning of 26<sup>th</sup> December 2004 started out like any other Sunday for Nur Asiah. The mother of two was up early washing clothes outside her parents-in-law's house in Meulaboh, a coastal town in the district of Aceh Jaya. Her weekend routine was abruptly interrupted when the earthquake occurred. Asiah recalled that the



ground shook for at least 10 minutes. She rushed back inside the house to secure her eight-month-old son. Once she was outside again, she remembered seeing a man running through the village screaming “air laut naik” to alarm residents of the rising sea water. Before the fateful day, many of the villagers had never heard the word “tsunami,” let alone experiencing it.

Along with the villagers, Asiah fled to the forest and made it to the top of a hill with her son on her back and her five-year-old daughter and mother-in-law by her side. They arrived just in time to see the giant waves swept away their village. For the following three months, Aisah and her family lived in a makeshift emergency camp on the hill before returning to the village where their home once stood, ready to rebuild their lives.

The 9.1 magnitude earthquake on that Sunday morning, followed by the 30-foot tall tsunami, became a disaster that devastated ten countries. The United Nations called the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami and Earthquake as one of the largest humanitarian disasters ever occurred. It is arguably one of the greatest and deadliest natural disasters ever recorded in modern history. In Aceh alone, 160,000 people died and many lost their homes and properties. The event horrified the world, but in unison also brought global solidarity for Aceh.

The tsunami that came about 20 minutes after the earthquake had devastated many of the coastal towns in Aceh. The quake occurred along a mega thrust fault line between the Indian tectonic plate and the Australian plate, 31 miles beneath the Indian Ocean.

Banda Aceh, the province’s capital and biggest city with a population of 240,000 people, were heavily impacted. Eyewitness described that when the sea receded, the seabed was exposed; prompting locals to collect stranded fish and explore the area. Consequently, they did not have time to escape when the tsunami hit.

At least three large waves were observed. The first appeared as a big flood rising slowly to the city. It was followed by two massive waves that travelled inland into the capital city as a large turbulent bore. Some Acehnese described it as a “the black giant”, “the mountain”, and “the wall of water”. Many footages from the time revealed torrents of black water as high as coconut trees, or approximately 30-meters tall, filled with debris, branches, and cars. The tips of the waves were visible as far as 15 kilometers

from the shore. It was how they pictured the judgment day looked like, as many Acehnese recalled.

It is estimated that 20percent of sea grass beds, 30percent of coral reefs, 35percent of wetlands, and 50percent of sandy beaches of the west coast, were damaged<sup>17</sup>. The most serious threat to coastal waters was due to the tsunami debris that was dragged into the ocean by the receding waters of the tsunami. Other impact was the loss of coastal lines.

In Banda Aceh, 85percent of all type of infrastructures were damaged<sup>18</sup>. Air access to Banda Aceh was the first to be rebuild so that aid and emergency workers can be easily transported. Roads were next. Around 1,3 million of Acehnese lived in emergency camps for months after the disaster. Children went to emergency schools built from tarps, taught by aid workers as many teachers in Aceh had either died or gone missing.

Several reports showed that one-third of the victims were children, the most vulnerable group to flee the giant waves<sup>19</sup>. In addition, the number of women casualties quadrupled to that of men in some regions because many died waiting for their husbands to return from the sea or looking after their children and family members when the waves hit<sup>20</sup>. Many of those who survived suffered psychological trauma. Most Acehnese are devoted Muslims who believe that the deceased must receive proper Islamic burials by their family and relatives. Nevertheless, many remain unrecovered.

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<sup>17</sup> GCRMN, Status Terumbu Karang di Negara-Negara Yang Terkena Tsunami 2005 (Queenland: Australian Institute of Marine Science, 2006).

<sup>18</sup> antaranews.com, "10 Tahun Di Mata Korban Tsunami," Antara News, December 26, 2014, <https://www.antaranews.com/berita/470948/10-tahun-di-mata-korban-tsunami>.

<sup>19</sup> Seth Mydans, "Toll in Undersea Earthquake Passes 25,000; A Third of the Dead Are Said to Be Children," The New York Times, December 28, 2004, sec. Health, <https://www.nytimes.com/2004/12/28/world/asia/toll-in-undersea-earthquake-passes-25000-a-third-of-the-dead-are.html>.

<sup>20</sup> Rhona MacDonald, "How Women Were Affected by the Tsunami: A Perspective from Oxfam," PLoS Medicine 2, no. 6 (2005): e178–e178.

The tragedy also reduced the population of Aceh by nearly 10 percent. Over 160,000 people were dead or declared dead following months of missing notice<sup>21</sup>. Over 500,000 people were displaced and thousands of them became permanently disabled to this day from the time they were running or wrestling in the black waves<sup>22</sup>. Around 139,000 houses were damaged, more than 2,600 km of roads destroyed, and thousands of schools crumbled down<sup>23</sup>. Around 750,000 lost their jobs or were not able to work due to the disaster. More than 73,000 hectares of farmland were destroyed, and 13,000 fishing boats were lost. The early estimate of the total loss was US\$ 4.9 billion<sup>24</sup>. Dozens of emergency field hospitals were built either by makeshift tents or by hauling hospital ships to the area. A famous 12,600 tons of a power plant ship stranded five kilometers inside the city is now a landmark of the devastating power of the tsunami waves.

On 27th of December 2004, the first flight from Jakarta carrying Vice President Jusuf Kalla and his entourage landed in Aceh to witness the devastation. "On the plane, we chat and laughed occasionally," one of the advisors said, adding that "It was clear that the real situation in Aceh was unknown to us". Upon landing, the realization hit them hard. The province's Sultan Iskandar Muda airport in Aceh Besar was packed with displaced people living in makeshift shelters. They were in distressed, hungry, and had nothing but their clothes. The ground crew briefed them then that Aceh's entire transportation hub was destroyed. With ports and highways gone, the only connection to the outside world was the Sultan Iskandar Muda airport. Prior to the tsunami, the airport catered only six flights per day and afterwards it had to maintain up to 128 flights per day. Those flights transported crucial aid,

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<sup>21</sup> Annemarie Samuels, *After the Tsunami: Disaster Narratives and the Remaking of Everyday Life in Aceh* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2019).

<sup>22</sup> Christopher S. Meisl et al., "Housing Reconstruction in Northern Sumatra after the December 2004 Great Sumatra Earthquake and Tsunami," *Earthquake Spectra* 22, no. 3 (2006): 777–802.

<sup>23</sup> Professor Kuntoro Mangkusubroto, "Analisis Dinamika Kolaborasi Antara Badan Rehabilitasi Dan Rekonstruksi Aceh Dan Nias (BRR) Dengan Lembaga Donor Pasca Tsunami 2004 Menggunakan Drama Theory," *Jurnal Manajemen Teknologi* 10, no. 1 (2011): 42–63.

<sup>24</sup> BRR, "Aceh and Nias Two Years After the Tsunami 2006: Progress Report" (Banda Aceh: BRR & Partners, 2006).

logistics, volunteers, and relief workers from all over the world in the early weeks of relief missions.

In the days following the tsunami, relief workers spent significant efforts on the collection of decayed bodies and the preparation of mass burials due to concerns of spreading disease. . Food and clean water also became the main concerns of humanitarian and government agencies along with sanitation facilities in emergency shelters. The potential spread of malaria, cholera, dysentery, and typhoid also became critical health concerns due to the tropical climate in Aceh.

As many as 300 humanitarian organizations and 60 countries mobilized over \$7 billion in relief for Aceh<sup>25</sup>. It was the one of the largest humanitarian measures ever taken in modern times. Foreign military personnel from 16 different countries arrived in Aceh to take part in the emergency relief activities. The involvement of foreign military assets in the tsunami response had become the greatest military operation other than war (MOOTW) in the world. The stream of aid came in varied forms from all corners of the world.

The vast scale of destruction and the complexity of the geopolitical situation of Aceh that suffered from the prolonged conflict at the time of the tsunami presented a unique challenge in the response. Aceh has indeed provided an immense lesson the world has ever learned about disaster response and humanitarianism in complexity.

## 3.2 The Power and Wisdom of the Community

The story about the great wave is one of resilience; it speaks about the community that withstood hardship and sufferings, yet they continued to thrive. It is a real-life tale of the capacity of an often-overlooked community that had endured tremendous hardship and is able to pass it down as local wisdom that could save the lives of generations to come in Aceh.

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<sup>25</sup> Bill Canny, "A Review of NGO Coordination in Aceh Post Earthquake/Tsunami Aceh" (Switzerland: International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), April 8, 2005).

For the Acehnese, tsunami is yet another test from God. Before the tsunami, they had endured the affliction of the prolonged military conflict that caused them to live in fear and immeasurable sufferings. As a religious society, people of Aceh are closely attached to the teaching of Islam in the daily life. This, in fact, is an internal asset that helps the people cope and recover from the crisis. Ritual of “Tahlilan 100 Hari” or “100th day Remembrance” is a religious ritual conducted to send prayer to the soul of loved ones who died. In Kampung Baro-Peukan Bada Subdistrict of Aceh Besar, a village that was severely demolished by the tsunami, community members came to pray together for the passing souls. Beyond a mere ritual, it provided a sense of relief and acceptance that is important for personal and social recovery. In addition, the ritual served to strengthen the connection among the community as they share similar grief and suffering. The community attended this event to support each other and to discuss on how to rebuild their life and their village after the tsunami. “Everything is destined by God; we have no power over to say otherwise” is an interpretation of a relevant Acehnese proverb *Langkah* (step/future), *raseuki* (fortune), *peu tumon* (mate), *maot* (death), *hana kuasa geutanyoe* (we do not possess power over them) *hamba* that perfectly encapsulated how Acehnese dealt with the disaster with resilience and optimism. There was a time to grieve on what was lost, but it is now the time to heal, then step forward to the better future.

The power of community and the local wisdom are crucial at any stage of disaster response. It also plays an important role even before the disaster, to reducing the risk and minimizing impact of the disaster. The *Smong* folklore from Simeuleu Island is another example of a local wisdom that saved many lives there. In the island’s community, the story about the great waves after a big earthquake had been passed down through generations in the form of a folk song. Despite its proximity to the epicenter, the loss of lives in Simeulu Island was relatively minimal (see: *The Lullaby of Smong*). Similar tales were also detected and preserved in other parts of Aceh. In Singkil, the mountainous area in the Southernmost part of Aceh, the tsunami is known as *Gloro*, while people living in Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar refer it as the *le-Beuna*.

Frequently, the role of community at the time of crisis goes unnoticed. In fact, they were the earliest and the nearest aid during the crisis. The community has never labeled themselves as humanitarian actors, or received any pay from any organizations, but they had indeed played a significant role and displayed authentic and true spirit of humanitarianism.

Community is a social network and organization that has the internal power per-se to organize themselves and cooperate. The community spontaneously provided immediate response, even before the external assistance arrived. The spontaneous collective actions were observed since the immediate after the tsunami struck. Leading the evacuations, helping neighbors, searching and rescuing victims, organizing community kitchen and setting up local security system in the camps or temporary settlements were among actions the local community did in the crisis.

“I was pulled by my neighbor when the water came, we run to the second floor of their house to save ourselves, and we survived.”

**(Ms. Y tsunami survivor)**

“I didn’t know the family. I just came to that village because it was safe and not hit by the tsunami. They opened the door for me and my children, they gave us food, clothes, and place to stay. We stayed there for over two weeks before my husband finally found us. I’m forever grateful for their help.”

**(Ms. RJ, tsunami survivor)**

“We quickly set up tents, and open our house for the survivors to stay, we collect whatever food we have, we gave them water and clothes and we ran a community kitchen organized by the ladies in to help the survivors. They are our brothers and sisters too and I feel their suffering. We do what we can to help them.”

**(Mr. B, community member)**

Active community participation in disaster response, recovery planning and post-disaster reconstruction programs are in fact beneficial in creating programs that are relevant to the needs of the affected community. Community’s capacity, local knowledge and wisdom are crucial assets at all stages of the disaster.

Community participation also fosters the sense of belonging, enhance resilience and empowerment.

As for Asiah from Meulaboh, the disaster had led her to a better life. She still resides in the very same coastal village where her home was once destroyed. Asia was a village midwife, who was still able to help her community even during hardship that she was facing after the disaster. She remembers how she helped deliver a baby from a woman just few hours after the tsunami struck. She had no proper medical equipment, let alone a proper place for the woman to give birth. It was around 10 PM when she delivered her baby on the grass field under a small tent.

Asiah's story and other alike have inspired best practices in humanitarian response, enhancing awareness of community capacity to promote better engagement and participation of community, which is essential in creating a resilient community. Even in hardship, the community should not be regarded merely as victims. In fact, they play a crucial and active role as agent of change in disaster response.



Peace Agreement process. A group of men in a remote village are together witnessing through a live broadcast of the signing of the Peace Agreement between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Government of Indonesia.

### The Lullaby of Smong

Though most people in Aceh have never heard the word “tsunami,” a local tale shows differently. There is a tale of Smong, which originated from Simeulue Island on the coast of South Aceh. The word itself, Smong, comes from a vocabulary in the Devayan language family, an indigenous language, and means tidal wave.

The history of Smong began when an earthquake of 7.6 magnitude hit Aceh in 1907. It triggered a tsunami that destroyed the coastal area of Simeulue. Only 30percent of Simeuleu inhabitant survived the disaster. The ancestors then decided to preserve Smong as a lesson to interpret natural phenomena and mitigate them. Historians presumed the tale started way earlier, however. The Smong message is conveyed through various forms like a poem or nandong (lullaby).

*Enggel mon sao curito  
Inang maso semonan  
Manoknop sao fano  
Uwi lah da sesewan  
Unen ne alek linon  
Fesang bakat ne mali  
Manoknop sao hampong  
Tibo-tibo mawi  
Anga linon ne mali  
Uwek suruik sahuli  
Maheya mihawali  
Fano me singa tenggi.*

*Please listen to this tale  
Once upon a time  
A village is sinking  
That was the story  
Started with a shaking earth  
Followed by immense wave  
The earth is swallowed  
Just by a click of finger  
So, when you feel the earth dance  
Then the ocean recedes  
That's the time  
To find a higher seat.*

For generations, this poem has been conveyed as a lullaby for children. It has become a collective memory that continues to this day. Smong becomes the reason behind the small number of Simeulue residents who died because of the 2004 tsunami. Only three out of 70,000 of this island inhabitants reported dead in the 2004 tsunami.



### **3.3 Forging Unity and Solidarity: Humanitarian Assistance from the Regional Actors**

On 6<sup>th</sup> January 2005, the Special ASEAN Leaders' Meeting on the Aftermath of Earthquake and Tsunami was conducted in Jakarta, Indonesia. Alongside leaders of ASEAN member states, the meeting was attended by representatives from 29 countries and international organizations participated in the meeting including Japan, United States and China, European Union, and the UN.

The meeting focused on discussing Indonesia which was hit hard by the devastating tsunami. The "Declaration on Action to Strengthen Emergency Relief, Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Prevention on the Aftermath of Earthquake and Tsunami Disaster of 26 December 2004" was adopted and a Flash Appeal for US\$ 977 million was issued by the UN General Secretary Kofi Annan, to mobilize international community to allocate necessary funds for emergency relief and rehabilitation of the disaster affected areas.

Several neighboring countries in Southeast Asia region were among the first to arrive due to their nearby position to Aceh. The Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) under the mission of "Operation Flying Eagle" arrived on 28<sup>th</sup> December 2004 in Meulaboh, a coastal town in West Aceh, worst hit by the tsunami. The military operation is claimed as the largest humanitarian and disaster relief mission in Singapore's history, where 1,500 SAF personnel from its land, air, and sea units were deployed and 23 types of military vehicles including ships, helicopters, and aircraft utilities were dispatched.<sup>26</sup>

In the first part of the operation, Singapore pledged US\$ 1.2 million and shipped various emergency supplies to Aceh. On 30<sup>th</sup> December 2004, Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong called for an urgent meeting of ASEAN to coordinate relief efforts under the United Nations (UN) where Singapore contributed a further

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<sup>26</sup> HistorySG, "'Operation Flying Eagle' Is Activated after Asian Tsunami - Singapore History," December 28, 2004, <https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/history/events/51f0da77-0362-4f5d-97bf-aba1a6f37dd0>.

US\$ 3 million. Another US\$ 10 million was pledged as additional contribution to UN reconstruction fund for disaster-affected countries.<sup>27</sup> Including private donations for reconstruction projects by non-governmental groups such as the Red Cross and Mercy Relief in post emergency response, Singapore raised about US\$ 43.06 million for Aceh alone.<sup>28</sup>

The SAF built heavy emergency infrastructure, beach landing points and helicopter landing areas that enabled other humanitarian agencies and countries to deliver supplies and aid, as the road access to Meulaboh was cut off. Its military vehicles carried tons of relief supplies and transported more than two thousand wounded survivors to be treated in Singapore and Batam of Indonesia<sup>29</sup>. The SAF medical team also operated field hospitals that treated more than 5,000 patients in Meulaboh and Banda Aceh. SAF ships also transported personnel and volunteers and supplies of 60 non- governmental organizations to Meulaboh. This operation opened a second hub for humanitarian assistance in addition to Banda Aceh that was flooded by international aid.<sup>30</sup>

In Banda Aceh, the SAF also supported infrastructural sustenance such as through the provision of a mobile traffic tower that eased the congestion in air traffic, portable water purification plants, and telecommunications equipment that improved coordination between emergency relief operations. In addition to deploying search and rescue teams, the SAF also activated its Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) teams to help families identify the deceased.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to the SAF, the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) also quickly sent its personnel to Aceh, Indonesia, and Khao Lak, Thailand. In Aceh, 130 SCDF personnel took part in

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<sup>27</sup> Reliefweb, "Singapore Plays Active Role in Tsunami Relief Efforts," ReliefWeb, January 17, 2005, <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/singapore-plays-active-role-tsunami-relief-efforts>.

<sup>28</sup> The Jakarta Post, "Singapore Continues to Support Indonesia's Meulaboh after Tsunami," The Jakarta Post, 22 2014, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2014/11/26/singapore-continues-support-indonesias-meulaboh-after-tsunami.html>.

<sup>29</sup> Reliefweb, "South Asia: Singapore Offers Use of Hospitals for Tsunami Injured - Indonesia," ReliefWeb, January 1, 2005, <https://reliefweb.int/report/indonesia/south-asia-singapore-offers-use-hospitals-tsunami-injured>.

<sup>30</sup> HistorySG, "'Operation Flying Eagle' Is Activated after Asian Tsunami - Singapore History."

<sup>31</sup> HistorySG.

search and rescue missions and provided medical care for two weeks. Prior to the Aceh deployment, SCDF was involved in overseas missions such as the Tai Chung County earthquake in Taiwan in September 1999.<sup>32</sup>

The SAF humanitarian operation scaled down on 21st January 2005 as the focus of the assistance shifted from emergency response to rehabilitation. The SAF also paved the way for greater involvement of civil organizations, particularly by opening Meulaboh as the second hub for humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation in Aceh province.<sup>33</sup>

On 17<sup>th</sup> January 2005, civil organizations began taking over the tasks that had hitherto been undertaken by the SAF, and Meulaboh remained the former's area of concentration for humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation activities. It started with 63 personnel of Singapore Red Cross emergency relief team encompassing a wide range of skills that included logisticians, medical personnel, emergency behavioral counsellor and other professions. Other civil society groups also arrived along with them. These groups arrived on the Singapore Navy's Landing Ship Tank RSS Endeavour.<sup>34</sup> After that, more NGOs arrived for various assistances. They were involved in infrastructural reconstruction, rehabilitation, capacity building and economic support particularly for the fishermen communities. Until August 2005, Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of United Nation recorded that there were Catholic Archdiocese of Singapore/Catholic Medical Guild of Singapore, Singapore International Foundation, Singapore International Foundation Partnering with Central Singapore CDC, Mobile Aid Repair Services (MARS), Order of Malta (SMOM) and Keppel FMO and the Society for the Physically Disabled (SPD) presented in Aceh for various humanitarian actions..<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> SCDF, "Asian Tsunami Disaster, Aceh, Indonesia (2004)," SCDF, 2004, [https://www.scdf.gov.sg/home/about-us/media-room/overseas-missions/asian-tsunami-disaster-aceh-indonesia-\(2004\)](https://www.scdf.gov.sg/home/about-us/media-room/overseas-missions/asian-tsunami-disaster-aceh-indonesia-(2004)).

<sup>33</sup> HistorySG, "'Operation Flying Eagle' Is Activated after Asian Tsunami - Singapore History."

<sup>34</sup> Reliefweb, "Largest Singapore Red Cross Relief Team Arrives in Meulaboh - Indonesia," ReliefWeb, January 17, 2005, <https://reliefweb.int/report/indonesia/largest-singapore-red-cross-relief-team-arrives-meulaboh>.

<sup>35</sup> Reliefweb, "South Asia: List of Tsunami Approved Projects 4 Aug 2005," ReliefWeb, April 8, 2015, <https://reliefweb.int/report/indonesia/south-asia-list-tsunami-approved-projects-4-aug-2005>.

The Government of Singapore was also involved in various infrastructure, rehabilitation, and other humanitarian assistance projects. Marked as the first Singapore-Indonesia hospital cooperation, three hospitals from Singapore assisted all hospitals in Aceh in improving health services and management after the disaster. This cooperation ran for three years, encompassing reconstruction of health facilities, improving health services, capacity building of doctor, management staff and administration, and many other health technical assistances.<sup>36</sup>

In Singapore, the Singaporean government also offered its air and naval bases as a staging area for flights and ships sending relief goods and waived handling charges for the efforts. Singapore also flew the national flag at half-mast and held an hour-long public memorial service for tsunami victims. This memorial was attended by more than 5,000 Singaporeans, including President S.R Nathan, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew and other Singapore senior officials.<sup>37</sup>

Beside Singapore, humanitarian assistance from Malaysia was among the first to reach Aceh after the tsunami. Mercy Malaysia was in fact the first international NGO that landed in Aceh. Within two weeks after their arrival, Mercy Malaysia supported by Malaysia Airlines had already deployed their third emergency medical relief aid Banda Aceh. In the following fortnight, Mercy Malaysia deployed the fifth medical team alongside a group of engineers and technical experts to establishing infrastructure, building well, and other basic needs and facilities such as water, electricity, and sanitation<sup>38</sup>.

During two-and-a-half year of operations, Mercy focused its assistance on health services and reconstruction of health facilities. In total, it accomplished 16 projects that included emergency medical relief, primary healthcare, psychosocial intervention, as

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<sup>36</sup> Reliefweb, "First for Singapore and Indonesia - Singapore Hospitals Sign Memorandum of Understanding with All Hospitals in Aceh," ReliefWeb, February 24, 2006, <https://reliefweb.int/report/indonesia/first-singapore-and-indonesia-singapore-hospitals-sign-memorandum-understanding-all>.

<sup>37</sup> Reliefweb, "Singapore Plays Active Role in Tsunami Relief Efforts."

