

DTE

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Aceh - scene of devastation

(DTE)



Down to Earth International Campaign for Ecological Justice in Indonesia



Volunteers from Palembang, January 2005, in Aceh

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After the tsunami: what next for devastated communities?

This edition of Down to Earth focuses on the human and environmental toll of the tragic events of December 26th and raises some key concerns about the future.

As the death toll from the 26th December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunamis climbed higher and higher, the world watched with horror. Aceh, nearest the epicentre of the earthquake that triggered the gigantic destructive waves, suffered the most. Here the death toll was estimated at 250,000 by the end of February. Tens of thousands had been injured and over 400,000 inhabitants were homeless. Whole villages were devastated along with large parts of the main population centres of Banda Aceh and Meulaboh; homes, livelihoods and many, many lives were obliterated by the debris-charged flood. The disaster is one of the largest in human history.

For the Acehnese, the instant tragedy of the quake-tsunami came on top of a long drawn out disaster - years of violent conflict and indiscriminate terror at the hands of Indonesia's military in its attempt to crush the Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (Free Aceh Movement). An estimated 10,000 people - most of them civilians - are thought to have died in almost three decades of conflict. While on paper, Aceh became an area of special autonomy in 2002, the disputed territory continued to suffer under military rule. Martial law was imposed in 2003 then downgraded to civil emergency status in 2004.

Aceh was also in deep ecological crisis before the quake-tsunami. Landslides and flooding claimed victims, homes and crops with every rainy season - the protective forests ripped out by illegal logging outfits backed by corrupt politicians and military personnel.

As the international emergency aid response gathered pace, Acehnese civil

society remained in deep shock. Many had to face the loss of their families, the loss of all their possessions, total financial ruin, homelessness, ill-health and hunger.

Many Acehnese civil society organisations lost staff, relatives and friends in the disaster. Among those lost were Mohammad Ibrahim, head of the environmental organisation WALHI Aceh, and Acehnese indigenous leader, Pak Keuchik Jailani (see obituary, back page). Local groups nevertheless threw themselves into the emergency relief efforts. They were joined by colleagues from outside Aceh who organised to send assistance, emergency supplies, transport, funds and volunteers in a matter of days after the disaster struck.

These Acehnese and Indonesian society organisations soon began to fear for the future of the disaster-shattered, war-torn Aceh that confronted them. They became concerned that the emergency aid and recovery efforts, while bringing immediate relief to many survivors, could also create their own problems.

There remains a lot of concern about the effectiveness of aid distribution, the high levels of corruption and the lack of participation by tsunami survivors in planning for their own future. There is concern for the protection of human rights and the need to protect land and property rights in the resettlement and reconstruction processes. There are also fears that reconstruction will exert a devastating toll on Aceh's already badly-depleted forests, leading to more fatal flooding and landslides inland.

The following reports highlight some of these concerns. They draw on local

and international media reports, as well as discussions with civil society groups, international NGOs and journalists, held during DTE's recent visits to Jakarta and Aceh.

A population bereft amongst the wreckage

Aceh lost an estimated 250,000 people of its 4 million population in the quake-tsunami, but the true toll may never be known. More than two months after the tsunami, bodies continue to be dragged every day from the wreckage in Banda Aceh.

In the Meuraxa and Kutaraja areas of Banda Aceh, only about 1,000 people survived out of tens of thousands. In Lammayang village, on the coast near Banda Aceh, only 75 people were left alive out of about 5,000. On some small islands in the Pulau Aceh group, north of Banda Aceh, no survivors were found at all when rescuers eventually reached there in late January.

Some 20,000 refugees from the disaster in Aceh - including over 4,000

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children under the age of 17 - fled to Medan, the provincial capital of North Sumatra.

Incredibly, Simeulue and the three small islands of Hinako, Bawah and Asu, off the west coast, close to the epicentre, were not completely submerged as was first reported. Simeulue escaped relatively lightly - although whether this is because of the path of the tsunami or the protective function of its mangrove forest is not known. Over 23,000 people fled to higher ground straight after the massive quake and there were few deaths, even through the northwest part of the island was totally destroyed. On the island of Nias, further south along the west coast of Sumatra, 270 people lost their lives.

The health and psychological impacts of the tragedy on the surviving population are likely to be enormous: agencies are striving to prevent outbreaks of disease; NGOs are calling for more counsellors for the bereaved survivors.

Acehnese society is structured around extended families or clans of 60 or so people. Everyone has lost relatives or has close friends who are still mourning. Under Islamic law, someone who is missing for 40 days is presumed dead. UNICEF has set up a tracing programme to help over 800 separated children to contact their nearest relatives.

A large proportion of people who fled their homes now have nothing. Along with all their possessions, they have also lost their identity cards and papers such as birth, marriage and property certificates and bank

documents. They cannot even prove their identity or the fact that they used to own a home and land. For traditional communities who depended on shared local knowledge and natural features to delineate their individual or communal property, changes in the physical landscape - including invasion of the sea and altered river courses - will make it impossible to identify their homes and farmland.

Local authorities

The local authorities were completely unable to cope with the crisis. Military barracks and police stations were among the many public buildings destroyed or badly damaged by the earthquake and subsequent tidal waves. The number of Indonesian troops killed, missing or injured has not been announced. Around 800 police, including members of the mobile brigade police, *Brimob*, in Aceh were reported dead (*Detik.com* 6/Jan/05).

Military personnel in the worst-hit areas were reported to be putting most of their efforts into finding the bodies of their families and colleagues and preventing weapons and equipment from falling into separatist hands during the first few weeks. In other places, troops were still carrying out operations against suspected members of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) rather than helping relief operations.

Key government offices in Banda Aceh and towns in Aceh Besar and along the west coast suffered structural damage or were full of mud and debris and significant

numbers of civil servants were among the dead. Aceh's governor, Abdullah Puteh, has been suspended from office and was in Jakarta awaiting a court hearing on corruption charges. The head of the local social affairs department was sacked in January after criticisms from Jakarta about the slow supply of food and medical supplies in many areas.

By early February, the military and officials from Jakarta had assumed control and more troops had been sent to Aceh. However, tight security measures hampered the movements of international humanitarian organisations and there were concerns that food and medical supplies were still not reaching all homeless communities (IDPs) as the Department of Social Affairs was having problems with the large numbers of those in need.

In the face of such devastation and human tragedy, it is hard to find any positive news. But there is some. Despite the huge numbers of dead and displaced people; severe shortages of clean drinking water; appalling sanitation in refugee camps; heavy rains; and the poor levels of pre-disaster health care, there have been no epidemics in the affected communities.

Volunteers and self-help

Streams of volunteers started to flow into Aceh almost as soon as the news was announced. When the first international relief workers arrived in Meulaboh around the end of the first week, they found several teams of Indonesian doctors already working there. Volunteers drove across country on dirt roads, walked or chartered boats to take food, water and medicines to groups of survivors isolated by the complete collapse of communications systems. People living in areas away from the coasts took in family members, friends and complete strangers from the affected areas, even though they had little themselves. About half the IDPs - some 200,000 people - are still lodging in other people's houses rather than living in camps or moving to relocation centres. Villagers from the uplands came down to the coast with sacks of rice and baskets of fruit to feed communities whose own crops and homes had been destroyed. Teams of university students volunteered to dig bodies out of the mud.

People who have lost their homes and families are caring for others who are also bereaved. The amount of moral support which survivors are providing each other cannot be over estimated. Mosques and muslim prayerhouses have, in general, suffered less damage than other buildings and provide a focus for many shattered communities in this deeply religious society. The religious festival of Idul Adha, which fell in late January, brought the muslim population closer and allowed surviving relatives to grieve together.

Civil society organisations' contributions

This newsletter does not attempt to describe the many constructive efforts of local Acehnese groups, national civil society organisations and international NGOs which are working in a wide variety of practical ways to support the tsunami survivors. Their activities range from bringing clean water supplies to remote communities to assisting refugees who wish to get on with the task of reconstructing their homes; from providing trauma counselling to advocacy for survivor participation in reconstruction planning and implementation and publishing updates to inform the wider world what is really going on.

Some useful websites for further information are:

Koalisi HAM - human rights coalition, Aceh
Yappika / Civil Society Coalition for the
quake-tsunami in Aceh and North Sumatra
Urban Poor Consortium
Aceh Aid at IDEP

www.koalisi-ham.org/
www.yappika.or.id/tsunami/
www.urbanpoor.or.id/
http://www.idepfoundation.org/aceh_aid.html

WALHI
Serambi
United Nations tsunami Indonesia site
Humanitarian Information Centre Sumatra
Oxfam GB tsunami coverage:

www.walhi.or.id
www.indomedia.com/serambi/
<http://indonesia-tsunami.un.or.id/>
www.humanitarianinfo.org/sumatra/
www.oxfam.org.uk/what_we_do/emergencies/country/asiaquake/index.htm
www.acehkita.com/
www.rumohkita.org/
www.aceh-eye.org/
<http://a9media.com>
www.tsunamiaceh.org

Acehkita daily news
Humanitarian relief/Posko Kita
Aceh-eye.org
A9 Media
Tsunami Aceh website

The international emergency relief effort

The tsunami disaster prompted one of the biggest international relief efforts ever seen. Prompted by the high levels of public interest and the outpouring of cash contributions, governments promised substantial aid commitments (see p.17). NGOs, government and UN agencies sent medical teams, field hospitals, body bags, tents, food and clothing. Some governments, including Singapore and the United States sent helicopters, ships and/or troops to help shift supplies, reach isolated communities of survivors and to evacuate the injured.