<sup>38</sup> Reliefweb, "MERCY Malaysia Medical and Humanitarian Aid for Ache and Sri Lanka," ReliefWeb, January 18, 2005, <https://reliefweb.int/report/indonesia/mercy-malaysia-medical-and-humanitarian-aid-ache-and-sri-lanka>.

well as reconstruction of health facilities, homes, and orphanage. Mercy's first completed infrastructure project was 227 permanent houses for community of Weu Raya village of Lhoknga, Aceh Besar. The houses were handed to the beneficiaries on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2005<sup>39</sup>. Mercy also engaged the community in their capacity building project on disaster prevention, preparedness, and mitigation.

Mercy Malaysia raised fund from various sources to be delivered to Aceh tsunami survivors. Among the contributors was Yayasan Shamsuddin Abdul Kadir under Sapura Group whose funding was to build the Kayee Kunyit children center that housed 123 orphans and 86 students<sup>40</sup>. Similarly, Petroliaam Nasional Berhad (PETRONAS) sponsored the reconstruction of Nursing Academy Block of Syiah Kuala University. With the same funding, Mercy Malaysia also conducted rehabilitation and capacity building programs at the Nursing Academy that enabled the enrolment of 625 students in four-year course.<sup>41</sup> In total, Mercy Malaysia contributed RM 23 million to Aceh emergency response and recovery effort.<sup>42</sup> In addition to that, according to Qismullah, the former president of Professor Association of Sultan Idris Education University Malaysia, soon after the tsunami struck Aceh, the Malaysian government, supported by parliament members, waived the tuition fee for Acehese students pursuing education at any Malaysian universities.

In addition, approximately 900 tons of aid including 832 batches of food and drink, 796 tents and 10 operational vehicles of Malaysian Red Crescent Society were shipped to Aceh by two

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<sup>39</sup> Reliefweb, "Indonesia, Aceh Rebuilding: MERCY Malaysia Repatriates a Community of 600 People in Weu Raya, Aceh Besar - Indonesia," ReliefWeb, May 10, 2005, <https://reliefweb.int/report/indonesia/indonesia-aceh-rebuilding-mercy-malaysia-repatriates-community-600-people-weu-raya>.

<sup>40</sup> Reliefweb, "MERCY Malaysia Completes Post-Tsunami Projects in Aceh, Indonesia - Indonesia," ReliefWeb, April 21, 2007, <https://reliefweb.int/report/indonesia/mercy-malaysia-completes-post-tsunami-projects-aceh-indonesia>.

<sup>41</sup> Reliefweb, "Indonesia: Mercy Malaysia Rebuilds Nursing Academy in Aceh That Promises to Restore Lost Capacity - Indonesia," ReliefWeb, October 18, 2006, <https://reliefweb.int/report/indonesia/indonesia-mercy-malaysia-rebuilds-nursing-academy-aceh-promises-restore-lost>.

<sup>42</sup> Reliefweb, "MERCY Malaysia Completes Post-Tsunami Projects in Aceh, Indonesia - Indonesia."

Royal Malaysian Navy vessels; KD Mahawangsa and KD Sri Indera Sakti, escorted by KD Musytari<sup>43</sup>. The Malaysian Armed Forces Health Services (MAFHS) and Malaysian Police also played an active role in post-tsunami emergency response, providing medical services, and delivering humanitarian aid to help people affected by the tsunami<sup>44</sup>.

Another ASEAN member state involved in post-tsunami relief work was the Kingdom of Brunei Darussalam. Immediately after the tsunami, Brunei activated Operasi Badai Berlalu, a humanitarian mission of the Royal Brunei Armed Forces (RBAirF) that facilitated the transportation and delivery of humanitarian aid to Aceh.

Another ASEAN member state involved in post-tsunami relief work was the Kingdom of Brunei Darussalam. Immediately after the tsunami, Brunei activated Operasi Badai Berlalu, a humanitarian mission of the Royal Brunei Armed Forces (RBAirF) that facilitated the transportation and delivery of humanitarian aid to Aceh.

The RBAirF delegation arrived in Aceh on 12th January 2004, comprised of 35 military and support personnel from the Royal and eight civilian personnel including of doctors, nurses, health personnel and volunteers from the Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Foundation, Brunei's Ministry of Health and Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports. The team also brought along medical supplies, food, and clothing donated by the people of Brunei through the National Relief Fund for Victims of the Tsunami Disaster.

Prior to the departure of this delegation, six emergency response personnel had already been assigned to assess the affected area and identify the needs<sup>45</sup>. The RBAirF worked alongside the other military team from the United States and France in Weh Island, the westernmost tip of Indonesia, to deliver humanitarian aid to the affected community.

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<sup>43</sup> Reliefweb, "Indonesia: Malaysian Navy Vessels Ferry Aid Shipment to Aceh - Indonesia," January 23, 2005, <https://reliefweb.int/report/indonesia/indonesia-malaysian-navy-vessels-ferry-aid-shipment-aceh>.

<sup>44</sup> Reliefweb.

<sup>45</sup> Reliefweb, "Brunei's Humanitarian Relief in Aceh Picks up Pace - Indonesia | ReliefWeb," January 11, 2005, <https://reliefweb.int/report/indonesia/bruneis-humanitarian-relief-aceh-picks-pace>; RBAirF, "Operasi Badai Berlalu," 2005, <https://www.mindef.gov.bn/airforce/SitePages/Operasipercent20Badaipercent20Berlalu.aspx>.

Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah visited Aceh in February 2005 to see firsthand the complexity of the humanitarian situation and discuss with Indonesia how Brunei could further contribute to Aceh's immediate relief and recovery effort.

Two other regional actors that contributed to the Aceh tsunami relief effort include Timor Leste and the Royal Cambodian Government. Both countries donated 50,000 USD and 10,000 USD, respectively, for the emergency relief work.<sup>46</sup>



An official representing the Government and People of Japan is seated together with Prof. Kuntoro Mangkusubroto (Head of the Aceh-Nias Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency/BRR), symbolizing the completion of the bridge on Krueng Sabee River of Aceh Jaya.

Japan also played an important role in providing a wide-range of relief and rehabilitation work through the Official Development Assistance (ODA).

The Japanese government disbursed a total of US\$ 500 million USD grant for Aceh. In the initial relief stage, the Japan Self-Defense Forces vessels brought in tons of emergency supplies to Aceh and North Sumatera.

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<sup>46</sup> Associated Press, "East Timor Donates \$50,000 To Relief Efforts In Indonesia," December 30, 2004, <https://etan.org/et2004/december/26-31/30etdonate.htm>.

Some of the major undertakings by the Japanese government included the provision of emergency medical services and medicines, the reconstruction of five health centers in Aceh, and the rebuilding of orphanages, schools and colleges, and vocational training centers.

The Japanese grant aid also allowed the reconstruction and restoration of public markets, land register, and fishing facilities, including the provision of fishing equipment and fishing boats,

The Japanese government also provided broadcasting equipment to radio and TV stations and assisted the construction of tsunami evacuation tower and evacuation roads.

For ASEAN, the Aceh humanitarian crisis served as a valuable lesson on the importance of cooperation and coordination. Likewise, the need for a coordinated ASEAN response capability to major disasters in the region gained momentum after the Indian Ocean Tsunami.

ASEAN has tremendous resources, experience, and efforts that can further enhance its humanitarian assistance and disaster response capacity. The establishment of the ASEAN Coordinating Center for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Center) in November 2011, later followed by the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) in July 2015, became a legal framework and common platform for all ASEAN Member States to respond to disaster emergencies collectively and minimize disaster impacts in the region. The AHA Center is mandated as the operational coordination body to execute the AADMER<sup>47</sup>.

The enormous support and generosity of the ASEAN Member States and the international community will always be in the hearts and minds of the Acehnese people. In Blang Padang, a recreational and sports park in Banda Aceh, a memorial plaque with the text "Aceh Thanks the World" stands as a symbol of gratitude to 53 countries that collectively assisted the rebuilding and reconstruction of Aceh.

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<sup>47</sup> AHA Center, "AADMER and Its Institutional Arrangement," Accomplishment Report, AADMER Work Programme- Phase I (Jakarta: AHA Center, 2016).





## CHAPTER IV

# NATIONAL CAPACITY AND COORDINATION

### 4.1 The Birth of the Agency for Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Aceh and Nias (BRR)

The massive devastation of the Indian Ocean tsunami on 26th December 2004 in Aceh immediately overwhelmed Indonesia's disaster response capacity and capability to single-handedly organized relief efforts for the province.

After the government declared the tsunami as a national disaster, the Indonesian government and the military immediately called their regional counterparts for immediate humanitarian relief and assistance to Aceh. The international humanitarian communities, including dozens of local and international NGOs and UN agencies, immediately came to Aceh with emergency aid<sup>48</sup>.

The community resilience of Indonesia, also known as *gotong royong* or mutual support, empowered hundreds of civil society organizations, religious groups, schools and universities, and many other community groups across the country to raise funds and send clothes, foods, medicines, tents, and other items to Aceh.

On the fourth day after the tsunami, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono announced that the government would carry out the Aceh recovery effort in three phases. The first stage was the emergency phase that began from the day of the disaster to March 2005, the second phase was called the rehabilitation phase, from April 2005 to December 2006, and the last phase was reconstruction from July 2006 to December 2009.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Budi Syahbudin et al., *Tsunami, Seri Buku BRR (Banda Aceh: Badan Rehabilitasi dan Rekonstruksi NAD-Nias (BRR NAD-NIAS), 2009), 14–23.*

<sup>49</sup> Tempo.co, "Pemerintah Siapkan Tiga Tahap Pemulihan Aceh," Desember 2004, <https://nasional.tempo.co/read/54083/pemerintah-siapkan-tiga-tahap-pemulihan-aceh>.

President Yudhoyono had also assigned the Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare Alwi Shihab to restore the capacity and capability of local government in Aceh paralyzed in the disaster. The government also mobilized 70 percent of its military forces to Aceh for search and rescue missions, building emergency infrastructures, and clearing roads and lands from tsunami debris.

Effective government-led coordination did not immediately exist following the tsunami due to a lack of experience and capability in managing a massive disaster at the scale of the December tsunami.

According to Indonesia's former foreign affairs minister, Dr. Hassan Wirayuda, the government had asked the UN to lead coordination in tsunami disaster response while preparing for the more extended and more well-defined plan for the recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction of Aceh.

Although relief coordination at the provincial level seemed to function properly through regular coordination and cluster meetings, coordination at the district level barely existed. NGOs and UN agencies tended to work in silos. A former UN staff working in Aceh described that coordination in the early relief stage was complex because various UN agencies tried to assume leadership roles at different district levels.

Questions on how the recovery effort in Aceh should be carried out became an intense debate and discussion among humanitarian relief workers.

At the same time, the government had planned to establish a specific institution for coordinating disaster response for disaster prone regions in Indonesia and because of the tsunami. Vice President Jusuf Kalla, suggested the establishment of a coordination institution for Aceh.

The government then prepared the establishment of an agency mandated to coordinate and implement the recovery and rehabilitation projects in Aceh. The agency would be an ad-hoc body operating within a certain period and would be tightly monitored to ensure transparency and accountability – a critical aspect to change international community's perception of corruption in Indonesia. The head of this ad-hoc body would report directly to the president which would cut through layered of unnecessary bureaucracy. Apolitical, and clean figure with

superb professionalism and incredible leadership track record was required, to lead the agency.

Vice President Jusuf Kalla, upon receiving recommendation from National Development Planning Minister Sri Mulyani, agreed to appoint Professor Kuntoro Mangkusubroto as the head of the Agency for Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Aceh and Nias or Badan Rekonstruksi dan Rehabilitasi Aceh dan Nias (BRR).

At that time, there were nearly 300 NGOs and 23 UN bodies working in Aceh. Coordination was obviously necessary in the pool of humanitarian agencies working for tsunami relief and recovery in Aceh. for the BRR clearly faced a very daunting task to coordinate hundreds of organizations with their different projects and missions in Aceh. A simple yet effective coordination mechanism needs to be developed. On 16<sup>th</sup> April 2005, President Yudhoyono issued the Presidential Decree number 2/2005 on the establishment of the BRR and four months later, a national law number 10/2005 was issued to strengthen the decree.

## **4.2 The Role of Leadership and Coordination During Crisis**

One of the major aspects in humanitarian action is coordination. The stream of humanitarian agencies in Aceh after the tsunami presented a challenge in delivering coordinated and effective response plan for Aceh. Humanitarian agencies essentially share the same goal to save lives and alleviate sufferings of the affected people. Nevertheless, each has its own mandate, system, and expertise. Therefore, ccoordination is important to provide a platform for humanitarian agencies to work together to ensure a comprehensive and coordinated response is provided in time. It allows also humanitarian agencies to work more effectively and efficiently to achieve their goal<sup>50</sup>.

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<sup>50</sup> ATHA, "ATHA: Humanitarian Coordination: An Overview," 2008, <https://hhi.harvard.edu/publications/atha-humanitarian-coordination-overview>.

Through coordination humanitarian actors can jointly develop a common strategy, policy and tools as well as setting up priorities to deliver a more coordinated response. Furthermore, coordination provides a means to tackle issues such as access, mobilization of resource as well as collectively monitor progress. All of these would improve humanitarian work in the field.

Many reports have suggested the importance of a comprehensive collaboration and coordination among humanitarian agencies to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the humanitarian response. In many emergencies, the institutionalization and the organization of coordination is set up by the United Nation. The United Nation Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) is responsible for the coordination of a humanitarian response.

Within 24 hours after the tsunami, the government asked the UN to lead the coordination of the innumerable stream of humanitarian assistance coming from different countries and organizations to Aceh. The United Nation Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) was dispatched to assess the situation on the ground and initiate coordination.

Concurrently, setting up the Humanitarian Information Center (HIC) also allowed the humanitarian community different information products to support the coordination, planning, decision making, and implementation of programs.

The humanitarian coordination and sectoral cluster meetings held daily and weekly allowed relief workers to share information and progress and discuss other important issues in Banda Aceh. However, coordination at the district and sub-district levels was non-existent<sup>51</sup>.

The emergency phase ended on 26th March 2005. A transition strategy was prepared to transfer coordination from the UN to the government as the recovery phase commenced. However, the linkage of coordination from emergency to recovery phase was not exist. The lack of effective transition process was due to the non-existing government body that managed the process before the establishment of the BRR.

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<sup>51</sup> J. Bennett, C. Harkin, and S. Samarasinghe, "Coordination of International Humanitarian Assistance in Tsunami-Affected Countries -Indonesia-" (TEC, 2014).

Established in April 2005 during the transitional period of the emergency phase and recovery process, as a coordinating authority, the BRR had the resources and a master plan to manage two-thirds of the almost US\$ 8 billion total tsunami rehabilitation and reconstruction budget in a coordinated and transparent manner.

The appointment of Professor Mangkusubroto – an engineer by background who has held ministerial and senior government leadership roles – was deemed by many as the best person to instill a sense of urgency and professional assurance in the agency. Professor Mangkusubroto, however, recalled in an interview in early 2022 that he did not immediately accept the assignment. Instead, he said he had proposed a few stipulations to the president to allow the newly-established organization to work effectively and efficiently in rebuilding Aceh after the crisis.

First, national law must serve as a legal power for the BRR to consolidate and manage global funds and humanitarian assistance for Aceh. Secondly, the head of BRR would report only to the president, making it equal to a ministry, and, third, the organization would not adhere to the typical bureaucratic process. It took him four months to negotiate this idea with President Yudhoyono until it was eventually approved. He recruited highly competent individuals from different fields to fill in crucial positions at the agency. However, at that time, no one in his team had any previous experience in a massive-scale tsunami.

From the onset, Professor Mangkusubroto intended to create the BRR as a “learning agency” for everyone and himself to adopt success and failure lessons beneficial in the long run.

Having embedded this mindset across the agency, Professor Mangkusubroto inspired his team to work with high creativity, efficiency, and effectiveness -- an achievable work ethic in the most challenging environment such as Aceh.

As the head of BRR, Professor Mangkusubroto had the full authority on behalf of the government to coordinate, implement and monitor the rehabilitation and reconstruction process in Aceh.

Under his leadership, the BRR had coordinated more than 12,500 projects from 60 bilateral and multilateral donors, and around 700 NGOs at its peak and implemented over 5,000 projects of its own. BRR succeeded in building 140,000 houses for the victims of tsunami, over 1,000 health clinics, and around 2,000

schools<sup>52</sup>. The work of the BRR was acknowledged as the most successful post-disaster rehabilitation and reconstruction program in the world<sup>53</sup>.



A staff of BRR (left) is issuing a visa extension to an international volunteer at the One Stop Service Unit at the BRR Head Office in Banda Aceh.

Professor Mangkusubroto received praise for his anti-corruption attitude and for cutting through bureaucracy for the international humanitarian agencies to work in Aceh and Nias. Financial measures and strategies were introduced to prevent the systemic corruption (See section: Building a Trusted Financial Mechanism).

To simplify bureaucracy, the BRR would manage basic logistics and administration such as visa extension, work permit and tax exemption from Banda Aceh to reduce diplomatic red tapes for foreign volunteers and staff assigned in Aceh. Professor Mangkusubroto explained in an interview that cutting through the

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<sup>52</sup> Arabiyani Abubakar et al., Pendidikan, Kesehatan, Peran Perempuan: Menyiapkan Generasi Bermutu, ed. Suhardi Soedjono, Seri Buku BRR (Banda Aceh: Badan Rehabilitasi dan Rekonstruksi NAD-Nias (BRR NAD-NIAS), 2009); en.tempo.co, "Professor Kuntoro Mangkusubroto: I Threw out the Aceh Master Plan - Interviews," October 19, 2018, <https://en.tempo.co/read/630979/kuntoro-mangkusubroto-i-threw-out-the-aceh-master-plan>.

<sup>53</sup> en.tempo.co, "Professor Kuntoro Mangkusubroto: I Threw out the Aceh Master Plan - Interviews."

bureaucracy was a critical gesture of serving the international agencies that have brought in generous humanitarian assistance to Indonesia. That is to make sure their work was not halted by administrative challenges, thus, the humanitarian response can be delivered more efficiently and effectively.

His practical approach made the coordination of humanitarian programs more efficient and effective. In his interview, Professor Mangkusubroto explained that at the initial stage, he had been puzzled by how he should approach the variety of UN bodies for coordination. Understanding that there was a way to make the coordination more efficient and effective, he then requested Bill Clinton, who at that time was UN special envoy for tsunami recovery, to establish a coordination body to represent the 23 UN agencies working for tsunami recovery in Aceh. The Office of the UN Recovery Coordinator (UNORC) for Aceh and Nias was then established<sup>54</sup>. According to Professor Mangkusubroto, it was the first time that the UN bodies “united” to representing the whole UN outside of their headquarter. In addition to providing the coordination support to the UN system, the organization also supported the BRR to strengthening its coordination mechanism at various administrative levels<sup>55</sup>.

The sense of urgency and emergency instinct possessed by Professor Mangkusubroto contributed to the acceleration and sense of urgency in the rehabilitation and reconstruction process. Similar mindset was echoed by Said Faisal Baabud, the former Deputy of Economic Development and Business of BRR. During our interview meeting, he explained that “the spectrum of time between us, and the effected people is different. For us that run the program, six months is short, but for the affected people, six months is a long time”. Maintaining the “emergency mindset” even in the non-life-and death recovery phase was important, as it ensures the much-needed assistance is delivered in time, for the affected people.

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<sup>54</sup> TGLLP, *The Tsunami Legacy: Innovation Breakthroughs and Change* (Banda Aceh: Tsunami Global Lessons Learned Project, 2009), 26–29.

<sup>55</sup> Reliefweb, “Indonesia: Office for the UN Recovery Coordinator for Aceh and Nias: Monthly Update - Mar 2007 - Indonesia | ReliefWeb,” March 31, 2007, <https://reliefweb.int/report/indonesia/indonesia-office-un-recovery-coordinator-aceh-and-nias-monthly-update-mar-2007>.



Additionally, Aceh had an exceptional complexity. The rehabilitation and reconstruction process in Aceh was not only about the remarkable efforts to rebuild a territory that was once shattered by a disaster, but it was also about rebuilding the society. There was the element of conflict and the ongoing peace process in Aceh post-disaster context. The BRR indeed was not mandated to resolve conflict and building peace. Nevertheless, conflict and peacebuilding were connected to Aceh rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts. In this context, Baabud stressed during an interview that the most expensive commodity is trust.

Furthermore, he added that a society that had lived in the longstanding conflict tend to find it difficult to trust others. This collective character was shaped overtime by painful experiences of the bitter longstanding conflict, fear, grief, and disappointment. Trust was the central issue in peace and post-disaster rehabilitation and reconstruction in Aceh. In fact, the lack of trust has been the greatest deficiency in humanitarian system. From rehabilitation and reconstruction perspective, building trust is about building a positive narrative through results and involvement. There has to be consistency from what is said and what is done. After the trust was earned, confidence grew, meaning that there was optimism and hope that the post-disaster rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts would work.

Aceh was in the midst of turbulent conflict when the tsunami hit. Even after the peace agreement was signed in August 2005, several security incidents still occurred in Aceh. Tensions between the ex-GAM combatants and TNI remained, causing a gripping security atmosphere unfavorable for the provision of humanitarian aid. The shooting of a foreign aid workers in Calang was the peak of the lamentable incidents that had hampered the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Aceh. On top of that, the lack of security became a major concern as it could potentially cause foreign assistance to be withdrawn from Aceh. Mangkusubroto was challenged with an important task, to secure access and protection of humanitarian mission in Aceh.

Mr. Mangkusubroto took a bold strategic step to meet with Hassan Tiro. Stated in his interview, his action was rather clandestine. Even President Yudhoyono had no knowledge of the meeting. Mangkusubroto, through several GAM trusted contacts, managed to meet Hasan Tiro at an apartment in a countryside

Mr. Mangkusubroto took a bold strategic step to meet with Hassan Tiro. Stated in his interview, his action was rather clandestine. Even President Yudhoyono had no knowledge of the meeting. Mangkusubroto, through several GAM trusted contacts, managed to meet Hasan Tiro at an apartment in a countryside nearby Stockholm. He presented Tiro with the map of rehabilitation and reconstruction of Aceh.

He recalled that during the one-hour meeting, Tiro had enthusiastically welcomed the agency's plan to rehabilitate and reconstruct Aceh. Professor Mangkusubroto only asked Tiro for one favor; to help him ensure the safety of all humanitarian workers and all parties -- including former GAM combatants -- and maintain sustainable peace in Aceh. After the important meeting, there were no reports of security incidents to humanitarian workers in Aceh<sup>56</sup>.

Furthermore, peace had to be maintained for the agency to work safely and effectively in Aceh. One of Professor Mangkusubroto



Prof. Kuntoro Mangkusubroto is updating the progress as well as the blueprint of the Aceh-Nias Rehabilitation and Reconstruction/BRR to donors, stakeholders and the International Non-Government Organization (I-NGO) members working in Aceh.

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<sup>56</sup> BRR, Aceh Government, and United Nations, "From LoGA to the KRFs-Governance in Aceh," Aceh Recovery Newsletter 3, no. 5 (May 2009): 2.

strategies is by involving the ex-GAM in rehabilitation and reconstruction process. "The combatants have no skills but shooting, and it's a not a big money that we pay, but it's enough for living, otherwise they will shoot," said Professor Mangkusubroto, reiterating the logics behind his decision to hire around 900 former GAM members in the BRR, including former senior leaders and commanders.

Teuku Kamaruzzaman, a former senior official of GAM, was assigned as the secretary of BRR whose tasks included communicating with other former rebels and identifying their needs in restoring their livelihood and gradual reintegration into the society. Various skill training and economic empowerment were provided to ex-GAM members.

The long-standing issue in Aceh on top of the prolonged conflict, was the chronic poverty. The central region of Aceh was not affected by the tsunami, but dozens of houses and buildings in the area were damaged by the earthquake. Similar to almost all areas in Aceh, this region is impoverished as the result of military conflict. While the tsunami fund benefited the coastal villages and towns the most, Central Aceh region had no access to the assistance.

People would come to where the assistance and services were available. Every time the temporary barracks were vacated, the new people will come. These were not the people affected by tsunami but the people from other areas that came out of the poverty and/or conflict. The discrepancy in the provision of aid had created issues and potentially created social conflict if it was not properly addressed. The issue was that most of the NGOs and humanitarian agencies were restricted by their mandate and donors to aid tsunami affected population. Realizing the potential issue and the needs, the BRR included the areas that were not affected by tsunami. Various projects such as housing, rehabilitation of health facilities and schools, economic empowerment and institutional strengthening were implemented in the areas such as Bener Meriah and Central Aceh District.

Sustainability is an element of the humanitarian and development nexus. Therefore, strengthening local capacity-through the involvement of local government officials in the BRR from the start - was central to the strategy linking rehabilitation and reconstruction to long-term growth.

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Local government officials received capacity-building training to continue the development of Aceh. On 16th April 2009, the BRR ended its four-year mandate, completing the post-tsunami rehabilitation and reconstruction in Aceh. Aceh and the BRR are a perfect example of the humanitarian-peace-and development nexus in practice.

### **4.3 Trust and Flexibility**

International support was a blessing but at same time could be the curse if it was mismanaged. To build trust amidst Indonesian reputation as a corrupt country, the BRR was required to create an effective, efficient, transparent, and accountable systems. A normal bureaucracy would potentially delay and derail the work of the BRR. “In a special and crucial situation like Aceh post-tsunami, a flexible and special bureaucracy system is required,” said Mangkusubroto during an interview meeting in 2022.

The agency’s equal standing of a ministry-level allowed it to develop and implement a flexible bureaucracy system. The BRR had the authority to coordinate directly with all ministries and government institutions relevant to Aceh rehabilitation, and reconstruction to ensure effective and efficient coordination. The BRR, for example, lobbied the Coordinating Ministry for the Economics for tax exemption on imported humanitarian assistance goods. It also requested the Foreign Affairs Ministry to delegate their staff to Aceh to provide visa renewal services for foreign humanitarian workers in Aceh. Before the service became available in the BRR office in Banda Aceh, foreign humanitarian workers had to leave for Singapore, Malaysia, or Jakarta for visa renewal – an inefficient immigration red tape that would cost manhours.

Through this one-stop service initiative, the agency created an inter-ministry joint desk that provided better and faster services

to all humanitarian agencies working for Aceh. This system was later adopted by the local government and ministries to provide more efficient public services such as civil registrations, business permits, work permits and other services.

The given autonomy had also allowed the BRR to offer flexibility to the donor countries and agencies. The BRR did not require donors to transfer funds to Indonesia government's bank account for their rehabilitation and reconstruction works in Aceh. Donors and agencies were also not obliged to implement their project through the BRR.

Instead, the agency made several options available for donors and NGOs on how they wanted to implement their project. They could either directly implement the project, or commission the projects to the BRR, or collaborate with the agency to implement the project. Professor Mangkusubroto admitted that this flexible mechanism came as lessons learned from the experience of many countries coping with the impact of huge natural disasters. He learned that turning pledged funding to commitment was proven very difficult and one of the causes, according to Mangkusubroto is usually because the receiving country want to have the direct control over pledged and committed funds and ask for direct intervention on to implement the funds.

Indonesia was known for its corruption practices, which became the main challenge for Professor Mangkusubroto to build a trusted system for donors to turn pledged funding into commitment. One of the ways to instill trust was the agency's permission for donors to directly implement and distribute their commitment to tsunami-affected people in Aceh based on the donor's country's regulations on the procurement and other related matters.

The BRR did not ask donors to transfer funds to the agency as the government's representative in Aceh. Furthermore, the BRR also facilitated the donors and NGOs with permits and other documents needed and helped communicate with relevant ministries to assist the donors' and NGO projects. All these processes mostly took only several days.

The option to directly implement the projects helped reduce the BRR's workload. Furthermore, it also showed transparency and accountability toward the donors. Professor Mangkusubroto recalled that the Singaporean Ambassador to Indonesia was surprised when he allowed options for the Singapore Red Cross to

directly implement the renovation project of Cut Nyak Dien hospital in Meulaboh or let the BRR implement it. The Singaporean team opted to enforce its project on its own. The flexibility given by the BRR had provided a sense of security for donor countries and organizations to allocate their funds for Aceh recovery and reconstruction as they could have direct control over project implementation and could ensure the accountability of their funds.

According to Professor Mangkusubroto, this mechanism became one of the starting points for building the trust of the international community in Indonesia. Soon afterward, more pledge funds turned into commitment funds. Some countries and donor agencies even offered more than they previously committed to rebuilding Aceh. Furthermore, with such flexibility and freedom to choose, the realization of the Aceh recovery projects was impressively fast.

#### **4.4 Building a Trusted Financial Mechanism MDF & RANTF**

Following the issuance of the After the Flash Appeal by the UN General Secretary Kofi Annan at the Special ASEAN Leaders' Meeting on the Aftermath of Earthquake and Tsunami in January 2005, many countries, organizations, and donor agencies committed to allocate necessary funds for emergency relief and rehabilitation of Aceh. The Ministry of Finance had requested the World Bank to design a trust fund mechanism to support the recovery process of Aceh. The World Bank, in collaboration with Indonesian government and donor countries created Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDF) for Aceh recovery in Mei 2005. MDF became the largest joint international financier for recovery of Aceh and Nias. The MDF later functioned as a coordination system between Indonesia and donor agencies regarding Aceh post-tsunami recovery.

The MDF management was unique as the donor's funds were transferred to a single account that was integrated into the National Expenditure Budget of Indonesia (on-budget). The use of donated funds was flexible as it was allocated to unmarked

projects to bridge the gap in the reconstruction and rehabilitation process and to anticipate the changing priority based on need assessment in the field. The same MDF members still contributed in the off-budget financial systems or directly implemented their program through each development agency.

Among the donor countries, the Japanese government, which stood outside the MDF, pledged the highest funding (more than US\$ 500 million) for tsunami recovery programs for all tsunami affected countries and deployed more than 100 emergency workers to assist with relief efforts. A total of US\$ 117 million was pledged to Indonesia for Aceh rehabilitation and reconstruction projects.<sup>57</sup>

To ensure the proper use of the humanitarian aid fund, some donors preferred to transfer the fund directly to the BRR's bank account (off budget mechanism), not through the regular government account (on budget mechanism). This special account for Aceh-Nias rehabilitation and reconstruction was first requested by ExxonMobil Indonesia and Venezuelan government that wanted their commitment fund goes directly to Aceh recovery and rehabilitation programs. With the assistance from National Development Planning Minister Sri Mulyani, the BRR created and directly managed the Recovery of Aceh-Nias Trust Fund (RANTF) account, another trust fund system aside from the existing Multi Donor Funds coordinated by the World Bank<sup>58</sup>.

The system offered greater freedom and flexibility for the donors to transfer the fund outside the government's regular mechanism. RANTF accommodated various guidelines and mechanisms of the donors in distributing their assistance. Later, RANTF was used as a fundraising system where donors could directly transfer their donation without being worried of mixing their donated fund with Indonesia development budget. BRR recorded that about 15 donors; countries, international and national organizations, and companies transferred their donation to RANTF<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Aichida UI-Aflaha et al., *Keuangan: Tujuh Kunci Pengelolaan Dana Bantuan Yang Efektif*, Seri Buku BRR (Banda Aceh: Badan Rehabilitasi dan Rekonstruksi NAD-Nias (BRR NAD-NIAS), 2009), 6.

<sup>58</sup> UI-Aflaha et al., 15–17.

<sup>59</sup> UI-Aflaha et al., 15–17.





Dr. Sri Mulyani, Head of BAPPENAS, and Prof. Kuntoro Mangkusubroto presented the update and progress of Aceh-Nias Rehabilitation and Reconstruction/BRR programs to the donors and stakeholders in Jakarta.



To ensure transparency, earmarked funding, flexibility, transparency, and accountability, the BRR also cooperated with five national and international bank companies (including HSBC, the Deutsche Bank and Standard Chartered Bank). Through their corporate social responsibility funds, these banks contributed to collecting, administrating, and regularly reporting the use of the collected fund without demanded the BRR to expend a specific budget. It was a zero-budget trusting system. The authoritative body also collaborated with legal consultants, tax consultants, public accountants, and anti-corruption organizations to ensure effectiveness, efficiency and transparency of the collected fund's management and distribution.

The Financial Auditing Agency of Indonesia also took part and closely monitored the use of the funds in collaboration with international auditing agencies. This cooperation mechanism ensures effectiveness, efficiency, and transparency and foster a sense of trust from donors. Some donors even increased their commitment funds as they were satisfied with the progress, realization, effectivity, transparency, and accountability of the BRR. The agency also produced quarterly progress reports and presented the report through public meetings, donor visits or meeting events with the donor and stakeholders.

In addition, the BRR also established an internal anti-corruption unit or Satuan Anti Korupsi (SAK). The team was placed directly under the director of the BRR, but it was not authorized to do further investigation or proceed with legal action. However, with the direct chain of command to the head of BRR, the unit could evaluate any programs and personnel and report the findings to the authority and, in this case, the police or the Corruption Eradication Commission or Komisi Nasional Pemberantasan Korupsi (KPK) for further investigation.

The unit applied a tight internal procedure for procurement and implemented other measures to prevent the BRR's personnel from receiving gratification and conducting potential frauds. However, according to the secretary of BRR, Teuku Kamaruzzaman, the strict monitoring and evaluation system on expenditure and implementation of the program had revealed fraudulence conducted by a local NGO in Aceh. Nevertheless, it was the only case of fraudulence during BRR's tenure in Aceh.

## 4.5 Building the Capacity of Local Government; An Exit Strategy

In July 2005, or three months after the establishment of BRR, Indonesian government agreed to allocate US\$ 2,1 million fund for Aceh. The Indonesian government also assigned the BRR to coordinate 101 working units in Aceh governance structure to coordinate rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts.

That huge fund was additional to the annual development budget allocated for Aceh province. The national government allocated funds for BRR only intended for the operational of BRR secretariat, finance department, and communication and information department. The BRR did not directly manage the reconstruction and rehabilitation works from the national budget. This also allowed it to focus working on the macro level. The districts government to which national budget was transferred and from which the 101 working units were created focused on the implementation of meso or middle-level works. NGOs, or implementer of smaller programs focused on micro or small level work<sup>60</sup>.

The 101 working units under the local government faced challenge in managing the meso-level works. The capacity of local government was below the bar due to the prolonged conflict. Furthermore, the tsunami claimed the lives of many qualified and competent human resources across government agencies. Some the remaining staff were recruited by international organizations, and some worked for BRR. To overcome this challenge, the BRR had set up branch offices in the districts to assist the district government to establish, train and assist the working units.

The cooperation between the BRR and the district governance, however, was inconsistent. The community's demand for the BRR was very high to accelerate the rehabilitation and reconstruction process, while the BRR did not hold the national budget to satisfy the demand. As a result, some projects, particularly in the housing

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<sup>60</sup> Saifullah Abdulgani, Kelembagaan: Meletakkan Fondasi Penata Kelola, Seri Buku BRR (Banda Aceh: Badan Rehabilitasi dan Rekonstruksi NAD-Nias (BRR NAD-NIAS), 2009), 19.

sector, were directly implemented by the authoritative body. But in other sectors, the BRR remained the coordinator, adviser, and trainer to the local government both at the provincial and district levels. BRR created this exit strategy to increase local capacity to plan, implement, and evaluate projects with transparency and accountability and to carry out BRR's rehabilitation and reconstruction effort after they end their mission in Aceh.

Involving the local government through the working units was a necessary process to transfer knowledge, skill, and systems to the local government. In 2008, inspired by the BRR's working system, Aceh government created the Aceh Government Transformation Programme (AGTP) to increase the capacity of Aceh government officials. The program indirectly served as a special initiation for Irwandi Yusuf, who won the gubernatorial election in 2006. Irwandi paid regular visits to the BRR headquarters as deputy chief to ensure better coordination and smooth transition process with the local government.

This indicated that the BRR was designed not only to lead and coordinate the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Aceh, but subsequently and indirectly also to revitalize the local government capacity; preparing them to sustain the completed projects and carry out long term development programs for Aceh

**SEKARANG...**  
**MARI SALING**  
**BAHU-MEMBAHU**



## CHAPTER V

# TRIPLE NEXUS OF HUMANITARIAN, PEACE, AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE ACEH CONTEXT

This chapter covers the post-tsunami humanitarian response, rehabilitation and reconstruction program and peacebuilding efforts in Aceh. After the signing of Helsinki peace agreement, Aceh entered its new chapter. The dynamics of democratization process is capture in this chapters, revealing the peacebuilding process and all its challenges. This chapters also provides a description of post-tsunami humanitarian assistance from relief to rehabilitation and reconstruction phase such as health, education, institutional strengthening, and economy analyzes its relevance in peacebuilding. Some of the programs and activities described had the peacebuilding element, revealing the linkage of humanitarian, peace and long-term development.

### **5.1 Constructing the Bridge to Sustainable Peace through Health Programs**

The armed conflict and tsunami in Aceh had a distinct impact on health sector. The armed conflict and tsunami have claimed thousands lives, suffering and wide-ranging health consequences. Approximately 15,000 people killed with more than 100,000 displaced during the 30-year conflict in Aceh<sup>61</sup>. Many have suffered injuries from mild to severe, or worse, permanent disability. The violent conflict had also left psychological trauma for many. Most people affected by conflict showed symptoms of depression and

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<sup>61</sup> Aguswandi and Judith Large, eds., *Reconfiguring Politics: The Indonesia-Aceh Peace Process, Accord* ; Issue 20. 154142700 (London: Conciliation Resources, 2008), 58.

anxiety, and about 34 percent of them showed signs of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).<sup>62</sup>

Throughout the 30 years of the conflict, the overall health system severely weakened across Aceh. It destroyed more than 22 percent of village health clinics and the abandonment of health infrastructures, and approximately 11-20 percent of transport infrastructures were damaged, affecting access to health services<sup>63</sup>.

Numerous water and electricity infrastructures to support the proper running of health infrastructures were also destroyed. Furthermore, as the result of lack of security, many of health workers left their duty station.

With the deterioration in security due to conflict, the poverty rate in Aceh unsurprisingly increased from 14.8 percent in 1998 to 28.4 percent (or 1.2 million people) in 2004. The number in rural area was even higher, at 36.2 percent.<sup>64</sup> One of the consequences of poverty is the high prevalence of malnutrition.

The tsunami had then worsened the already weakened health system in Aceh. According to BRR data, 32 hospitals were destroyed, 9 hospitals were damaged, 259 Community Health Center or Pusat Kesehatan Masyarakat (Puskesmas) were destroyed and 64 were severely damaged.<sup>65</sup> About 830 auxiliary health posts and approximately 2283 village health posts were destroyed, and more than 700 health posts were damaged<sup>66</sup>. In addition, other health infrastructures such as health offices, laboratories, port health authorities and food and drug administration offices were damaged. Hundreds of health workers were killed in the tsunami, while many were displaced or left the province.

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<sup>62</sup> Mary-Jo DelVicchio Good et al., "A Psychosocial Needs Assessment of Communities in 14 Conflict Communities in Aceh" (International Organization for Migration, 2007).

<sup>63</sup> Aguswandi and Large, *Reconfiguring Politics*, 58.

<sup>64</sup> Aguswandi and Large, 58.

<sup>65</sup> Abubakar et al., *Pendidikan, Kesehatan, Peran Perempuan: Menyiapkan Generasi Bermutu*, 7.

<sup>66</sup> Abubakar et al., 7.

Humanitarian health assistance can serve as a catalyst for positive peace through different ways. In the initial state of emergency both in conflict and natural disaster, the goal of humanitarian health assistance is to save lives, reducing mortality and morbidity. But beyond saving lives, the humanitarian health assistance has intrinsic values that promote peace.

Immediately after the tsunami, medical teams and organization were among the first to arrive. The team of doctors, nurses and other health professions provided health services based on need and medical priority. Emergency hospitals and health posts were set up allowing people to access services and get the necessary treatment. Free medical care was provided to all without distinction.

“We didn’t care, whether they were GAM or civilians, or military, rich or poor as long they were affected by tsunami, we helped them”

(Ms. Y former nurse in a medical organization working in tsunami emergency response)

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), for example, was among the first medical NGOs that arrived in Aceh after the disaster. The emergency medical organization working based on the principle of neutrality, impartiality, and independence. Medical assistance was delivered by MSF based on medical needs with priority given to those in serious and immediate danger. MSF deployed its teams of doctors, nurses, logistician to conduct rapid health assessment while immediately reaching out the affected people to deliver medical care. The team also brought six tons of medical materials, drugs and supplies to improve water and sanitation. MSF operated two mobile clinics in Banda Aceh, visiting IDP camps and the areas where many people were gathered. MSF operation was later expanded covering Lamno Meulaboh and Sigli, as they identified urgent medical needs in the areas. Later on, MSF expanded its work to the area of mental health for people affected by tsunami as well as the conflict<sup>67</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> MSF, “One Year After The Indian Ocean Tsunami Disaster (December 2005),” Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) International, 2005, <https://www.msf.org/one-year-after-indian-ocean-tsunami-disaster>.





Emergency Community Health Centre constructed and assisted by Medicos Del Mundo on behalf of the Government and People of Spain.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) set up an emergency field hospital that started to operate on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2005<sup>68</sup>. Was also among the first medical NGO arrived in Aceh to deliver emergency medical assistance after the tsunami. IMC team that consists of international medical staff and their corps provided a broad range of health service that include emergency medical care, trauma care and maternal and child health, construction of health center, and provision of scholarship for medical students at the end of emergency phase<sup>69</sup>.

<sup>68</sup> Rafiullah Qureshi and Vincent Lusser, "Indonesia: ICRC Emergency Field Hospital Closes in Aceh - ICRC," 2005, Asia and the Pacific; Asia and the Pacific/Indonesia, <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/resources/documents/news-release/2009-and-earlier/6cwm95.htm>.

<sup>69</sup> IMC, "Disaster Relief | What We Do," International Medical Corps, 2005, <https://internationalmedicalcorps.org/what-we-do/>.



The role of foreign military personnel in emergency medical relief delivery also cannot be denied. The Australian Defense Force Medical Team with New Zealand Defense Force personnel established the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) field hospital in Banda Aceh and ran the surgical and infectious disease wards. The ANZAC surgical team were among the first to provide definitive surgical care to tsunami affected survivors.

ANZAC had carried out 173 surgical procedures for 71 patients in their facility and 119 procedures for 30 patients<sup>70</sup>. The SAF was the first to reach Meulaboh, the fishing town in east coast Aceh that had been severely destroyed by the tsunami and provided medical care to 5174 patients in Meulaboh and Banda Aceh<sup>71</sup>. In collaboration with Project HOPE, the hospital ship USNS Mercy of the United States arrived in the coast of Aceh and remain on station off the coast Banda Aceh until March 2005 to provide medical care for the tsunami effected people.<sup>72</sup>

Health assistance that is neutral and impartial can promote acceptance, build trust, and enhance social cohesion. Humanitarian health assistance also has more freedom of action, meaning that health support to the greater extent, can reach and serve all individuals including the conflicting parties. The neutral health intervention where all people and groups can enjoy the equitable access to health can promote trust and dialogue and further can promoted social cohesion.

When everyone can benefit from equitable access to health care, they have a higher chance to strengthen their capacity and make meaningful contribution to peace and resists the motivations to violence.

Health facilities and hospitals and other health facilities such as ambulances and vehicles carrying health workers and health assistance also typically apply a no weapon policy. This can also

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<sup>70</sup> Anthony J Chambers et al., "Operation Sumatra Assist: Surgery for Survivors of the Tsunami Disaster in Indonesia," *ANZ Journal of Surgery* 76, no. 1–2 (2006): 39-, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1445-2197.2006.03644.x>.

<sup>71</sup> HistorySG, "Operation Flying Eagle' Is Activated after Asian Tsunami - Singapore History."

<sup>72</sup> James B. Peake, "The Project HOPE and USNS Mercy Tsunami Experiment," *Military Medicine* 171, no. Supplement 1 (2006): S27–29, <https://doi.org/10.7205/MILMED.171.1S.27>.

promote a neutral environment and reduce the risks of tension. The efforts to raise awareness about this no weapon policy to communities and the conflicting groups is indeed an education and the promotion of peace.

The health impact of tsunami can be direct (such as deaths and injuries) and indirect, due to displacement, lack of access to health care, poor hygiene and sanitation supports, lack access to food and lack of protection. Hence, the scope of health intervention post-tsunami also focuses on prevention of diseases, it includes any efforts on disease prevention, surveillance, diagnosis and case management, outbreak detection and management, as well as prevention and management of malnutrition. From public health aspect, improving access to clean water, hygiene and sanitation is essential in disease prevention. IDPs living in overcrowded camps with sub-standard water, sanitation, hygiene promotion (WASH) facilities were prone to risk of water born disease. Organizations working in WASH such as Oxfam GB, the Red Cross, UNICEF had contributed significantly to preventing disease among the affected population.

In another aspect, the enormity of tsunami had also triggered and exacerbated mental health conditions of the people. Many endured the traumatic experience, the loss of family members and the loved ones as well as properties and their livelihoods. These all has tremendous and profound impact on mental health, and thus, mental health and psychosocial support is inseparable from the overall emergency health assistance.

The link between humanitarian nexus and peace in Aceh was also observed thorough various health programs that serve and address health issues as the results of conflicts, such as mental health. The post-tsunami humanitarian health assistance has opened the door for a better access to health care for conflict affected people inducing mental health and psychological problems that had long been unseen, hidden and neglected. IMC for example, had been able to reach out people with psychological mental health issue due to conflict through its post-tsunami mental health and psychosocial support program that initially targeted people affected by tsunami. The program that was implemented in Pidie, Aceh Besar, Aceh Jaya,

West Aceh had provided the much needed psychosocial and mental health support, not only to the people affected by tsunami

but also to those affected by the conflict. Community and local health personnel played an important role to inform and connect the organization with those in need of mental health and psychosocial support, including those affected by conflict.

Health assistance has allowed the grievance of the conflict-affected community to be heard and addressed, said former IMC staff, dr. Ashra Vina. This program helped address the trauma and provide closure, especially for those who feel the direct impact of the conflict. In addition, this intervention created a supportive and safe environment that consequently influenced people's motivation and capacity to engage in peacebuilding. The mental health and psychosocial support program took place from 2005 to 2010.

Furthermore, the disruption of the health system in Aceh as the result of tsunami has also disrupted medical supplies for on-going treatment such as maternal and child health service, mental health conditions, diabetes, Tuberculosis, and other chronic conditions as well as vaccinations. Humanitarian health intervention includes ensuring the availability and continuity of services for these condition that requires continuous treatment. In the recovery phase, the post-tsunami health programs start to put more emphasis on rebuilding the disrupted health system.

The post-tsunami health program gradually moved from provision of emergency health services to a more comprehensive health development. The rehabilitation and reconstruction of health infrastructures had further contributed in creating equitable access to health care. BRR and humanitarian partners for example, had built and renovated 211 Puskesmas, 276 Pustu (auxiliary health center), and 395 Polindes (village maternity post), in addition to the reconstruction of 28 hospitals across Aceh<sup>73</sup>. The hospitals and health facilities were restored and equipped with supporting facilities, which even before the tsunami were not available, allowing for better diagnosis and improving the overall services. This project was implemented in tsunami affected districts as well as in non-tsunami affected districts that were affected by conflict.

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<sup>73</sup> Abubakar et al., Pendidikan, Kesehatan, Peran Perempuan: Menyiapkan Generasi Bermutu, 73.

Issues in health sector in Aceh are not only limited to the lack of health infrastructures, but also its human resources. Interventions in health sector in the recovery and reconstruction phase also focused on increasing the capacity of human resources. The capacity building programs such as training in clinical management of illness, maternal and child health care and nutrition as well as training to operate the newly donated medical devices were provided to local health workers to ensure they can provide and continue the services even better in the future. At the grassroots level, the local communities are recruited and trained as community health workers. The revitalization of Posyandu Program by Save the Children in the districts of Pidie Jaya, Bireuen, Lhokseumawe and Simeulu Island for example was implemented in both the tsunami-and-conflict affected villages.

Posyandu program was a community-based health program focuses on mother and child health. The program conducted once a month by community health workers, known as cadets. The revitalization of Posyandu program was conducted in participatory manners, involving community leaders and members of the community in the design and implementation of the program. This program involved capacity building training for the cadets recruited from the community.

Alongside the Puskesmas staff, cadets received four months of training on Posyandu program and health promotion. At the end of 2006 more than 1000 cadets had been trained and 214 Posyandu were revitalized<sup>74</sup>. The element of participatory in program design and implementation helped enhancing social cohesion. The participatory-designed health programs that put people at the center of its interventions promotes more inclusive societies, which in turn is a key factor for sustainable peace. The capacity building element had helped in optimizing community's potential, making them more resilient.

The other aspect of humanitarian health assistance is how it linked to building local capacity to carry out the rehabilitation and reconstruction to long-term development. BRR for example,

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<sup>74</sup> John Paterson and Ratna Pawitra Trihadji, *Studi Kasus: Manik-Manik Terserak, Seri Buku BRR (Banda Aceh: Badan Rehabilitasi dan Rekonstruksi NAD-Nias (BRR NAD-NIAS), 2009), 130–36.*

had provided scholarships to local doctors to pursue medical specialization training to fulfil the need of doctors in different districts in Aceh. This not only eliminates the dependence on external support, but also ensure the sustainable development gains in health sector will continue to be carried out by the local communities.

The overall efforts in health humanitarian response in Aceh has demonstrated the links between humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding. It had promoted equal access to health care, resilience, and social cohesion, which contributes to addressing the inequity and marginalization that can be a trigger for tensions and grievance. This notion had inspired an idea for a better scheme of health coverage that can be enjoyed by all. Jaminan Kesehatan Aceh (JKA) or the universal health coverage for the Acehnese was born as a breakthrough in health sector development, providing better access to healthcare. When people are healthy, they work better, they can study, and they can participate more actively and constructively in peacebuilding. Hence, the efforts to build a healthier and more prosperous society is an effort to peace.

## **5.2 Human Capital Development Program – An Investment for Prosperous and Peaceful Aceh**

“Compared to other provinces in Indonesia, Aceh now has the largest well-educated society member graduated from various overseas universities. Some are from highly reputable universities. This is a great investment to maintain and build peace in Aceh” (Saiful Mahdi, 2021)

The longstanding armed conflict in Aceh had negative consequences on formal and non-formal education sector. Perhaps only schools in Banda Aceh and that were not deconstructed by both ex-combatants and the Indonesian military force. For GAM, formal education taught Indonesia ideology and symbols of Indonesia’s future agenda in Aceh that opposed all ideas carried out by them. In that sense, formal schools had to be damaged. For the military forces, all hideouts for the GAM should be damaged even if it was a school.

The World Bank estimated that from 1999-2002, when the conflict started escalating that was then responded by declaring Aceh under the Martial Law, about 49 percent of high school, 47 percent of middle schools, 54 percent of primary school and traditional Islamic schools and 74 percent of kindergartens were damaged<sup>75</sup>. Following the collapse of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement in 2003, another 880 schools had to be closed. More than 180,000 people left the province for survival. United National appealed to the conflicting parties to protect school and other educational facilities from destruction<sup>76</sup>. Some individuals persuaded GAM not to destroy the school, which was fulfilled if the school did not teach Indonesian language, Indonesian history, Pancasila of Indonesia constitution, and other classes teaching subjects related to Indonesia, often referred by GAM as Java.<sup>77</sup>

Such efforts did not help school from destruction very much as, in total, 4,376 schools or two thirds of total educational infrastructure, mainly in rural Aceh were damaged because of the conflict. Public and private universities were also affected by the conflict. Both rectors of State Islamic University and Syiah Kuala University were assassinated during the conflict. The conflict degraded the human capital of Aceh province as education was badly affected by the conflict and later by the Tsunami that destroyed more than 2000 schools and killed 2,500 teachers. These series of disasters had prevented more than 150.000 children from attaining schools<sup>78</sup>. These all put the education quality of Aceh behind other provinces of Indonesia.

The destruction of the tsunami brought hundreds of organizations to the northern tip of Sumatra Island. Initially they came for emergency responses for the tsunami. While they started

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<sup>75</sup> The World Bank, "Aceh Growth Diagnostic: Identifying the Binding Constraints to Growth in a Post-Conflict and Post-Disaster Environment" (Jakarta & Washington: The World Bank, July 2009).

<sup>76</sup> United Nations, "Indonesia: UN Agencies Urge Parties to Protect Educational Facilities in Aceh," UN News, May 21, 2003, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2003/05/68692-indonesia-un-agencies-urge-parties-protect-educational-facilities-aceh>.

<sup>77</sup> Merdeka, "Kisah Samsuir Lobi Petinggi GAM Demi Pendidikan Anak-anak Aceh Saat Konflik | Merdeka.Com," November 23, 2019, <https://www.merdeka.com/peristiwa/kisah-samsuir-lobi-petinggi-gam-demi-pendidikan-anak-anak-aceh-saat-konflik.html>.

<sup>78</sup> BRR and The World Bank, "Rebuilding a Better Aceh and Nias - Stocktaking of the Reconstruction Effort: Brief for the Coordination Forum Aceh and Nias (CFAN) - October 2005" (Banda Aceh, October 2005).

working on rebuilding permanent schools, emergency schools were built around the tents and shelters. Some students went to the schools that were still functioning in the nearest village and provided temporary schools in tents<sup>79</sup>. On 10 April 2006, Public elementary school 70 became the first fully reconstructed and refurbished school that was completed by Education International. The completion of the school in Gampong Jawa also came with education facilities, furniture, and equipment such as computer<sup>80</sup>. After conducted a comprehensive assessment, UNICEF later recruited more than 1,500 teachers to start teaching in July 2005<sup>81</sup>.

In emergency, humanitarian actors focused on providing access to education for displaced children. Apart from NGOs, individuals also took part in facilitating education during to displaced children during the emergency responses period. They came to emergency tents to teach children for free. They conducted storytelling and reading program and invited children to play and build a temporary playground for them. Some local organizations like Tikar Pandan, a cultural communal organization established in 2003, held traditional opera, drama, and cinema for the affected community. Another local organization Dokarim (taken after an Acehese famous poet and intellectual during Dutch colonial) held various poetries declamation and other programs and activities such as writing course, TV Eng Ong program and Cinema Fest. The TV Eng Ong depicted an opera with local history combined with culture. Their voluntarism and spirit to bring up local culture to contribute to addressing tsunami and conflict-induced psychological trauma had invited international donors to collaborate with them. With donor support, they organized Cinema Fest which was an entertainment and education program about conflict and peace from around the world. Cinema was a platform that was missing because of conflict and tsunami. Whereas it can be an important instrument in addressing psychosocial issue, educating the community, and connecting the community to the outside world. Support from donor also enabled them to add more

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<sup>79</sup> BRR and The World Bank, xx.

<sup>80</sup> EI, "Rebuilding Aceh Through Education For All," Education International, April 7, 2007, <https://www.ei-ie.org/en/item/17109:rebuilding-aceh-through-education-for-all>.

<sup>81</sup> BRR and The World Bank, "Rebuilding a Better Aceh and Nias - Stocktaking of the Reconstruction Effort: Brief for the Coordination Forum Aceh and Nias (CFAN) - October 2005," xx.

programs to develop human capitals and expand their activities to other four districts in Aceh.

While some emergency responses in education sector had been undertaken, all actors led by the BRR also had been working on the longer-term program to enhancing education quality in Aceh that was hampered by the conflict. In its reconstruction and rehabilitation master plan, the BRR addressed three important aspects to address<sup>82</sup>.

Extending access to education services for the whole population in Aceh and Nias, particularly for the nine compulsory years of schooling.

1. Improving quality and relevance of education through curriculum development and increasing quality, the number, and the professionalism of teaching and non-teaching staff.
2. Strengthening the management of education services.

These not only addressed education problems in the tsunami-affected areas but also in the whole province of Aceh that was affected by the conflict. As described earlier, conflict had damaged the whole aspect of education in Aceh, particularly in the rural areas, which was twice as bad as the tsunami.



A makeshift classroom in one of the emergency schools in Aceh Besar district.

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<sup>82</sup> BRR and The World Bank, 100.



The conflict not only affected community access to education but also prevented GAM members from completing their education at public and private schools. Data from the World Bank showed that most ex-combatants were between the age 21 to 40. Although they were literate, many of them did not graduate from high school. The absence of secondary school and higher education in Aceh affected both ex-combatant and non-combatant's prospects for future employment particularly in public services and managerial level positions<sup>83</sup>. This at least, reflected during the reconstruction and rehabilitation process, which many job opportunities were available. Many international and national organizations including BRR recruited staff from outside of the province, particularly for middle to senior level positions. They were equipped with necessary skills and experience to implement either tsunami or peacebuilding program in Aceh. Meanwhile many local people were employed for rather lower-level position such as driver, security, and local facilitator as they did not have the qualification needed for higher or senior level position. However, some Acehnese were able to secure mid-to-senior level roles in international NGOs or UN bodies in Aceh.

The BRR, a leading and coordinating agency for reconstruction and rehabilitation programs, implemented three phases to build back education sector in Aceh. From 2005 to 2006, they focused on reconstructing and rehabilitating schools, mainly kindergarten and elementary schools (nine-year compulsory education) while keeping their trajectory to reconstruct all level of schools in Aceh. In 2007, the focus was on capacity building for the teachers. This included training for teaching and non-teaching staff, providing learning tools such as computers, and laboratory equipment. BRR also helped students and those who had limited access to education, like the ex-combatants and victims of conflict to sit in national final examinations to pursue their further education.

The BRR school renovation and reconstruction work did not stop only at the high school level. It further helped students to attain higher education by providing scholarships. This helped eliminating financial issues, which is one of the main obstacles

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<sup>83</sup> Noble et al., Multi-Stakeholder Review of Post-Conflict Programming in Aceh, 19.

for many young Acehnese to pursue higher education. BRR also provided research grants to increase the quality of education in Aceh through research. In 2008, the BRR continued working on other projects such as early childhood education and vocational schools. In 2009, the agency also focused the work on operationalizing of the school. This included the operational costs. The program was given 42 fostered schools<sup>84</sup>.

In 4 years working the BRR had been able to train 39,663 new teachers to substitute 1,927 teachers killed in tsunami and conflict. BRR also built 1,759 schools along with the facilities to replace more than 6000 schools that were damaged because conflict and tsunami<sup>85</sup>. After the BRR and the external actors left, school continued to be built and renovated by local government. The government also recruited more teachers based on the national recruitment system. Many teachers were also able pursue further education at universities in Indonesia or abroad.

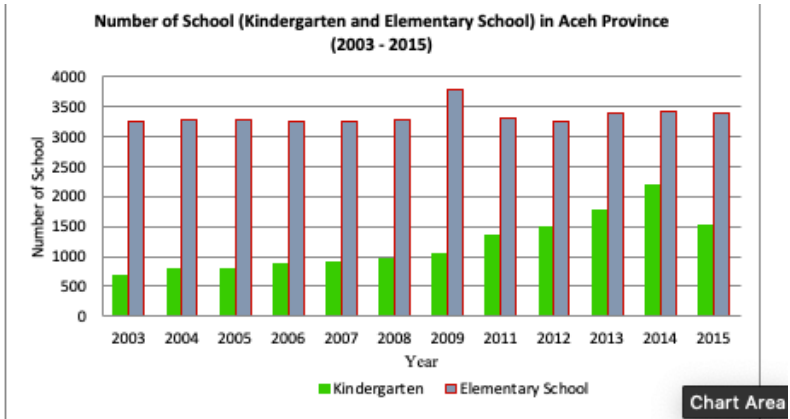
In 2009, at the end of the BRR's rehabilitation and reconstruction mission in Aceh, the number of schools – particularly at the elementary level –increase quite significantly. Following the end of the BRR mission, from 2010 to 2015 government continued to carry out the reconstruction of schools. Overall, elementary school outnumbered junior and high schools as to there were more options for the community to choose whether to continue their education to either public or private junior and high schools. The private schools were grouped into secular private schools that adopt curriculum of the public school or religious private boarding schools that have a mix of private and public-school curriculum (modern boarding school) or applying their own curriculum (modern or traditional).

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<sup>84</sup> Abubakar et al., Pendidikan, Kesehatan, Peran Perempuan: Menyiapkan Generasi Bermutu, 22.

<sup>85</sup> Abubakar et al., xi, 2; Noble et al., Multi-Stakeholder Review of Post-Conflict Programming in Aceh, 32.

Picture I: Number of Kindergarten and Elementary School in Aceh Province (2003-2015)<sup>86</sup>

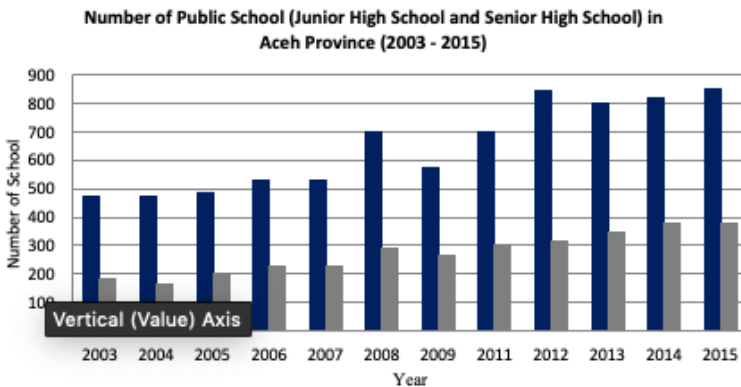


The segregated data of public versus private kindergarten and elementary school, however, is not available. The decreasing trend from 2011 to 2015 occurred particularly on the development of private schools due to competition between private schools or between private and the public schools. Management and financial issues also contributed in decreasing the number of private schools in Aceh.

<sup>86</sup> BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2004 (Banda Aceh: BPS & BAPPEDA Provinsi Aceh, 2005); BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2005 (Banda Aceh: BPS & BAPPEDA Provinsi Aceh, 2006); BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2003 (Banda Aceh: BPS & BAPPEDA Provinsi Aceh, 2004); BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2006 (Banda Aceh: BPS & BAPPEDA Provinsi Aceh, 2007); BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2007 (Banda Aceh: BPS & BAPPEDA Provinsi Aceh, 2008); BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2008 (Banda Aceh: BPS & BAPPEDA Provinsi Aceh, 2009); BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2011 (Banda Aceh: BPS & BAPPEDA Provinsi Aceh, 2012); BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2012 (Banda Aceh: BPS & BAPPEDA Provinsi Aceh, 2013); BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2014 (Banda Aceh: BPS & BAPPEDA Provinsi Aceh, 2015); BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2015 (Banda Aceh: BPS & BAPPEDA Provinsi Aceh, 2016); BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2013 (Banda Aceh: BPS & BAPPEDA Provinsi Aceh, 2014); BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2009 (Banda Aceh: BPS & BAPPEDA Provinsi Aceh, 2010).

It is quite unlikely that public schools experienced the decrease because they received the full support from the government, and it requires a very specific situation and complex procedure to shut down a public school. Furthermore, according to Saiful Mahdi, BPS's consultant and prominent tacticians at Syiah Kuala, that the decrease also due the government agency for statistical data collected secondary sources from relevant government institutions which did not actively participate in updating sharing their data to National Statistic Agency in Aceh province.

Picture II: Number of Public School (Junior High School and Senior High School) in Aceh Province <sup>87</sup>



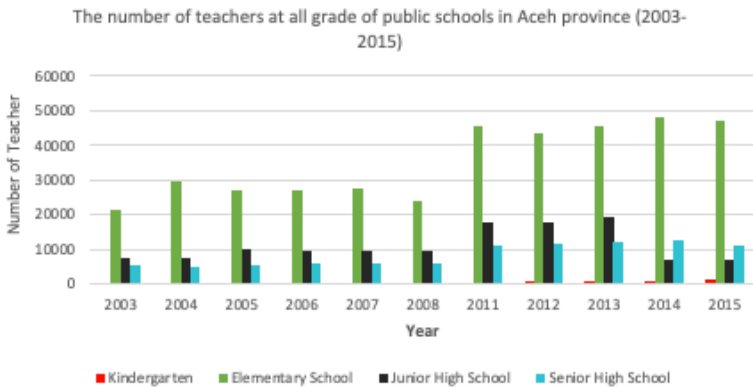
The number of public junior and senior high schools increased even after the BRR ended its activities in Aceh. Apparently the BRR focused on building the pre and elementary level of education

<sup>87</sup> BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2004; BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2005; BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2003; BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2006; BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2007; BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2008; BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2011; BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2012; BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2014; BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2015; BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2009; BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2013.

during their assignment in Aceh. During the BRR presence, however, the number of both junior high schools had increased in 2008. The reconstruction of school continued to be carried out by the local government after BRR left. In 2015 there were 851 junior high school and almost 379 senior high schools in Aceh.

With the increased number of schools, number of teachers at all schools had been also increased. The diagram shows that along with the increasing number of kindergartens, the number of kindergarten teacher was also increased, indicating more recruitment of teacher to support the infrastructure (2011-2015). This occurred even after BRR, and international organizations accomplished their works in Aceh.

Picture III: The Number of Teachers of All Grade of Public School in Aceh <sup>88</sup>

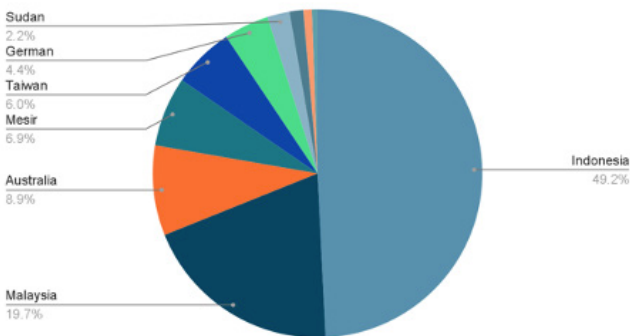


<sup>88</sup> BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2003; BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2004; BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2005; BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2006; BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2007; BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2008; BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2011; BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2014; BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2015; BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2013; BPS Provinsi Aceh and BAPPEDA Provinsi. Aceh, Aceh Dalam Angka (Aceh in Figure) 2012.

The graphics reveal that the Aceh government had a strong interest in investing in human capital development as it could contribute to and sustain the peacebuilding efforts even after BRR and other humanitarian agencies finished their work in Aceh. Furthermore, as part of human capital development, Aceh students had also received various scholarships.

It is one of the most noticeable post-tsunami assistances for Aceh people. Many high incomes developed countries such as Germany, the United States, Canada, Australia, and others waived application conditions, such as TOEFL or IELTS scores for Acehese students to win the grant. Some countries even created scholarship programs to support the Aceh reconstruction and rehabilitation projects, such as the Australian Award Scholarship. For example, other countries like Canada, Germany, and England gave larger slots for the Acehese and even facilitated language training. The provision of scholarships has become part of the peacebuilding effort to increase the human capital in Aceh after being devastated by a long-armed conflict and tsunami. The lengthy armed conflict had n access and opportunity for many of the Acehese to quality education.

Aside from scholarships offered by international agencies, Aceh government also provided scholarships for undergraduate, master, and doctoral programs for the Aceh people. The Aceh government had sent Acehese students to at least 24 countries to pursue for undergraduate, master, and doctoral programs.<sup>89</sup>



<sup>89</sup> Arfiansyah Arfiansyah, "Efektifitas Dan Kontribusi Dana Pendidikan Aceh: Studi Kasus Program Beasiswa Aceh," *Jurnal Ilmiah Didaktika* 17, no. 2 (2017): 157.



A teacher is giving her lesson in a makeshift elementary school classroom.

The scholarships also included medical specialization studies at various medical schools in the country, said Reza Hidayat Syah, a sub-coordinator from the Agency for Human Resource Development of Aceh Province (BPSDM).

The government's scholarship programs were designed for students living in remote districts such as Seumeleu, Singkil, and Southeast Aceh, where healthcare facilities and medical personnel are lacking severely,

Most potential youths from districts would be offered scholarships. Upon graduation, they would return to Aceh and improve long-neglected healthcare services in their hometowns due to the armed conflict. In addition, the commission also provided scholarships for qualified conflict victims, former GAM members, and their family members to attend universities. The recruitment process for the scholarship recipients from these group categories was different than the regular one.

Reza added that the Aceh government also ran a diploma scholarship program designated explicitly for the poor. This



program aimed to increase Aceh's economy through human resources capacity building. Providing the poor opportunities to enroll in universities would allow them to improve their skills, knowledge, and, more importantly, a sense of self-worthiness necessary for their life.

This could also contribute to problem-solving and improving local economy. The same idea and program had been also adopted by district governments. Making investment in human capital becomes the largest investment of Aceh. This program was well known in the west coast of Aceh and remote districts like Singkil and Simeulue districts. Since 2013, Singkil and Simeulue have invested in human capital development by sending talented children to further their study Banda Aceh. The district governments not only provide scholarships for higher education but they also give monthly scholarships to elementary, junior and high school schools. These programs had helped improving access to education for the poor.

Education is important in peacebuilding, in fact its positive effect to peace have been documented. Investment in education sector after conflict and tsunami is indeed a peacebuilding initiative. Its role in building economic generation, increasing rate of employment, improving social development have contributed to durable peace in Aceh, sustaining the positive peace for the for future Aceh generation.

### **5.3 Capacity Building in Knowledge Management Sector that Pushed Forward the Positive Peace**

The protracted conflict had a significant impact to education sector in Aceh, including the higher education. The two leading universities in Aceh, Syiah Kuala University (Unsyiah or now known as USK) and the State Islamic University Ar-Raniry (UIN Ar-Raniry) had suffered the consequences of conflict and the tsunami. In September 2000, Safwan Idris, the rector of the State Islamic University Ar-Raniry was shot dead by unidentified gun men and a year later the rector of Syiah Kuala University, Dayan Dawood, had been assassinated in September 2001. The tsunami



also claimed the lives of 30 lecturers at both universities while research activities was almost non-existent.

Aceh Research Training Institute (ARTI) and the International Center for Aceh and Indian Ocean Studies (ICAIOS) spearheaded the initiatives to increase knowledge management sector in Aceh. ARTI was established to support the collapse of higher educational institutions in Aceh, particularly research activities. The institute was established with support from Myer Foundation and AusAID through eight Australian universities that was led by Professor Michael Leigh of Melbourne University<sup>90</sup>.

Before conflict in Aceh escalated, UIN Ar-Raniry was the main education institution for Islamic studies in Asia. Syiah Kuala University was also known for high quality and activities on social research. Pusat Latihan dan Penelitian Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial (PLPIIS) was the prominent training center for social science of Syiah Kuala University. The institution later known as Pusat Pelatihan Ilmu Sosial dan Budaya (PPSIB), which then became Badan Riset Ilmu Sosial (BRIS). It was the first research center for social science in Indonesia that had attracted many researchers from across Indonesia to learn and conduct research<sup>91</sup>.

ARTI had trained 420 young researchers and lectures from all universities in Aceh. The training includes introduction to research methods and on-the job field research training. The training focused on different branches of social sciences such as law, religion, culture, politics gender and others. The goal is to increase the quality research so public can learn about the complexity of social issues in Aceh.

Furthermore, ARTI had attracted many international scholars to collaborate in different research projects about Aceh. ARTI also provided grants for doctoral students around the world to conduct research in Aceh. ARTI's attempt to build an international environment in research activities had contributed to the open learning circle and building the wide network of researchers and scholars around the globe. ARTI had given birth to excellent

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<sup>90</sup> ARTI, *Penguatan Penelitian Lokal Dalam Konteks Global* (Melbourne: Bamba Press, 2010), 3–4.

<sup>91</sup> ARTI, 4.

scholars and researchers of Aceh. Many of them have succeeded in their education and career and contribute significantly to pushing forward the positive peace and development in Aceh.

Another initiative to improve the knowledge management sector in Aceh was the ICAIOS. The idea to establish a world-class research center was initially initiated by Anthony Reid, a New Zealand-born scholar and historian well known for his works on Southeast Asia. Reid proposed three main ideas in his meeting with Professor Mangkusubroto; to establish a research center, organize an international conference, and support anthropology projects during the rehabilitation and reconstruction process in Aceh.

The primary purpose of the research center was to introduce Aceh to the world through research and to expand public knowledge about other aspects of Aceh besides conflict and tsunami. Furthermore, the center aims to support government policies through a research-based policy development approach. They both agreed that the center should be free from being managed by a particular institution, potentially making it exclusive to others. The center had to be an integral part of higher education systems in Aceh and to be led and run by local Acehnese to ensure its sustainability.

The first conference was conducted for the launching of the research center. Scholars and researchers from around the world were invited to the conference where they presented their studies on the Aceh and the Indian Ocean region.

The History of Aceh was among the main interest of many Acehnese and ICAIOS had triggered interest of local communities about research and to learn more about their own history. Masyarakat Peduli Sejarah (MAPESA), Pedir Meuseum were among initiatives of local communities, inspired by the ICAIOS that focused on Aceh history study as a learning reference that could shape its history in the future.

The ICAIOS has been a leading research agency in Aceh. Various projects, training and seminars were conducted by ICAIOS. Discussion series were organized, inviting different scholars and researcher to share their research finding and new knowledge to public. The ICAIOS had become partner for the local government in increasing the quality of public policy through research and research training.



Prof. Anthony Reid, from the Asian Research Institute (ARI) of National University of Singapore (NUS), delivered an opening remark at the opening ceremony at the First International Conference on Aceh and Indian Ocean Studies witnessed by Irwandi Yusuf (the first Governor of Aceh from Ex-combatant) and Prof. Kuntoro Mangkusubroto (Head of Aceh-Nias Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency/BRR). This conference was the birth of the International Centre for Aceh and Indian Ocean Studies (ICAIOS) which is one of BRR's legacy. This Research Center continues to hold conferences bi-annually until 2020.

Furthermore, ICAIOS also supported the government to address crucial public issues by conducting research and advocacy. During the implementation of this research in 2021-2022, the ICAIOS had been supporting provincial office for religious affairs in developing pre-marriage courses, disaster mitigation modules. Together with Baitul Mal agency of Aceh Province, agency that is designed to collect, manage, and distributed religious property, ICAIOS initiated for governor policy to provide proper guardianship mechanism to orphan or child without guardian. To date, the ICAIOS has been the most sustainable initiative of BRR and one of very few organizations established after the tsunami that remains progressive and sustainable.

#### **5.4 Civil Society as An Active Agent in Humanitarian, Peace, and Long-term Development in Aceh**

Due to the armed revolt led by Ulama against Indonesia in the very early time of Indonesia's independence, religious based civil

society movements grew larger than other movements. Association of Aceh Ulama (PUSA, Persatuan Ulama Seluruh Aceh) was one of motors for development and social change in Aceh. It initially emerged as a revolt organization against Indonesian government<sup>92</sup>.

In the 1990s, some local NGOS emerged in Aceh. In 1993, the local NGOs established Forum LSM Aceh, a supporting and coordinating forum of the local NGOs. There were 43 local NGOs involved in the forum. This forum was a hub and supporting system among the NGOs. It served as platform for the NGOs to collaborate with other local, and national and even international organizations.

According to Afrizal Tjoetra, a senior activist and co-founder of Forum LSM, during the conflict, the forum had run various projects on livelihood and agriculture in Pidie district. They came across several human rights abuses occurred in their project area in Pidie, which was among the concentration areas for military operation against GAM. The forum gradually shifted their work from livelihood to law and human rights including advocacy for the prevention of sexual harassment and abuse. They provided support to the victims and to report their findings to the House of Representatives and to the National Commission for Human Rights.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of August 1998, to boost further the advocacy, several Aceh civil society organizations established the Coalition of Non-Government Organizations for Human Rights (Koalisi NGO HAM) to conduct advocacy for the victims of human rights abuse at national and international level. Twenty-eight organizations and individuals joined the force. This new coalition focusing on human rights abuse in Aceh gained support from international, national, and regional civil societies organization

In 1998, a new university student movement emerged in Aceh following the political turmoil at national level in May 1998. This movement was motored by several university student organizations. Later, they established the Central Information for Referendum Aceh or Sentra Informasi Referendum Aceh (SIRA)

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<sup>92</sup> Nazaruddin Sjamsuddin, *Pemberontakan kaum republik: kasus Darul Islam Aceh, Cet. 1* [Ind. ed.] (Leiden: KITLV, 2010), 6.

to demand for the referendum in Aceh following the East Timor's independence.<sup>93</sup>

After the tsunami, civil society organizations in Aceh actively involved in humanitarian response, rehabilitation and reconstruction through various programs and activities. After the disaster, a group of civil societies established Aceh Recovery Forum (ARF) in February 2005 to support the post-tsunami rehabilitation and reconstruction programs in Aceh. Specifically, they worked in seeking ideas and inputs from civil society organizations in Aceh to discuss the rehabilitation and reconstruction process in Aceh, including input for evaluation of project in various vital sectors.

Another civil society organization established was the Aceh Development Funds (ADF). It is an intermediary organization to mobilize funds and other resources and channeled them to various civil societies organizations in Aceh. The institute established itself as an organization of trust fund or grant-making and acted as an intermediary.<sup>94</sup>

To increase the capacity and participation of civil society organizations in Aceh, a training center named IMPACT was formed. The main mission of this center is to produce "1000" facilitators to support the rehabilitation and reconstruction works in Aceh along with some Acehnese professionals, ulama and academicians. The participation and involvement of civil society organizations and individuals had also contributed to promote local values of Aceh and enhanced the sense ownership toward the rehabilitation and reconstruction programs. Various local civil society organizations also received capacity building supports from international NGOs, allowing them to better contribute to the long-term development efforts during and after the end of rehabilitation and reconstruction phase.

Civil society organization were also active in supporting peacebuilding efforts in Aceh. After the signing of Helsinki peace agreement, Aceh civil society organizations participated in the development of LoGA. Civil society organizations in

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<sup>93</sup> Arfiansyah Arfiansyah, *Syariat Islam, Politik, Dan Perempuan Di Aceh* (Banda Aceh: Ar-Raniry Press dan Lembaga Naskah Aceh (NASA), 2012), 69–71.

<sup>94</sup> Noble et al., *Multi-Stakeholder Review of Post-Conflict Programming in Aceh*, 146.

Aceh also actively contributed to monitoring and safeguarding the implementation of the peace agreement and LoGA. They remained active in conducting advocacy for the victims of conflict to have their rights fulfilled and supported several economic empowerment projects for the poor and communities affected by conflict. They also involved as partner of the local government in policy development. Participation from civil societies in policy development and in public issue had helped in improving government performance that is essential to pursue long term development and achieve durable peace.

## 5.5 The Reintegration of Ex- GAM Combatants

“I was an elementary school teacher in Bireuen, but then I got involved in GAM. The peace process has brought security, no more feelings of fear. Like many others, I have been able to come back home, to start my job. Without fighting, I can work.”

Mukhtar Hassan, ex-combatant for Aceh Free Movement, 2007.

On 14th of November 2005, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono issued a decree instructing 16 ministries and three national agencies – including the National Intelligence Agency (BIN) and the BRR, and the Governor of Aceh to follow up the implementation of Helsinki MoU. The Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal and Security Affairs then followed up the decree by establishing a team to do the socialization of the peace agreement<sup>95</sup>.

Due to the large scope of peacebuilding and reintegration process, the team then set up a specific body for reintegration of GAM ex-combatants known as the Agency for Reintegration of Aceh or Badan Reintegrasi Aceh (BRA). BRA was established on 11th of February 2006 or five months after the signing of Helsinki peace agreement.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Noble et al., 134.

<sup>96</sup> Lina Frödin, “The Challenges of Reintegration in Aceh,” *Accord, Aceh-Indonesia*, no. 20 (September 2008): 54, <https://www.c-r.org/accord/aceh-indonesia/challenges-reintegration-aceh>.



This institutionalization of the reintegration process and peacebuilding activities was the actualization of the MoU article 3.2.3 that stated that Gol and the authorities of Aceh will take measures to assist persons who have participated in GAM activities to facilitate their reintegration into the civil society. These measures include economic facilitation to three beneficiary groups; former combatants, pardoned political prisoners and conflict affected civilians. The reintegration fund under the administration of the authorities of Aceh would be established.

Until 2015, the BRA had a very limited authority in implementing the mandate. The members of BRA were appointed by the governor of Aceh through a decree. In Indonesian legal system, the decree bestows only for executing the mandate without any authority to initiate, develop and implement programs. With such situation, BRA was a just a facilitator to deliver the reintegration fund from the central government, posted through the Agency for Social Affairs, to the three main beneficiaries<sup>97</sup>.

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<sup>97</sup> Noble et al., Multi-Stakeholder Review of Post-Conflict Programming in Aceh, 136.



Furthermore, the members of the BRA lacked of operational fund to support their work. This challenge had hampered BRA to implement its mandate for the reintegration process.

Having learned that BRR had suffered organizational limits, Aceh government issued regional regulation (locally called Qanun) No. 6/1015 constituting BRA as a formal agency in 2015. This had enabled BRA to propose and manage budget independently as well as implement program. This institutionalization development has given BRA larger space for innovation, creativity, and independence financially.

The initial work of BRA focused on economic support of the three main beneficiaries. Its main focus was to fulfill their basic needs and enabling them to restart their live after. For the ex-combatants and pardoned political prisoners, the process had no significant challenge. The definition of the groups was clear and the reliable data were available. However, there was no clear definition for the conflict affected victims.

Geographically, the entire Aceh province – at one time or another – has experienced the trauma and seen the impact of a military conflict. Therefore, the basic assumption was that everyone inhabiting Aceh was basically the victims of conflict. Without experience and references and demanded to deliver the mandate as soon as possible, BRA started mapping the need of the ex-combatants by calling for proposal from the individuals. They received more than 15 thousand proposals.<sup>98</sup> BRA were puzzled. With limited resources and human capitals, BRA could not learn and select the proposals as all the applicants were deemed eligible. The call for proposal was then retrieved from the mass media. The assistance was then delayed that arose protests from the beneficiaries.

With the support and advice from the World Bank, Japanese Government through the International Organization for Migration (IOM), AUSAID-Lestari of the Australian Government, the operational structure of the BRA was simplified for efficiency and effectiveness of the work. The new team structure consisted of five persons: the head, secretary, and three program coordinators for economy, social and culture, and one data and monitoring. The

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<sup>98</sup> Noble et al., 146.



team recollected the beneficiaries' data from their representative at district level. It decided form of assistance without calling for any proposal as it did the first time. BRA required the ex-combatants to submit their data that includes their names, address, and bank account, to which the reintegration fund will be transferred.<sup>99</sup>

Nevertheless, procedure was problematic at the time as the combatant elites were reluctant to do so. They worried if the government would use the data for a hidden agenda. "The trust between the GAM and Indonesia government was not built well yet at time. It was understandable as it was a new phase for both conflict parties. But trust was very essential for the work, and we did our best to build trust between them," said Yusny Saby, the former head of BRA.

BRA showed commitment and competence. They were Acehese professionals who were known for their integrity. "Honest communication was the key element to build trust. We also had a direct 24 communication with Aceh governor and Indonesia elites without any protocol required" added Yusny Saby, who was the third head of BRA appointed since November 2005. Under his leadership, BRA succeed to implement their mandate.

Most of the financial supports and assistance that BRA delivered to the beneficiaries came from the national and provincial budget. The budget was assigned for economic supports, conflict compensation, healthcare, education (scholarship) and housing for the ex-combatants (military and nonmilitary wings of the GAM), pardoned ex-combatants, surrendered GAM members during the conflict, militia, and victims of the conflict (widows, orphan, and people who permanently disabled because of the conflict).

Housing was the largest BRA program. Until 2019, BRA had built 16,468 houses in the whole Aceh, mostly located in most conflict-affected districts: East Aceh, North Aceh, Pidie and Bener Meriah district. Until 2009, BRA directly distributed Rp. 1.7 trillion from national and provincial government to the beneficiaries, which was about 47percent of total funding for peace and reintegration program in Aceh<sup>100</sup>.

In addition, from 2006 to 2009, the reintegration fund was installed to Kecamatan Development Program, the pre-existing

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<sup>99</sup> Noble et al., 146–47.

<sup>100</sup> Noble et al., 59.

government development program at Sub-district level. This assistance was meant to reach all undocumented victims of conflict. Unlike regular BRA's assistances that was given directly to individual, the Kecamatan Development Program was designed as a bottom-up program in which the community decided the program and targeted beneficiaries either individual or as a group. The program was implemented in 67 sub-districts covering 1,724 villages in the whole Aceh. It disbursed Rp. 218 billion to support various development programs to the villages with different amount of grant depending on the impact of conflict to the village. Almost 90percent of the fund went to support the economic activities such as livestock, small trading business for individual and agriculture. The remaining 10percent went to building communal infrastructures. This initiative stopped in 2009 due to different understanding about the concept of reintegration between Indonesia government, BRA, and donor.

Aside of BRA, other actor such as IOM played a remarkable role in supporting the reintegration process of ex-GAM participants. Following the signing of Helsinki Peace Agreement in 2005, IOM launched the Post Conflict Reintegration Program (PCRP) funded by the Japanese Government<sup>101</sup>. IOM worked closely with Ministry for Laws and Human Rights and Department of Social Affair. The organization was assigned by the Indonesian government to lead the other international organizations in developing programs to support the reintegration process within the framework of peace process in Aceh

Using the Information, Counselling and Referral Services (ICRS) models, IOM was able to reach and assisted 3,044 ex-GAM combatants and 1,911 amnestied political prisoners to find employment and re-start their new lives. The program was implemented in 2,192 villages throughout Aceh<sup>102</sup>.

In 2007, the Japanese Government extended its support to IOM in Program for Peacebuilding Assistance in Conflict-affected Communities in Nangroe Aceh Darussalam to enable IOM to

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<sup>101</sup> IOM Indonesia, "Post-Conflict Reintegration Programme in Aceh: Building a Lasting Peace" (Jakarta, August 2006).

<sup>102</sup> Jihan Labetubun, "Japan Extends Support for Aceh Peace-Building, Backs IOM Youth Job Creation," International Organization for Migration, November 29, 2007, <https://www.iom.int/news/japan-extends-support-aceh-peace-building-backs-iom-youth-job-creation>.

continue supporting the reintegration process of the former GAM combatants, ex-political prisoners and unemployed youth in conflict affected areas of Aceh. Targeting 5000 young people and local business, the program had helped in providing job opportunities for the unemployed youth, contributing to conflict prevention, and reducing the risk of drifting into crime. The program was implemented in conflict affected districts including South Aceh, South East Aceh, Gayo Lues, Central Aceh, Bener Meriah, Bireuen and North Aceh<sup>103</sup>.

### **Reintegrating into the Society: The Story of Rusyidah Mahmud**

Rusyidah Mahmud, a female former GAM soldier, joined the rebel group after the death of her two brothers during the conflict. "I joined GAM because I wanted to defend Aceh and Acehnese's dignity and avenge my brothers' death," said Mahmud.

As part of her reintegration process, Rusyidah received money from the government to start a new life. Furthermore, she had received training in clothes making, which would allow her to pursue her dream of running a small tailor in her village.

"I enjoy the peace, and I'm grateful for what I have, but many other female ex-combatants like me have not yet received the reintegration assistance fund," Mahmud said, describing one of several issues faced by many ex-GAM rebels.

"The children of my late brothers are also victims of the conflict, but they, too, have not received any assistance, and I am worried about their future," Mahmud said.

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<sup>103</sup> Labetubun.

### ● **5.5.1 Case Study: The Community-led Conflict Reconciliation in Bener Meriah**

Little is known about the Aceh armed conflict's impact on different components of its society. Aceh is home to at least ten ethnic groups. The international and national support focused on the districts severely affected by the armed conflict. According to a multi-stakeholders review on post-conflict programming in Aceh, the area severely affected by the war are regions heavily frequented by former GAM rebels, particularly East Aceh District, North Aceh District, Bireuen, and Sigli. Therefore, the four areas became the most significant support recipient in the reintegration program.

The composition of community in the four districts is almost monogamous. Most of the population was of Aceh ethnic group. There were other ethnic groups living in the areas, such as Javanese and Chinese who were very few and they were also the victim of the conflict. Some were killed, some chose to flee out of Aceh, and some just had to stay for different reasons.

Bener Meriah is a district in central region of Aceh. The composition of communities in Bener Meriah and most Central Aceh region is rather heterogenous. Gayonese ethnic is native and the majority in the area. The Javanese is the second largest ethnic group and the Acehnese from various places comprise the third largest ethnic group in the region.

The armed conflict had affected the social relation between these three ethnic groups, who used to live side by side in peace for a long time. The Javanese was mostly the target of GAM during the conflict, aimed to increase their anti-Indonesia campaign as the Javanese was associated with its domination in Indonesian government.

During the conflict, the Indonesian military force provided extra protection to the Javanese as they were the target of the GAM. For their own protection, the Javanese also created a militia organization called the defender of homeland or Pembela Tanah Air (PETA). They fought against GAM. The Gayonese was in between of the two groups. Many of the Gayonese were also members of GAM, however, many of them stood at Indonesia's side.

After the signing of the peace agreement, the conflict caused horizontal effect to these ethnic groups. The strong social cohesion of these three ethnics had ruptured. Unlike in the coastal Aceh areas, the conflict is more vertical between the GAM and the TNI. GAM could claim that they represent the community since they received the support from the most Acehnese. The reintegration process from anthropological point of view was relatively easy for the ex-combatants in Aceh coastal areas. The only issue was about the funding.

Nevertheless, in Bener Meriah and Central Aceh District, the peacebuilding process needed to consider the horizontal conflict between the three ethnic groups involved. The same approach used in the coastal areas in reintegration process cannot be delivered as it is in Bener Meriah and Central Aceh. It needed more than just economic support, housing or rehabilitation of land. Conflict reconciliation among the three ethnics group had to be undertaken.

Community leaders and prominent figures of the three ethnic groups took an initiative to restore the relationship and social cohesion. A major cultural event was initiated to strengthen their relationship, to contemplate the past peaceful days and forgive each other. In 2012, Muzakir Manaf, the ex-military commander of the GAM also visited Bener Meriah and held a cultural ritual in Panji, a predominantly Javanese village. They held a cultural feast in which a big healthy water buffalo had to be sacrificed and cooked as the main menu. He was guarded by Sutrisno, the head of PETA. The ex-PETA members also actively took part in political campaigns for former GAM elites who ran for governor elections in 2009 and 2014. This support, however, was more of a personal initiative rather than as a group.

There is no data documented a formal top-down initiative to the reconciliation of the central of Aceh province. Neither the BRR nor the BRA documented any programs of reconciliation in both Central Aceh and Bener Meriah district. The reconciliation was initiated independently by the elites of each group. Local civil society organization and NGOs supported very few activities related to the reconciliation. KontraS was perhaps the first organization came to central part of Aceh and learned the excess of conflict in the society. KontraS initiated

a communal meeting and held a cultural ritual for peace. The organization invited Javanese of PETA to visit the headquarter of ex-GAM combatants in Kenawar Lot village of Central Aceh District. It took some phases and specific approach to make the meeting happened.

Musdawalat, KontraS deputy director, approached women's religious circle of both GAM and PETA. "Only the women who were able to talk to each other freely as they always meet in the same religious study circles. Men were afraid to see each other as they are still suspicious to each other" said Musdawalat. The women then talked to their husband and encouraged the visit. The meeting for reconciliation took place in a mosque of Kenawat Lot in 2007.

Redelong Institute supported by Oxfam also had organized several small meetings for the reconciliation of the three ethnic groups. Fakhruddin, the director of the Redelong institute said that it was a very small support but very meaningful for the peace in both Central Aceh and Bener Meriah. Redelong Institute also organized trainings for women on peace and reconciliation. It had conducted meetings inviting the representative of the groups to talk peace and reconciliation to restrengthen the social cohesion once they all had before the conflict.

## **5.6 The Role of BRR in Reintegration of GAM-Ex Combatant**

Peacebuilding and supporting the reintegration of GAM ex-combatant were not the official mandate of BRR. The agency was designed by Indonesian Government as a response to the devastating tsunami in Aceh. Indonesia government, however, was mandated by the peace agreement to involve GAM ex-combatants in the rehabilitation reconstruction process. Professor Mangkusubroto's initial idea to involved GAM ex-combatants in BRR was to maintain security that was vital for rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts in Aceh. After the signing of the peace deal, many of GAM ex-combatants laid down their arms yet had no job to survive. Under Professor Mangkusubroto's leadership, nearly



From left to right, Mr. Edy Purwanto (Deputy of Operation of BRR), Prof. Kuntoro Mangkusubroto (Head of BRR), Mr. Malik Mahmud (Former Prime Minister of GAM), and dr. Zaini Abdullah (Former Minister of Health of GAM) were discussing the plan and progress of the Aceh rehabilitation and reconstruction in the first office of BRR. GAM members were also involved in the whole rehabilitation and reconstruction process as well as in peacebuilding programs.

900 GAM ex-combatants worked for BRR in different position, such as driver, cleaner, and mostly guards of many of BRR 's important projects.

The active involvement of GAM ex-combatant in BRR had allowed them to participate in recovery and rehabilitation process in Aceh, which is essential for peacebuilding. For the first time, through the BRR, both GAM ex-combatants and Indonesian Government worked together to rebuilding Aceh.

Former GAM members were also in the top of BRR senior management structure. Among others, was Teuku Kamaruzzaman. According to Kamaruzzaman, one of the mandates of Helsinki MoU was involving five former GAM members, including those who were involved in peace process into the organization structure of the BRR. The candidates were chosen and delegated by the top elites of GAM. However, due to different vision regarding Aceh development in post conflict and tsunami among ex-GAM, only Kamaruzzaman remained at the top structure of the BRR until 2009. From the beginning he was posted as the secretary general to Professor Kuntoro Mangkusubroto, the director of BRR. The governor of Aceh, regardless his political affiliation, would



automatically act as the vice director of BRR. At that time, Irwandi Yusuf, a former GAM strategist, won the governor election, and consequently he automatically became the vice director of BRR. Being at the two top positions in the BRR had allowed ex-GAM to participate in planning, supervision, as well as monitoring and evaluation of BRR programs.

Former GAM leaders, through their council, decided, choose, and provided support to anyone from their group to sit at top position in the BRR. There were attempts to fail Kamaruzzaman by some former GAM members. They demanded for more benefit for the ex-combatants whether project activities, work opportunities, and fundings (donation and such). Kamaruzzaman, whose background was an activist and had led some national youth organizations in Aceh during the conflict, rejected all these uncountable requests from his ex-combatant fellows. Some ex-GAM top leaders learned about this issue and invited Kamaruzzaman to a meeting. They asked Kamaruzzaman whether it is possible to secure more senior positions for GAM ex-combatant in the BRR, so that they could involve more in the rehabilitation and reconstruction process. He agreed to meet some of the demands but also asked their assistance present the BRR “the most competent GAM-combatants in reconstruction project.”

Since the beginning, GAM council realized the demand for reconstruction of Aceh. Their call to Kamaruzzaman was basically to accommodate the protests from their own members in the field who thought that it was not only an opportunity to participate in rehabilitation and reconstruction process, but more than that they regarded it as an opportunity to gain financial benefit. The absence of competent individuals, had made Kamaruzzaman become the only GAM ex-combatant at the top structure of BRR until its mission concluded in 2009.

Armada Saleh is another former GAM rebel who held a mid-level position in the BRR. Saleh was among the most senior members of GAM who joined the organization in 1970s as a successor of his late father, Saleh Adri, a commander of Darul Islam; a movement that was succeeded by the GAM in an attempt for Aceh liberation. During conflict, Saleh's last position was the governor of GAM of central Aceh region consisting Central Aceh, Bener Meriah, Gayo Lues, and Southeast Aceh. Saleh had an impressive background in development and reconstruction. He obtained his undergraduate



degree from one of the most prestigious universities in Indonesia, the Institute of Technology of Bandung (ITB). After his graduation, he was involved in many national mega projects which were mostly located in Java. One of his notable works in Aceh province was the airport of Lhokseumawe, which ironically was also a place where he was departed to Java as political prisoner.

Kamaruzzaman had no knowledge behind his appointment as the BRR secretary general, nor did he know about Saleh's work in the authoritative body. Both Kamruzzaman's and Saleh's involvement in the BRR was decided by solely by the top leaders of ex-GAM at the council. This showed the serious efforts and strong commitment of ex combatant in development and peace after the Tsunami in Aceh.

Saleh was the regional deputy of the BRR covering Central Aceh, Bener Meriah, North Aceh, and Bireun. He was given the authority to implement and monitor the rehabilitation and reconstruction process in these four districts. During his tenure until 2008 (he resigned due to health issues), he gave some small portions of the projects to some of the commanders of ex-combatant in these four areas.

He expected that the commanders would share the benefit of the projects to their ex-combatant subordinates. He even trained and showed how to manage the project to these GAM ex-commanders although they had very little knowledge on reconstructions and management. Some commanders were able to carry out the project successfully. However, some took benefit from the project for themselves and put the reconstruction projects at risk. Regarding the attitude, Saleh did not blame them. Instead, he saw it as a learning process as the peacebuilding itself is very long process. She stated that:

"It was one of the consequences of conflict. I was lucky to receive education from one of the most prestigious universities in Indonesia. But thousands of children had to drop out of school because of conflict. Since then, they were raised in the jungle and all they knew was carrying the guns. They knew very well how to make gun and explosive weapons. These people are now with us after the peace agreement. It is my responsibility to train them and give them chance to start living after the conflict ended. If they failed, it was a learning process for them and others, not a total

failure. The cost lost because of it was much cheaper than letting them continue killings and put the peace at risk”

He was invited by the top former leaders of GAM to visit their headquarter in the jungle of Pidie. There, he met with other ex-combatant members and asked the leaders about their livings and what they consume daily in the jungle. Their responses surprised him as they did not earn anything and consumed what the jungle provided to them.

Mangkusubroto then decided to employ them to guard BRR project. His concern was that if these ex-combatants had no job after they might lift their arms again for living and this will ruin peace and make security deterred. Involving unskilled ex-combatants in rehabilitation and reconstruction process was part of the long process of peacebuilding that goes beyond the peace agreement. In his interview, Mangkusubroto stated that “It is important to employ them not only to helping them restarting their life after wondering in the jungle as guerilla, but it was also to eliminate the security threat to the reconstruction process. Aside from TNI, it was only the ex-combatants who had weapons and capability to ruin process”. He said peacebuilding is a learning process for both Indonesia and GAM as well as the entire community in Aceh. Reflecting on the imprisonment of Aceh Governor Irwandi Yusuf for corruption, Mangkusubroto said “Although Irwandi Yusuf was arrested for corruption, it was a learning process. They (GAM) were not sufficiently trained for development and management. It is not their thing. Surely, they will make mistakes from which they will grow better.”

Munawar Liza, the ex-GAM member and former mayor of Sabang conveyed his opinion during our interview. “Many of the ex-combatants were poor and had no job after the conflict, although they received some financial supports for philanthropies and/or individual they have never been rich like the local political elites.”

“Meanwhile there were the BRR and international organizations managing a huge fund for rehabilitation and reconstruction of Aceh and therefore, they cannot just be the spectator of the process. All of them have to be involved to fulfill their development agenda and receive support to start their life.”

As the director of BRR, Mangkusubroto realized that there is no development without peace and there is no peace without the development. This a fundamental principle underlying his decision to involve many of the GAM ex-combatants in various positions and projects at the BRR. The BRR's contribution in GAM reintegration process had contributed to the peacebuilding process, ensuring security for smooth delivery of humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation and reconstruction process in Aceh and supported the economy for many ex-GAM combatants to re-start their lives.

## **5.7 Democratization and Political Transformation of GAM**

The Indonesian government reasserted their agreement through article 77-88 of the Law on Aceh Governance, which was later affirmed with President Decree 20 of 2007 on Local Political Party in Aceh. This widely opened the participation of the ex-combatants in all sectors of Aceh governance. In 2006, the first election in post conflict and tsunami, ex-GAM started the participation into politics following the Indonesia democratic systems. At the time, there was no local political party established. There were two candidates from GAM running for the ballot of gubernatorial election. Irwandi Yusuf and Muhammad Nazar eventually won the gubernatorial election of 2006. Irwandi was the former GAM strategist and Muhammad Nazar was the leader of SIRA Aceh, a civil society organization that supports Aceh's referendum<sup>104</sup>.

The year 2006 marked the official engagement of ex-GAM in Aceh politics following the national democratic system. It was not only at provincial level, but ex-combatants did also secure leadership positions through independent mechanisms at districts and municipality levels that were the concentration of their movement during the conflicts. They won the election in 9 of 23 districts and municipalities of Aceh Province.

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<sup>104</sup> Ichal Supriadi and Shin Seung Hwan, "ACEH: Balloting for Peace and Democracy PILKADA Nangroe Aceh Darussalam ( NAD) 2006" (Bangkok: Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL), 2006).

Those who won the first election in the post conflict of Aceh were not part of the top elites of GAM. None of them had served as commander or wing commander of the ex-combatants during the conflict. For the first elections, none of the top elites ran for the candidacy. They were all intellectual of the movement. This showed the ex-GAM were organized in a democracy system in which the most qualified member would be supported for any position.

In total, 80percent of Aceh population or 2,1 million people participated in literally the first democratic election in Aceh. It was the highest public participation at the time. Many international and national observers commented that it was truly a democratic stage. National politicians welcomed the output without many negative comments although it was the ex-combatant winning the election<sup>105</sup>.

However, the election of 2012 also showed the internal disharmony among the elites of the ex-combatants. Due to different vision on Aceh's future among the elites and how to achieve them, Irwandi Yusuf, the incumbent candidate, established another local political party, Party of National Aceh. For some time, this cleavage affected the ex-combatants and sympathizers at the grassroot level<sup>106</sup>.

The experience of former GAM rebels in the first election was quite useful for the second and mayoral election in 2012. The two political parties of the ex-combatants started collaborating with national political parties and national figures. The collaboration for the mutual interests in Aceh for both local political parties and national political parties showed a positive progress of reintegration. They learned a lot about the Indonesian political systems and practices, bureaucracy, and structure building of the governance. Most importantly, many of the former GAM elites reintegrated well into Indonesian systems.

The first election for the member of house of representative brought more members of the ex-combatants into Indonesian

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<sup>105</sup> Rakesh Sharma, "2006 Pilkada Elections in Aceh: An Overview of Pre and Post Election Surveys" (Washington DC: IFES, June 2007).

<sup>106</sup> Mohammad Hasan Ansori, "From Insurgency to Bureaucracy: Free Aceh Movement, Aceh Party and the New Face of Conflict," *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 1, no. 1 (2012): 31.

election systems. Those who compete for a chair at the house of representative were unlike the delegation of the ex-combatants to the first gubernatorial and mayoral election which was dominated by their intellectual group. It was very well known that most of the ex-combatant members were less educated and trained in politics. Many of them did not finish senior high school as their education was interrupted by their direct involvement in the armed conflict. As mentioned by Saleh above that their best skill in warfare. Obviously, large number of them were not skillful and qualified for office works.

2007 was also marked as the first establishment of Aceh local political party. Initially, there were six local political parties were established. One of them was Aceh Party or Partai Aceh (PA) previously named as Independent Aceh movement or Gerakan Aceh Mandiri which was protested by Jakarta as it carried the old mission of GAM that did not suit spirit of the peace agreement. Later in 2021, due to internal instability, Irwandi Yusuf, elected governor in 2006, founded another local political party; Partai Nasional Aceh (PNA). This party is more progressive compared to Aceh Party which to some extent and time still carries the old vision of Free Aceh Movement. Many progressive ex-combatants and activists joined PNA for its progressive campaign for the Aceh future. Those who joined SIRA, a movement organization mobilizing mass demonstration for a referendum also converted the organization into political party with the same abbreviation for it stood for Independent Voice of Aceh Society (SIRA, Suara Independen Rakyat Aceh). However, majority members of the local political parties lacked knowledge and experience in political practices and development<sup>107</sup>.

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<sup>107</sup> Ben Hillman, "Power-Sharing and Political Party Engineering in Conflict-Prone Societies: The Indonesian Experiment in Aceh," *Conflict, Security and Development* 12, no. 2 (2012): 149–69.

## List of the first local political parties in Aceh

No	Party's name	Abrr	Founded in	Leader
1	Partai Aceh	PA	2007	Muzakir Manaf
2	Partai Daulat Aceh	PDA	2007	Jamaluddin
3	Partai Aceh Aman Seujahtra	PAAS	2007	Ghazali Abas adan
4	Partai Bersatu Aceh	PBA	2007	Ahmad Farhan Hamid
5	Partai Suara Independen Rakyat Aceh	Partai SIRA	2007	Taufik Abda
6	Partai Generasi Aceh Beusaboh Ta'at dan Taqwa	GABTHAT	2007	Tgk. Abu Lampisang
7	Partai Nasional Aceh	PNA	2012	Tgk. Mukhsalmina

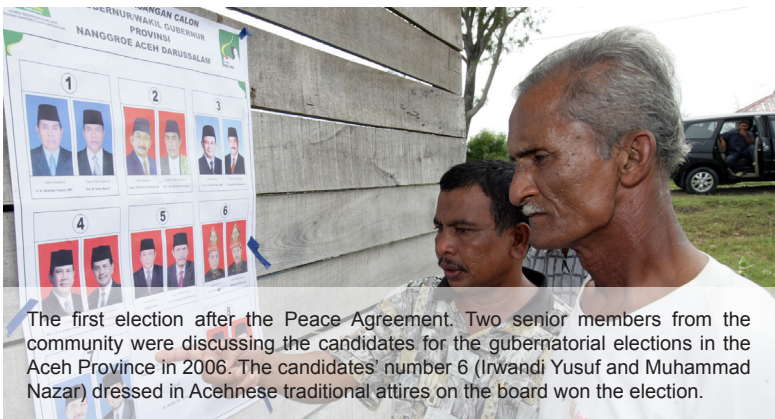
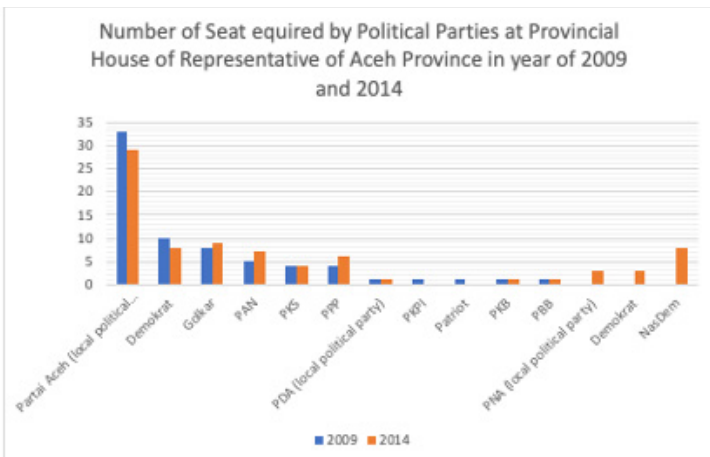
Collected from various sources

Some civil society organizations realized the ex-combatant problems. Knowing the ex-combatant participation in the politics under the Indonesia political system was a crucial moment for the peacebuilding, they then initiated the establishment of the School of Democracy that was supported by some international and national organizations. Through the School of Democracy, civil society organizations prepared the ex-combatants' qualifications to compete for the house of representative.

The school trained and educated the ex-combatant who planned for the political competition. It equipped them with skill and knowledge on national political system, political party management, mass organization, development, election, public speaking to convince voters, legal drafting, and politics both knowledge and pragmatic. So useful the training for those who compete for the election, the School of Democracy attracted not only members from local political parties, which were dominated by ex-combatants and local religious leaders, but also cadres from national political parties in Aceh. The cadres of national political parties attended the school to help in increasing their political

skill and knowledge about Aceh politics which gradually changes. Until 2010, the School of Democracy had conducted 12 series of trainings.

According to Taufik Abda, one of the school's initiators and local political party leader, almost all the trainees of School for Democracy participated in the election for the House of Representative at the provincial and district levels. But not all local political parties joined the election as they failed in administrative processes. The first election in 2009 participated by PA, SIRA, and PDA. While in 2014, SIRA declined which at the same time, PNA was established and made their way to the house of representatives.



The first election after the Peace Agreement. Two senior members from the community were discussing the candidates for the gubernatorial elections in the Aceh Province in 2006. The candidates' number 6 (Irwandi Yusuf and Muhammad Nazar) dressed in Acehnese traditional attires on the board won the election.

In 2008, BRR as part of its peacebuilding programs, supported an event about the 2009 General Elections in Bener Meriah District. Ahmadi (second left), Head of the Independent Commission for Elections of Bener Meriah District, accompanied by the other members were presenting the rules and procedure of the 2009 General Elections.



However, in both elections (2009 and 2014) PA was their dominated. Although there was a slight decline in 2014 as result from public evaluation of their performances in the first tenure.

In 2009 PA received 33 seats of total 69 seats at the Provincial House of Representative. This shows the influence of ex-combatants in community. With its dominance at the house of representative, the ex-combatants directly involved in leading and managing regional development. In districts that were the bases of the ex-combatants; Pidie, North Aceh and East Aceh, PA even successfully secured more than 50percent of total seats. However, in 2014 the ex-combatants' votes were split into PA and PNA led by Irwandi Yusuf. Due to their performance in the first tenure, public gradually turned their support to PNA. Consequently, vote for PA decreased. PNA obtained very few supports for their first appearance in political elections. PDA struggled to keep their existence while SIRA failed to fulfill the pre-election requirements. This trend continued to the following elections in 2019 and 2014<sup>108</sup>

<sup>108</sup> Usman Usman, "Analisis Eksistensi Partai Politik Lokal Di Aceh Pasca Perdamiaan," *Jurnal Serambi Akademica* 9, no. 4 (May 30, 2021): 520–37.



Political Party	Acquired Seat at Provincial House of Representative in three consecutive period		
	2009-2014	2014-2019	2019-2024
PKB	1	1	3
Gerindra	0	3	8
PDI-P	0	0	1
Golkar	8	9	9
Nasdem		8	2
PKS	4	4	6
PPP	4	6	6
PAN	5	7	6
Hanura	0	0	1
Demokrat	10	8	10
Partai Aceh	33	29	18
SIRA	0	0	1
PDA	1	1	3
PNA		3	6
PBB	1	1	0
PKPI	1	1	1
Patriot	1		
<b>Total of members of House</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>Total Political Party in House</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>15</b>

Collected from various sources



**KRU SEUMANGAT INONG ACEH**  
**BAK DUEK PAKAT KEU AMAN**  
**MAKMU DAN ADEE**  
Anjong Mon Mata Banda Aceh, Tanggal 20-22 Februari 2000

## CHAPTER VI

# THE ROLE OF ACEHNESE WOMEN IN PEACE, HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE AND DEVELOPMENT

One of the most vulnerable groups in crisis and emergency is women. Yet, despite their vulnerability, they are also the source of remarkable strength and resilience. Acehese women's role in peace, humanitarian response, and development is an undeniable historical fact. Acehese women possess a strong humanitarian instinct that manifested in their acts throughout the 30 years armed conflict and up to the devastating tsunami.

They were the first to raise awareness of terrible human rights violations in Aceh and make the issue a national concern. Women



Acehese women held the fourth Acehese Women Congress in Banda Aceh municipality.

in conflict-affected villages became the grassroots promotor of peace, playing a significant role to foster peace in their naturally-instinctive way. In the post-tsunami response, women in Aceh exerted the same strength and resilience they displayed during the war by taking the lead in organizing various community pockets, from those whose homes were spared in the tsunami to those who struggled to live in IDP camps.

Amid the loss of family members, fear and sadness, women remained active to helping their respective community groups. They organized communal kitchens, provided their neighbor's shelter, treated injured, helped unaccompanied children reunite with their parents, and organized the cleaning of public facilities. However, women were slowly "herded" back to their traditional roles after the post-crisis situation. As a result, their contribution during the crisis and emergencies received little recognition.

This chapter weaves women's personal experiences, collect scattered notes, and reviews the various strategies that Acehnese women used during conflict and after the tsunami. Finally, this chapter also discusses the role of Acehnese women in peace, humanitarian response, and development to adequately show their remarkable contribution to shaping

## **6.1 The Role of Women in Peace**

In 1990, in a village in rural Aceh, a group of women was planting rice in the rice fields when a skirmish between GAM and TNI took place before them. The women grouped themselves into two groups and separately approached both warring sides, demanding a cease-fire.

"Stop fighting for a moment! We are planting rice; if we can't plant them, our children won't be able to eat!" Subsequently, both warring sides laid down their arms for a brief truce, allowing the women to finish their work safely. This story and many other stories describe Acehnese women's bravery, motivation, and power in peace contribution.

Women – along with their children as casualties of war – also endured immeasurable misery during the 30-year conflict in Aceh. Numerous cases of rape and sexual violence -- in some cases, resulting in death -- had gone unreported or forgotten during the

conflict in Aceh. Quite frequently, women were forced to witness the torture of their loved ones, causing immense psychological and emotional trauma.

Women who lost their husbands during the conflict instantly became breadwinners and providers for their families and this strength was perhaps because they possessed the strongest humanitarian instinct. Stories about their courageous acts during the conflict were not uncommon, from visiting warring parties to demanding the release of innocent civilians to evacuating corpses in the forest or the roadside.

Whether from nature or nurture, they supported their fellow women in need, providing emotional and psychological support to other women, helping take care of the children, cleaning the house, and giving donations or loans to support those with financial needs. The resilience and motivation of women to achieve a semblance of peace during the conflict in Aceh were remarkable. Nevertheless,



A group of Acehese Women in Jakarta took the street campaigning for peace in Aceh. They protested Aceh's status under military operation and urged the Government of Indonesia to return the capital that was extracted from Aceh's natural resources as a condition for peace.

their role was often neglected and perceived as individual acts rather than organized actions. Finally, some woman activists realized that women needed to organize themselves to become a movement that could push for peace.

Women's activists started to develop strategies to providing support to other fellow women and raise public awareness of the suffering women during the lengthy conflict. For example, they frequently used pre-existing religious and social gatherings such as "Wirid Yasin" or Qur'an recitation gatherings to meet and speak with women in conflict-affected villages. In addition, they implemented a "mentoring" program to develop an awareness of sexual violence and abuse of women and established mechanisms to report the cases.

Law authorities' oppression became one of the main obstacles faced by the activists to implement the programs openly and safely during the intermittent 30-year war. For example, unlawful arrests of activists falsely accused of affiliation with either party often occurred.

The activists often used their own house as a safe shelter for the women victims of conflict, and the majority were sexual violence-related cases. Furthermore, they organized evacuation for the victims to receive further support, including medical and psychological treatment.

Understandably, the most challenging obstacle faced by the field activists involved victims of sexual violence to speak up about their harrowing experiences.

A women's rights activist who shared her experience with the research team said that at one point, she even pretended to be a fellow victim to convince another rape victim to share her painful ordeal. The women's rights activists also gathered credible data and information from the victims to raise awareness of the violence and shared them with the media and NGOs as part of the human rights campaign.

The activists also tirelessly advocated for lifting martial law in Aceh to the government and fighting for peace, one of which by reporting the human rights violations and immeasurable suffering people in Aceh had to endure as the consequences of the conflict between GAM and TNI. Women had ignited the idea of peace dialogue that had significantly impacted the decision of both GAM and the government of Indonesia's high-rank officials to sit at the



negotiation table. The women's groups that fight for peace started their effort by developing a collective spirit and building their commitment to peace.

Amid a possible crackdown by security forces, women's groups organized rallies and demonstrations to demand peace in Aceh. They also distributed flowers to people on the streets to raise awareness about peace and encourage more people to support peaceful means to solve the conflict.

Discourse on conflict resolution through peace dialogue had become essential to Aceh's peace initiation process. Still, on the contrary, GAM and its supporters regarded peace as a setback in their struggle that aimed for Aceh's independence.

According to Eka Srimulyani, a State Ar-Raniry Islamic University professor, this challenge failed to discourage women's groups' efforts and instead further fueled their motivation to push for peace in Aceh. Women were the first group to advocate for peace in Aceh, while other groups were inclined to either the option of independence or a referendum for Aceh. Some groups, especially students, were more inclined to a referendum, but women's rights groups believed peace talks would be the best solution to conflicts.

However, notable Acehnese human rights activist Suraiya Kamaruzzaman said women's rights groups regarded peace negotiations as the best option for everyone. Several women's civil society organizations conducted small meetings to push their peace agenda to discuss strategies, priorities and plans to achieve a peaceful Aceh. One of the most notable strategies was to hold an all-women congress -- an idea initiated by activists such as Naimah Hassan, Suraiya Kamaruzzaman, and Syarifah Rahmatullah.

Hassan had developed a network with the other women's organizations to align their goals and objectives. This network later gave birth to the first Acehnese women's congress. Nonetheless, challenges such as the lack of resources and the escalation of the conflict had hindered the women's groups from materializing this plan quickly and forced them to shelve the idea until security conditions improved.

Approximately four years before the Aceh tsunami, the coalition of women's rights groups and activists remarkably delivered the first All-Acehnese Women's Congress, known as Duek Pakat Inong

Aceh (DPIA), aimed to promote the peace agenda. Setting the tone for ushering in changes and peace, the three-day congress (20-22 February 2000) took place to create a safe, peaceful, and justice for Aceh. Eka Srimulyani observed that the congress had taken place before the issuance of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on the involvement of women and integration of their perspective in peace and security.

Amid terror and security concerns Srimulyani pointed out the congress participants came from across Aceh, approximately 500 women from various backgrounds and professions participated in the congress, including housewives, lecturers, farmers, lawyers, health care workers, activists, students, entrepreneurs, and religious and community leaders.

Some of them were the direct victims of conflicts. The congress also served as a platform for the women to share their pain and bitter experience of the violent conflict that had made them lost their husbands and loved ones, deprived from their homes, or suffered violence and abuse.

Putting peace in the center of its agenda, the congress produced 22 recommendations centering on the demand of peace negotiation to end the conflict and participation of women in peace process and governance. The result of the congress provided a clarity on the aspiration of the Acehnese people toward peace and better participation of women in the peace process. Although after the congress, many of the women activists who initiated the congress receive threats from the groups that supported the notion of the independence of Aceh, but their fighting for peace did not end. After the DPIA-1, they formed a coalition named Balai Syura Inong Aceh (BSuIA) to implement the agenda and the recommendations of the congress.



Seven ulamas from seven districts of the Aceh Province were taking part in the opening ceremony of the first Aceh Women Congress in 2000. On the right, the Steering Committee (Ms. Suraiya Kammaruzzaman with a black hijab) and a head member of the Organizing Committee (Ms. Naimah Hasan on Suraiya's left) were accompanying the women ulamas to formally open the first Aceh Women Congress.



As the follow ups, the recommendations from the congress were disseminated to various stakeholders, including President Abdurrahman Wahid, for the government to prioritize dialogue as the solution for Aceh conflict. Facilitated by the Center for Humanitarian Dialogue (previously known as Henry Dunant Center), from mid-May to June 2000, women's civil society organizations lobbied various institutions and organizations, including government for involvement of women in the negotiation.

Nevertheless, the participation of women in the peace negotiation remained minimal. Shadia Marhaban was the only woman delegate on the GAM negotiation team, while the GoI had no woman representation on its negotiation team. Similarly, there was a lack of women's voices in the Helsinki MoU implementation.

Despite the apparent involvement of women as GAM combatants, not a single woman was identified in the first list of reintegration fund recipients issued by BRA.

In the LoGA, the participation of women was nonexistent, and as a result, no articles had been included for promoting a better policy for the protection, participation, and empowerment of women in Aceh.

The first DPIA had become the forerunner of the post-independence Acehese women's movement, igniting the fight for more meaningful involvement of women in peace and security and the political realm. After the signing of the Helsinki Peace Agreement, women remained active in advocating their rights to participation in peace, security, and politics to shape the future of Aceh.

The second All-Acehese Women's Congress, or DPIA-II, with the support of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), took place in June 2005 and allowed women to discuss their current needs and priorities after the devastating tsunami. The congress also focused on the lack of consultation decision-making process in relief and recovery works, including the lack of protection of displaced women and girls. Progress continued with the third DPIA was held in 2011 and the fourth occurred in November 2017.

More work remains in future for better empowerment, representation, protection, and recognition of the roles of Acehese women. However, the birth of the Acehese women in the civil society amid conflict stands as a remarkable example of women's power in making and sustaining peace in Aceh.

## **6.2 Vulnerability versus Strength: Women in Tsunami and Their Important Role in Relief, Recovery and Reconstruction**

Women were among the most vulnerable group in population. Women can be direct or collateral victims of different form of violence during conflict, either physical, psychological, social, or economic. According to Oxfam report, women may had been killed

four times than men in the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami<sup>109</sup>. The high mortality in women in disaster is linked to their pre-existing vulnerabilities. In many societies women bear responsibility to take care of their family, including the elder members of the family. Many women were also unaccustomed to swimming, making it difficult for them to survive. In coastal villages in Aceh there were stories about women running back to shore to search for missing children after the earthquake, hence, they had no time to escape the tsunami.

Women who survived also faced numerous challenges. The tsunami was traumatic per se. But the loss of family members, properties and the uncertainty about their future had added to the deep psychological trauma. Women and girls in emergency camps and settlements had limited protection, exposing them to risk of sexual violence and rape. In addition, orphaned and unaccompanied girls were also susceptible to trafficking. Few cases of human trafficking were reported following the tsunami<sup>110</sup>. Until March 2005, there were 11350 pregnancies identified among 133,318 women of reproductive age in the emergency camps, makeshift shelters, and host families<sup>111</sup>. In forced displacement and breakdown in health services, women face greater risks to their maternal life.

Humanitarian aid was often gender blind. In camps and emergency settlements women's specific needs were often ignored or overlooked. Women were not given adequate chance to participate in planning and implementation of humanitarian response. As a result, women's need was not entirely met. For example, items like sanitary pads, undergarments and toiletries for women were often not included the non-food item package distributed to emergency camps and settlements. Without adequate consultation with women, latrines were built in locations

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<sup>109</sup> Oxfam, "The Tsunami's Impact on Women," Briefing Note (Oxfam International, 2005), <https://reliefweb.int/report/indonesia/tsunamis-impact-women>.

<sup>110</sup> Reuters, "Indonesia: UNICEF Confirms Tsunami Child Trafficking Case - Indonesia | ReliefWeb," July 1, 2005, <https://reliefweb.int/report/indonesia/indonesia-unicef-confirms-tsunami-child-trafficking-case>.

<sup>111</sup> ICMH, "Interim Report of a Meeting on Public Health Impact of the Tsunami" (Geneva, April 2005).



Women's active participation during the post tsunami rehabilitation and reconstruction in Aceh.



that were not entirely safe for women. Recognition toward women's need and voice, however, gradually improved as early recovery phase began.

Understanding women's vulnerability in the time of crisis can help humanitarian system to better response to the needs of women and thus, making the overall response more effective. Nevertheless, women were not merely the vulnerable victims and passive recipients of humanitarian assistance. In fact, women were the active agent during crisis.

They brought vital skills, resources, and experience to contribute to humanitarian response. Women were among the first responders in tsunami, whose role was paramount in the survival of their families and communities. Like Asiah, who returned to her house to save her children and mother in-law after the earthquake, women would take the risk to save their families, sometimes sacrificing their own. Stories like Asiah's was not uncommon in Aceh when the tsunami hit. Their role was instrumental in ensuring the most vulnerable members in the community did not get left behind.

In the aftermath of tsunami many women in villages and emergency camps quickly took responsibility to providing care and organizing support for their communities. They organized communal kitchen, cared for unaccompanied minors, and helped them reunited with their family, arranged the distribution of aids, provided emotional support for their neighbors and communities and others. In some instances, women also engaged in works traditionally considered as man's work such constructing makeshift tents, clearing lands and rebuilding houses. This particularly true for women who lost her husband, son, or other male family members in the disaster.

Women also have strong local knowledge and links with others in the area where they live, which is an important resource in humanitarian response. With this knowledge, many women had been sources of information to guide NGOs and other humanitarian actors in conducting their rapid need assessment and response. Women displayed exceptional leadership in rebuilding their community after the disaster. Although it was not very common, but there were communities and camps led by women in Aceh following the tsunami. The story of Mak Cut – a well-known woman activist in Lhok Mee area of Aceh Besar – exemplifies one of only

in the area where they live, which is an important resource in humanitarian response. With this knowledge, many women had been sources of information to guide NGOs and other humanitarian actors in conducting their rapid need assessment and response. Women displayed exceptional leadership in rebuilding their community after the disaster. Although it was not very common, but there were communities and camps led by women in Aceh following the tsunami. The story of Mak Cut – a well-known woman activist in Lhok Mee area of Aceh Besar – exemplifies one of only a few female camp leaders whose remarkable role had significant impact in rebuilding her community after the devastating tsunami (see Mak Cut from Lhok Mee).

### **Mak Cut from Lhok Mee**

During our daily visit to emergency camps after the tsunami, we heard about a small IDP camp in the hilly village of Lhok Mee, Aceh Besar. Located about 35 km from Banda Aceh, Lhok Mee resides in Lamreh hills, that is a sparsely populated and secluded.

In 2005 before the arrival of the NGOs, very few people knew or ever visited these rocky but picturesque meadow hills, which hide a stretch of beautiful white sandy beach. We arrived at the village around January 2005 after seeing a group living in makeshift tents. Later we named it Lhok Mee Internally Displaced People (IDP) camp.

A local man at the camp had told us about Mak Cut – a standard reference for women homemakers – whom he described as the camp leader. We had never asked what her real name was but little did we know that she would play a critical empowering role for the camp and its inhabitants.

Mak Cut was in her 50s when we first met her. Dressed in a simple sarong and headscarf, she greeted us with a friendly smile. Before the tsunami, Mak Cut said she and many other IDPs were livestock farmers and fishermen who used to live in the same village down by the beach.

Although the tsunami has somehow spared the lives of her fellow villagers, everyone there had lost their houses and

livelihood; Mak Cut told us about the origin of the Lhok Mee IDP camp. Of the 155 IDP camps across the Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar districts where our organization had been working then, Lhok Mee, occupied by approximately 40 families (around 200 people), was the only camp led by a woman.

Mak Cut said many people at the IDP camp badly needed relief aid, and she and her team often had to walk seven kilometres to the nearest subdistrict of Krueng Raya to get medicine and logistics for the camp.

Mak Cut's leadership and people skills significantly contributed to our organization's achievement in providing Lhok Mee with Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities, electric generator engines, and bicycles. She sought the input and took in perspectives from women in the camp by regularly visiting tents and encouraging them to give opinions and contribute to the community's decision-making process.

Mak Cut also organized camp residents to distribute non-food items, assist our team's construction of wells and latrines, and set up the camp's sanitation committee to look after the facilities.

Lhok Mee gradually became exposed to humanitarian agencies, and after our visit, various NGOs arrived in the camp to support the community. As a result, food shortage no longer became a concerning problem with the support of many organizations.

As the construction of new homes started, cash grants began trickling in for the affected communities to start small businesses and restore their livelihood. Lhok Mee is now a tourist destination, offering a blend of the natural scenery of the green hills and turquoise sea.

The once-tranquil white sandy beach we used to frolic with the Lhok Mee community is regularly packed with visitors. Small food stalls run by the local people are now lining the Pasir Putih beach.

It has been over 16 years since I last saw Mak Cut, but I heard she is running a food stall by the beach now. Mak Cut from Lhok Mee is undoubtedly an active recipient of the post-tsunami assistance and an essential agent in the response.

Her inspiring leadership role was central in rebuilding the Lhok Mee community and empowering its people.

As told by M, the former staff of an NGO worked in Lhok Mee

Many studies reveal that women's leadership in humanitarian response can create a highly effective response and recovery, yet this resource remains underutilized. More often, women were excluded in the decision-making process at all levels, yet interestingly they kept seek out opportunities to take part in the response and contribute.

This reflects women's tremendous resilience and their leadership capacity. Furthermore, in situations, where women had the opportunity to exercise and sharpen their leadership skills and knowledge, women had helped in transforming community's attitude toward women's leadership.

Following the tsunami, many women in Aceh had the opportunity to work with international organizations in different positions. From economy aspect, this gave women opportunity to earn better income after the tsunami. Other than that, they were also exposed with international working environment, which provided them with opportunity to learn from experts and professionals from around the world. The opportunity to meet and interact with different people and various organizations had given women with opportunity to expand their network, which is important for their personal and professional development.

Many humanitarian organizations also conducted various capacity building opportunities for their staff, including trainings, on-the job coaching, and mentoring, which helped women gain a new insight, enhanced their skills on their job and equipped them with capacity important for their future career.

An interview with a former staff of a medical NGO working in Aceh reveals how the opportunity to work and interact with professionals and experts in the NGO had helped her find her passion and prepared her to pursue her future career.

"I was on my third year in medical school when tsunami hit and following the tsunami, I worked as a translator for foreign doctors



providing health care to tsunami affected communities. The doctors didn't just regard me as their translator because they knew I was a medical student, they often taught me how to examine patients, how to do use stethoscope and other medical instruments correctly when we visited our patients in the camps. Being in my third year, I had not yet been taught these skills before. So, when I started my training in the hospital, I already had the skills and more confident to meet patients, than other students. I also had worked as assistant for an expert in mental health. I learned a lot from her. This also had triggered my interest on community mental health and helped me pursuing my career in this area" (Ms. AV, a former staff of an international NGO working in tsunami response- currently working as a mental health expert at a UN agency)

In another interview, a woman who worked in an international NGO following the tsunami also explained similar story about the opportunity to develop personally and professionally and being recognized for her leadership capacity.

"After three months working for the organization, I was promoted to be the team leader of the camp monitoring team. My supervisor told me that he saw the leadership potential in me, and he wanted me to develop this capacity by taking up a leadership position. I wasn't confident initially, as my team members were mostly men and older than I was, but over time I became more confident. Yes, I made mistakes, I was not very patients back then, but I learned from my mistakes and became better as a leader. I learned a lot about leadership and managing people in challenging environment from my supervisor" (Ms. D, former staff of international NGO working in Aceh, currently taking up a leadership position in an international organization).

The recognition of women's leadership capacity and building on their capabilities is paramount to enhancing the accountability of humanitarian system to the affected population, building community resilience including women, strengthening women's rights to participate in response and decision-making process and helping better transition from relief to recovery<sup>112</sup>.

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<sup>112</sup> Alison Barclay, Michelle Higelin, and Melissa Bungcaras, "On the Frontline: Catalysing Women's Leadership in Humanitarian Action" (UK: ActionAid International, 2016).

Starting from early recovery phase, gender issue gradually received more attention. Gender was gradually mainstreamed in all recovery and rehabilitation sectors. UNIFEM assigned a gender advisor in BRR to provide technical guidance to formulate gender policy, address gender issues and mainstream gender in rehabilitation and reconstruction works.

Gender policy and strategy were developed to provide guidance for each rehabilitation sectors to integrate gender into their programs and activities. The strategic document on gender also set up indicators that must be achieved by each sector in rehabilitation and reconstruction works. The availability of sender segregated data was part of the policy, which was developed to inform projects to better address the needs of women and for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation. A set of practical checklists was made available to promote active participation of women in post-tsunami rehabilitation and reconstruction projects, which was further expected to ignite gender in Aceh.

Positive and maximum involvement of women will only occur when gender issues have become a mainstream construct and are integrated into the existing social system. In post-tsunami humanitarian response context, the integration starts from the process of scoping, planning, and implementing the program to making a follow-up plan and evaluation. When this is happened, then the programs would make a positive impact on women.

In the context of women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming, the BRR had successfully implemented several initiatives through development of specific policy, programs, and budget allocations. For example, the Joint Land Titling Policy, in which women together with men in their families are registered as the owners of the land and/or house they receive from the BRR. Previously, it was customary for the land or buildings to be registered under the men's name only. This joint certification initiative had promoted not only women's right to ownership, but also access to their other rights, including their economic rights. This joint certificate can be used by women to access loan and economic assistance.

Each sector in the BRR had allocated programs aimed for empowering women. For example, the social, cultural, and religious unit had implemented a writing course program and facilitated the publishing of books written by female students. In

economy sector, technical and capital assistance were provided to women's business groups or individuals to resume and start small business.

The BRR also established a women and children directorate. In addition to taking a cross-cutting approach to mainstream gender in different other sectors, the establishment of specific directorate that address women issue had allowed for more programs and activities on women's empowerment to happened, including better access to budgetary assistance for women for the respective activities.

Nevertheless, women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming efforts in rehabilitation and reconstruction were not free from challenges. Many important stakeholders such as community leaders, traditional leaders, religious scholars, and local government even including staff that implemented the rehabilitation and reconstruction programs, were not aware or sufficiently trained on women's empowerment and gender issue. Consequently, programs implementation was hindered.

Furthermore, Aceh's culture and customs that were laden with strong patriarchal culture was among the major challenges for women's empowerment efforts. There had been several times trainings for women was dismissed by community members because of their disagreement with the definition of women's empowerment. While it somehow reflected the poor understanding of the community on women's empowerment concept, it also indicates the need to raise awareness and strengthen the understanding on gender to the community leaders, particularly at grassroot level. The deliberation and consensus to discuss critical issues is carried out first at the village level. The application of law and custom occurs usually at the lowest government level, which is the village. With gender mainstreaming at the village level, there would be gender equality at the higher level.

Administrative barriers such as lengthy procedure and lack of segregated data were among other challenges in the implementation of programs aimed at women's empowerment and gender equality. One of the indicators of women's involvement can be seen through the availability of data during the rehabilitation and reconstruction process. This includes data on the type of program, the management structure of program implementers, as well as data related to the beneficiaries of the program. Nevertheless, in

some projects these data remained lacking. In addition, the lack of coordination and integration of programs by humanitarian workers on women's empowerment and gender had made programs become comprehensive and effective.

Approaching the end of rehabilitation and reconstruction phase, however, the understanding on gender justice and equality was improving. A number of trainings and seminars on gender issues were held to empower and inform participants including tsunami affected communities, students, NGOs, and government policy makers.

It required a concerted political will from all actors involved in rehabilitation and reconstruction to mainstream gender in all stages of the program. Starting from gender sensitive planning, assessment process, implementation, monitoring, evaluation to the data produced, all of them must reflect gender mainstreaming.

Gender mainstreaming is an important aspect of change in Aceh and the main gate for women's involvement in Aceh long term development. In this context, good governance is only achieved when women have become part of the process and social transformation is only possible if it is complemented by successful gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment efforts.

Development of gender policy in rehabilitation and reconstructions, joint land titling program, women's business cooperative and series of other activities aimed at empowering women are capital for the sustainability of the rehabilitation and reconstruction in Aceh and it is the responsibility of local government to proactively sustain these efforts, including bringing about positive political change and security after the peace agreement.

Women are social capital in the context of rebuilding Aceh after natural disasters and conflicts. When the policy to provide access to all women to further optimize their potential is available, women as social capital will increasingly play their significant role to bring the positive social change in Aceh.



## CHAPTER VII

# DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter provides discussions and conclusions of the study. It summarizes how humanitarian, peace and development activities intertwined in Aceh. The discussion involves all lessons learned and opportunity for improvement for future humanitarian assistance and to achieve sustainable peace in conflict zones.

### **7.1 Demystifying Peace and Establishing Nexus Between Peace, Humanitarian and Development**

Literature suggest that international support can contribute to create a sustainable peace if they can concurrently address the humanitarian, development, human rights, and security needs of the affected population. In Aceh context, this deemed to be true. The peace in Aceh is sustained as the humanitarian need was addressed, long-term development ran well, and security issues were solved.

Peace shall go beyond the absence of conflict. It should further build an environment where a country and the people could thrive and develop optimally. Therefore, the concept of peace in this research is not limited to a single event that marks the end of conflict between GAM and the Indonesian government but peace in a more comprehensive and transformational lenses.

Peacebuilding involves several important aspects: conflict prevention, political, security, humanitarian, and development efforts. All these elements were demonstrated in Aceh post-tsunami humanitarian assistance from relief to rehabilitation and reconstruction, including continuity of the humanitarian efforts in the longer-term development. At the same timeline, process, and activities in the implementation of peace agreement such as the

reintegration of ex-GAM combatants, democratization process and the transformation of GAM from a separatist movement to a political party showed peacebuilding aspects, mainly in term of conflict prevention, political and security. The reintegration process of ex-GAM combatants that involved provision of reintegration fund and skills training also has element of humanitarian and development.

In a narrower and more traditional concept of humanitarian assistance, it is sometimes difficult to see humanitarian aids as an entry point for peacebuilding. However, in Aceh it was completely the opposite. Humanitarian assistance in Aceh was viewed rather through contemporary lens that has a broader scope from immediate relief to rehabilitation and reconstruction. In this broader context humanitarian assistance may and have proven to pave the way for peacebuilding in Aceh.

Various humanitarian aid programs have enabled a better longer-term development and made durable peace possible. For example, the construction of health facilities has improved access to healthcare, addressing one of the consequences of the longstanding conflict in the health sector and the impact of the tsunami, contributing to a healthier population physically and mentally. Improved access to basic services such as health care may increase social cohesion, reduce grievance, and prevent conflict. After all, the healthier population can make a better contribution to peace and long term-development.

Education has positive effect to peace. According to the Institute for Economics and Peace, education appears in two of the 24 indicators of the Positive Peace Index <sup>113</sup>. Programs to improve human capital such as training, scholarship programs, reconstruction of schools, strengthening knowledge management capacity are linked to peace and development. For example, scholarships that were given to the marginalized community in several districts of Aceh have not only given a better education opportunity but also addressed inequality, contributing to social development and prevent conflict.

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<sup>113</sup> IEP, "Global Peace Index 2021: Measuring Peace in a Complex World" (Sydney: Institute for Economics & Peace, 2021), <https://www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/GPI-2021-web.pdf>.

Many of the young Acehnese had better opportunity pursuing education overseas after the tsunami through various scholarship programs. Even after the end of rehabilitation and reconstruction phase, Aceh scholarship program was introduced and provided for Acehnese students to study master and doctoral programs overseas. They returned to Aceh, equipped with better knowledge and skills to build Aceh. The program illustrates linkage between humanitarian and longer-term development and more importantly creating environment supportive for positive peace.

Humanitarian assistance is guided by humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence and if these principles are not compromised, humanitarian aid can be an entry point for peacebuilding. In fact, saving lives, alleviating suffering, and maintaining human dignity create the fundamental of peace.

## **7.2 What Makes Peace Sustainable**

A sustainable peace is a process that is built upon some practical notions. The first one is that the durable peace is cultivated from the bottom. While the top-down approach to peace or negative peace may prevent violence and give some impression of stability and security, the durable peace cannot be achieved if it is not rooted in local communities, recognizing the needs, the agency, and the capacity of the local communities for peace. The case study from Bener Meriah and Aceh Tengah perfectly illustrates the peace that cultivated from the bottom. The three main ethnic groups in the region bear the borne the extra consequences of conflict that was the weakening of social cohesion. The community-led conflict reconciliation in Aceh Tengah and Bener Meriah not only exhibited the agency of community but also their motivation and desire for peace. It revealed the importance of analyzing and enhancing the remaining capacity for peace in the community affected by the conflict, of which the people resort to in times of conflict; their resilience, their motivation to thrive and their desire for peace, not only focusing on the factors that drive or sustain conflict.

In the context of humanitarian response, humanitarian actors need to ensure that their assistance will not aggravate the conditions caused by the conflict or reduce the capacity of the people to self-recover and make peace. While there had been no



intervention worsened the condition caused by conflict, In Aceh context, some programs somehow have created dependency of the affected people to humanitarian assistance, reducing the capacity of people to recover.

Due to its nature, humanitarian assistance can build an avenue for peace but on the other hand, it can also create and aggravate the conflict. The uneven distribution of aids and partiality, for instance, can increase tension and disrupt social cohesion. BRR initiative to provide humanitarian assistance not only to communities affected by tsunami but also the community affected by conflict and marginalized community had contributed to preventing tension and reducing the risk of disrupt social cohesion. The impartiality and neutrality shown by BRR and many other humanitarian organizations in provision of humanitarian assistance had prevented conflict and resentment. Therefore, humanitarian organizations need to have a solid understanding of the local context when responding to crisis and the humanitarian programs need to be conflict sensitive. The analysis of the conflict that may include the history, groups involved, and root causes of conflict and other important aspects need to be conducted and considered in developing humanitarian response programs.

Humanitarian actors need to recognize, identify local capacities and work on building these capacities to achieve sustainable development and peace. Even in a prolonged conflict and crisis, the community still have potency and capacity. They have extraordinary adaptability to survive in difficult environment, the motivation to thrive and build better life. They possess the resilience and experience and skills gained before and during the tsunami crisis. In many crisis events, community and local organizations tend to play very important role.

The community never see themselves the humanitarian actors, but when an emergency occurs, they are the first to respond before the external supports arrived, and they remain active during and after the crisis. With maximum support, the local community can flourish, and with their own potential, they can cope and contribute to their own community. This eventually will contribute to creating a peaceful and resilient society.

Improving sustainability means improving the resilience of the society. In emergency, humanitarian organizations need to think beyond providing the basic needs for survival, but they also need

to create sustainability; making sure the basic needs are met and at the same time gradually working to eliminate community's dependence on humanitarian aid. In the long run, community will become more resilient. Enhancing the resilience and the capacity of the community can pave the way for the long-term development to commenced. Nevertheless, this does not come without challenges. In acute crisis the priority is to save lives and ensure the immediate needs of the affected people are met. Organizations may not have time and capacity to engage in long-term strategic thinking. In emergency response programs, funding is usually short and therefore humanitarian organizations could not engage in long-term strategic thinking toward sustainability.

The humanitarian response programs need to be tailored to context where they operate and avert from any preconceived ideas about the communities and the region where the crisis occurs. Community participation and engagement with local actors can make interventions relevant to context. Both participation and engagement contribute in expanding insight of the humanitarian actors' in understanding the context where they work, so they appropriately answer the needs and avert from creating any harms.

These three concepts are not standing alone, instead they are interrelated and complementary. Built of these three concepts, the future humanitarian action should be able to ensure a fluid transition to development and the development gains are not reversed. The humanitarian response programs that are conflict sensitive, tailored to the local context, engaging, and enhancing local capacities and sustainable can generate the condition that allow for development and peace to flourish.

### **7.3 Sowing the Seeds of the Durable Peace: The Contribution of Humanitarian Assistance to Cultivate and Nurture Durable Peace in Aceh**

The majority of humanitarian assistance is provided in conflict situation. Aceh, was no exception. The post-tsunami humanitarian response in Aceh is provided amidst a politically complex situation.

Aceh had endured more than 30 years of armed conflict between GAM and the Gol and was isolated from the world. Immediately, Aceh became the center of the world's attention when the Indian Ocean tsunami hit the province in December 2004. Humanitarian aid from countries and organization across the world poured into Aceh. The gate to Aceh that was impassable for years had suddenly open. The world was exposed not only about the devastation of the tsunami but also about the prolonged conflict in Aceh. The disaster has somewhat freed Aceh from its prolonged isolation.

The Indian Ocean tsunami hit when the peace process was being carried out. Humanitarian assistance that came into Aceh after the tsunami was and must be free from political interest of any conflicting parties. Therefore, in this context keeping the two separate was vital to ensure humanitarian assistance maintain the neutrality and impartiality. It indicates that peace and humanitarian nexus don't always have to be entwined and are contextual. They can work hand in hand, but in some instances and times they shall remain exclusive.

In an interview, H.E I Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja, a senior diplomat and one of Indonesia's representatives in the Aceh peace negotiations with GAM, provided a different angle that the Indian Ocean tsunami was not the only trajectory that led to the Aceh peace agreement but it indeed facilitated the continuation of peace talks between GAM and the Indonesian government. The blessing in disguise as many expressed, the tsunami has brought a momentum for the long-awaited peace to be materialized.

On August 15, 2005, in Helsinki, Finland, Indonesian government and the GAM, finally signed the MoU marking the end of the 30-year conflict in Aceh.

The post-tsunami humanitarian assistance played role in nurturing this peace, making the durable peace possible and can be enjoyed by all, not just the peace on the paper. All actors working on humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding program are crucial in tailoring the will and commitment of the conflicting parties for peace, encouraging, and hastening the peacemaking process, maintaining peacekeeping, and supporting the peacebuilding.

Although tsunami did not directly create peace, the devastating force of tsunami was a great push for peacemaking process as it immediately shifted everyone's focus from killing to saving life. The presence of international military forces followed by hundreds

humanitarian actors and thousands of volunteers created a “moment of pause for humanitarians’ action” to further deescalate the conflict.

The post-tsunami humanitarian aids have instigated the recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction beyond the damages and destructions that caused by tsunami, but these efforts had also touched the victims of conflicts and the impact they endured as the result of the prolonged conflict, which before the tsunami received less attention let alone the proper assistance. BRR showed its crucial engagement in peacebuilding. After the peace agreement, BRR expanded their working area from tsunami to conflict affected area. In its headquarter office, the BRR engaged ex-GAM to Aceh development programs by including them into formal structure of the organization. This was also a reintegration process of the ex-combatant into Indonesia development and financial systems, which contribute in preventing conflict and promoting the positive peace.

The post-tsunami humanitarian assistance has further instigated the long-term development and this development contribute significantly to sustain the peace in Aceh. BRR, as the leading coordination agency played very crucial role in leading and coordinating assistance for Aceh rehabilitation and reconstruction. BRR was the nexus in itself and the subject of the humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding programs in Aceh.

Humanitarian assistance indeed, can pave an avenue for the sustainable peace. Humanitarian assistance not only plays the role in ensures the basic needs are met; the food and clean water is accessible, the health service is delivered, the shelter and essential non-food items needed for survival are provided, but more than that, it can provide livelihood for the affected community, helping them to earn income and rebuild their lives. Humanitarian assistance can bring tangible development gains contributes to sustainable peace when it is properly designed. The rehabilitation and reconstruction of infrastructures such as roads, schools and health facilities help to address inequities and reduce damages caused by both the disaster and conflict. The reconstructions and rehabilitation of health facilities, for instance can address issues of the unequal access to health services that can contribute to improve health and prevent disease, creating a healthier community that can thrive and develop optimally. Humanitarian assistance can

spark the development gains that address the inequities, which play an important role in building or re-building social cohesion and prevent competition over resources, which can create tension and exacerbate conflict.

The neutrality and impartiality embedded in humanitarian assistance is essential in trust building and trust is vital in humanitarian response and peacebuilding. Trust enables humanitarian actors can reach all elements in the communities, including the conflicting parties that may be affected too by the crisis. Humanitarian assistance must be given solely based on the needs, and thus it must be impartial.

Humanity must be put at the center of humanitarian assistance and when it is practiced, not only does the humanitarian assistance can save lives and alleviate suffering for all, but it also can promote dignity of every individual, recognizing the humanity, which is essential in peacebuilding.

## **7.4 Opportunities for Improvement**

Although Aceh peace has been claimed a success, many local Acehnese have not been satisfied with the peace development. Some have complained, including the ex-combatant and victims of the conflict about the inequality of economic development, the raising of local oligarchies, and corruption practices that appears to be increasing. his study also reveals what did not work in the tsunami recovery and peacebuilding efforts in Aceh.

The first was lack of capacity institution responsible for reintegration of the ex-GAM combatants. BRA was structured under the governor. Until 2018, The status of the agency was no more than a committee for reintegration process that was assigned to deliver national fund to ex-combatant and the victims of the conflict as mandated by the peace treaty. The agency had limited mandate to develop the reintegration program to be more advantageous to the public at large. In 2018, the agency was legalized as formal state institution under the Aceh governor. The agency was dominated by the ex-combatants dominated the agency. With poor qualification in governance and leadership, the agency has been mismanaged that benefited only the ex-combatant members.

Secondly, the lack of assessment over the impact of conflict can hampered the peacebuilding process. All reports on conflict and peace in Aceh conclude that Aceh Besar, Pidie, North Aceh, and East Aceh were areas where conflict was concentrated. These areas were the most affected by the conflict and therefore become the focus of reintegration and peacebuilding programs. These four districts were dominated by Acehnese ethnic group and less diverse ethnically. Since they are ethnically less diverse, the conflict had no negative repercussion on the communal relationship in the four districts. Even so, it strengthened the ethno-nationalism of the community as they shared common background and culture with the ex-combatants' members. But it was not the case in Bener Meriah and Central Aceh Region.

Such situation was not noticed by the humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding actors as well as the government during the rehabilitation and reconstruction process. Civil society groups just have been aware of situation when they actively involved in Truth and Reconciliation since 2017.

Nevertheless, the community in Bener Meriah and Central Aceh Region managed to conduct the reconciliation process and sustain peace. Social relationship in these heterogenous community has been naturally normalized although it was almost impossible to return to the good old days. However, still many of the communities affected by conflict in Bener Meriah, Aceh Tengah and other area have not yet received financial assistance and stated in the peace agreement.

There had been lack of focus on the long-term reintegration program at the community level, rather the program focuses on individual. The peace treaty mandated that the individual of ex-combatant and victims of the conflict shall receive reintegration funds and various economic supports. These programs will help them to reintegrate into the community. Unfortunately, focusing on individual within an unlimited timeframe has re-disintegrated the ex-combatants from the community. They turn to be the exclusive group within the community with special access to reintegration funds. On one hand, this is advantageous for Indonesia's politics and security concern in Aceh as ex-combatant compete for the same small resource at the BRA and other resource from the local government. on the other hand, however, this decelerates the peacebuilding program from negative peace, which focus on

stability, to positive peace that focus on driving the development in multi sectors.

Participation of women and recognition of their significant contribution in crisis must be enhanced. Women continue to be the most vulnerable groups in the society. Nevertheless, in their vulnerability lie the remarkable strength to cope with and recover from the crisis, to help their family and to rebuild their community. Recognition on women's role and contribution in the time of crisis can create more participation, enhancing their voice so their needs and rights could be better fulfilled and providing them with greater opportunity to make an even greater contribution for their community and the country.







## CLOSING

Aceh is a perfect example of the triple nexus in practice. First, the disaster raised awareness of the fragility of massive earthquakes and tsunamis. Since then, Indonesia has expanded networks of seismic monitors and ocean buoys as an early warning system for the next possible wave.

Signs of evacuation routes and nearest shelters can be found all over Aceh. Disasters education is the new norm in school from kindergarten to high school. The 2004 tsunami led many researchers in Indonesia to study the potential of this type of major disaster in the nation's future.

The province's leading university, the state Universitas Syiah Kuala, is now operating the country's Tsunami and Disaster Mitigation Research Center (TDMRC). Since 2006, the center has held a series of conference on tsunami disaster recovery, often partnering with countries with similar risks such as Japan, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.

Aceh is now a hub of the international community. The port of Sabang, an island north of Aceh, is an international shipping port carrying and sending goods worldwide. The airport in Banda Aceh also serves international flights to neighbouring countries and the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia, where many Acehnese dreams of going for their pilgrimage and Hajj.

The global response has made the Acehnese realize that they were not as isolated as they once thought during the prolonged conflict.

Memorials of the tsunami memorial have become landmarks in several places in the heart of Banda Aceh. For example, the "Monument of Gratitude" is an eternal message of gratitude from Aceh to the world. There is also a museum to commemorate the disaster, built-in 2009, with octagon shapes all over the outer part of the building to celebrate Aceh's history and culture.

Surprisingly few remnants in Banda Aceh indicate the worst natural disaster in Southeast Asia's living memory. Instead, restaurants, coffee shops, clothing stores, and shopping malls are bustling and open late into the evening.

In the center of town, young people drive motorbikes down streets lined with advertising billboards, enjoying the success of post-tsunami development and sustainable peace.

Aceh has surpassed the prolonged conflict and the devastation of that tragic December 2004 and the overall experience -- the hardship, lessons learned, and more importantly, the spirit of the Acehnese -- has driven the region towards a sustainable future built on peace, unity, understanding, and forgiveness. It was a turning point to build a better future for the people of Aceh and the whole country.

## DOCUMENTATIONS



ASEAN-IPR Indonesia and the Research Team of The Aceh Research Project call on the Wali Nanggroe Aceh, Paduka Yang Mulia (PYM) Malik Mahmud Al-Haytar

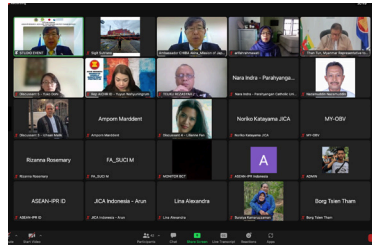
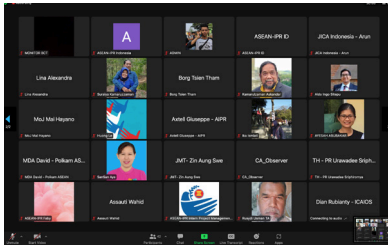


ASEAN-IPR Indonesia and ICAIOS conducted Forum Group Discussions organized by ASEAN-IPR Indonesia and collaboration with ICAIOS



The Preliminary Seminar of the ASEAN-IPR Research – Aceh Case:  
Peacebuilding and Post Tsunami Recovery





The Outcome Seminar of the ASEAN-IPR Research – Aceh Case: Peacebuilding and Post Tsunami Recovery

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND GLOSSARY

AADMER, ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response

ADF, Aceh Development Funds

AGTP, Aceh Government Transformation Programme

AHA, ASEAN Coordinating Center for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management

AIPR, ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation

AMM, Aceh Monitoring Mission

ANZAC, Australian and New Zealand Army Corps

ARF, Aceh Development Funds

ARTI, Aceh Research Training Institute (ARTI)

ASEAN, Association of South East Asia Nations

BIN, Badan Intelijen Negara / National Intelligent Agency

BPS, Badan Pusat Statistik / Statistics Indonesia

BPSDM, Badan Pemberdayaan Sumber Daya Manusia /Agency for Empowerment of human Capital

BRA, Badan Reintegrasi Aceh / Agency for Reintegration of Aceh

BRIS, Badan Riset Ilmu Sosial / Social Science Research Centre

BRR, Badan Rehabilitasi dan Rekonstruksi Aceh / Agency for the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Aceh and Nias

BSuIA, Balai Syura Inong Aceh / Acehnese Women Council

CFAN, Coordinating Forum for Aceh and Nias

CMI, Crisis Management Initiative

CoHA, Cessation of Hostilities Agreement

DDR, Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration

DI, Darul Islam / Islamic State

DOM, Daerah Operasi Militer / Military Operations Area



DPIA, Duek Pakat Ureung Inong Aceh / Acehnese Women Congress

DSF, Decentralization Support Facilities

DVI, Disaster Victim Identification

EU, European Union

GAM, Gerakan Aceh Merdeka / Free Aceh Movement

Glоро, northern Acehnese term for Tsunami or great wave.

Gol, Government of Indonesia

GOLKAR, Golongan Karya / The Party of Functional Groups

Hadist Maja: Acehnese Proverb

HDC, Henry Dunant Centre

HIC, Humanitarian Information Center

HUDA, Himpunan Ulama Dayah Aceh / Aceh Ulama Association

ICAIOS, International Center for Aceh and Indian Ocean Studies

ICRC, The International Committee of the Red Cross

ICRS, Information, Counselling and Referral Services

IDP, Internally Displaced Person

le-Beuna, Acehnese of Aceh Besar group's term for the Tsunami or great wave, not necessarily triggered by earthquake

IMC, International Medical Corps

IOM, International Organization for Migration

JKA, Jaminan Kesehatan Aceh / the universal health coverage for the Acehnese

KODAM, Komando Daerah Militer / Regional Military Command

Koalisi NGO HAM, the Coalition of Non-Government Organizations for Human Rights

KPK, Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi / The Corruption Eradication Commission

LNG, Liquefied Natural Gas

LoGA, Law on Governing of Aceh

JSC, Joint Security Committee, during the CoHA

MAFHS, the Malaysian Armed Forces Health Services  
MAPESA, Masyarakat Peduli Sejarah Aceh / Aceh History Care  
Community  
MARS, Mobile Aid Repair and Keppel FMO  
MDF, Multi-Donor Trust Fund  
MSF, Médecins Sans Frontières  
MOOTW, Military Operation Other Than War  
MoU, Memorandum of Understanding  
NGO, Non-governmental Organization  
NOTAM, Notice to Airmen  
NWoW, New Way of Working  
ODA, Official Development Assistance  
PA, Partai Aceh / The Aceh Party  
PCR, Post Conflict Reintegration Program  
PETA, Pembela Tanah Air / Defender of the Homeland  
PETRONAS, PetroliaM Nasional Berhad  
PLPIIS, Pusat Latihan dan Penelitian Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial / Training  
Centre for Social Studies  
POLRI, Polisi Republik Indonesia / Indonesian National Police  
PTSD, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder  
PNA, Partai Nasional Aceh / National Aceh Party  
PUSA, Persatuan Ulama Seluruh Aceh / Association of Aceh  
Ulama  
PUSKESMAS, Pusat Kesehatan Masyarakat / Community Health  
Center  
Polindes, Pos Kesehatan Desa /village maternity post  
Posyandu, Pos Pelayanan Terpadu / Integrated Healthcare Center  
Pustu, Puskesmas Pembantu / Auxiliary Health Center  
PPSIB, Pusat Pelatihan Ilmu Sosial dan Budaya / Training Centre  
for Social and Cultural Studies  
RANTF, the Recovery of Aceh-Nias Trust Fund

RBAirF, the Royal Brunei Armed Forces

SAK, Satuan Anti Korupsi / Anti-Corruption Unit

SAF, Singapore Armed Forces

SCDF, Singapore Civil Defense Forces

SIRA, Sentral Informasi Referendum Aceh / Central Information of Referendum for Aceh

SMOM, Services Order of Malta

Smong, a local term in Simeulue Island of Aceh Province for earthquake-triggered tsunami

SPD, the Society for the Physically Disabled

TNI, Tentara Nasional Indonesia / Indonesian Armed Forces

UIN, Universitas Islam Negeri / State Islamic University

UN, United Nations

UNDAC, The United Nation Disaster Assessment and Coordination

UNIFEM, United Nation Development Fund for Women

UNOCHA, The United Nation Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

UNORC, The Office of the UN Recovery Coordinator

UNSCR, United Nation Security Council Resolution

USK, Universitas Syiah Kuala / Syiah Kuala University

WASH, Water, Sanitation, Hygiene

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# The Aceh Case: Peacebuilding and Post Tsunami Recovery

“The Peace process and post tsunami rehabilitation and reconstruction of Aceh province are interlinked. The two Indonesia’s success stories were possible to attain in a more open and democratic Indonesia, and the dynamic of reform since 1998 reflected at every stage of an arduous but fruitful journey as described in this book.

This book would be a valuable reference for those who have an interest in doing a further study of the Aceh case.”

**Dr. N. Hassan Wirajuda**

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia  
2001 - 2009

“Aceh is a story of many things. Eventually it is a story of hope. The context of the situation at the time necessitates creativity among the actors and this was evident in the coordination and implementation of programs, both to address the peace and conflict as well as humanitarian issues, by the responsible bodies. An approach that combines the humanitarian, development, and peace concerns was necessary for the creation of sustainable positive peace for Aceh. The book highlights these concerns and explains in detail the approach used by the relevant bodies. It gives us a good understanding of the challenges that needed to be overcome to make this a success story. While we hope not to face again the sufferings faced in this story, we at least know that with sincerity, hope, creativity, and perseverance, peace can and will prevail in the end.”

**Prof. Dr. Kamarulzaman Askandar**

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