The situation was chaotic in the first few weeks. Villagers from islands off the north and west coast were desperate to get to the mainland, not realising that conditions there were even worse than those they left. Relatives from all over Aceh, Medan and as far



Rubble-strewn scene, Banda Aceh, January 2005

(DTE)

as Jakarta poured into Banda Aceh to look for their families while those made homeless by the disaster were streaming out of the city fearing a major outbreak of disease due to the large numbers of unburied bodies.

Reports of looting in Banda Aceh were fewer in the second week after the police issued orders to shoot.

(continued next page)

Preliminary damage assessment by Bappenas

A preliminary assessment prepared for the January meeting of Indonesia's creditors grouped in the CGI, attempts to quantify the earthquake and tsunami damage in terms of economic damage and losses. It also gives an initial impression of which communities have been worst affected and how the natural resources which support rural livelihoods have been destroyed.

The report, *Preliminary Damage and Loss Assessment*, by national planning agency, Bappenas, estimates total damages and losses at US\$4.45 billion (Rp41.1 trillion), which amounts to a full 97% of Aceh's GDP. The assessment found that the disaster hit families, and private livelihoods hardest - including farmers, fisherfolk, shopkeepers - as they sustained about 78% of the total damage and losses, while the public sector sustained about 22% of the total. The human toll among fishing and farming communities is the highest. Almost a third of those who lost their lives are thought to have been involved in agriculture and 10-15% of fisherfolk in the 18 affected *kabupaten* (districts) are believed to have died.

The assessment found:

- ♦ More than one third of the total losses were in income from agriculture and fisheries;
- ♦ The total agricultural land affected by the tsunami is estimated at 69,000 ha;
- ♦ In the affected coastal regions almost all water wells are thought to be contaminated;
- ♦ The tsunami inundated up to 5 km inland in some places. On the west coast agricultural areas have been badly affected up to 2km from the coastline;
- ♦ A quarter of cash crop areas and rice fields appear to have been damaged, meaning that around 250,000 people are

likely to become unemployed;

- ♦ Besides the immediate damage to crops, sand and mud deposits on the fields plus erosion and salinization may mean that agricultural land is permanently lost or crop yields are reduced for some years. 10% - 15% of the affected area or 5,000 to 7,500 hectares may have been permanently lost;
- ♦ Affected districts may reach 30% unemployment rates due to the destruction of thousands of enterprises and livelihoods;
- ♦ 30% of the Banda Aceh - Meulaboh road has been destroyed and 110 (60%) of the bridges;
- ♦ Fourteen out of 21 local governments in Aceh and three in North Sumatra were severely affected and not yet operational. Police were thin on the ground and the command hierarchy fragmented or collapsed;
- ♦ About 29,800 vehicles were destroyed or seriously damaged, almost all of them privately owned.

Environmental damage

The tsunami wreaked environmental havoc, destroying forests, damaging mangroves, and coral reefs, swamping coastal areas with silt and saltwater and changing permanently the shape of the coastline. The loss of mangroves and reefs in particular represent a double loss, because these provide a protective function for coastal areas, as well as being rich in marine life and providing nursery grounds for commercial fisheries.

Bappenas' preliminary assessment put economic damage to the environment at Rp6,180 billion (US\$675 million), most of which consists of losses in environmental services. The report points to "long term loss

of economic opportunities and environmental services from damaged reefs and forests which will need at least a generation to recuperate".

Before the tsunami, there were about 100,000 hectares of coastal reefs in the affected area, with roughly 30% live coral. The report states that the mangroves around Banda Aceh, the badly damaged provincial capital, had been cleared and converted into 36,597 hectares of fish or shrimp ponds. Environmentalists had for years warned against mangrove destruction for shrimp ponds which leave coastlines unprotected and devoid of their former biodiversity (see also page 15).

The tsunami caused full damage to the 25,000 hectares of mangroves in poor condition.* In 2000, there were an estimated 30,000 hectares of mangroves in good condition (around Simeulue island) 286,000 hectares in fair condition in addition to the 25,000 ha in poor condition, according to data quoted in the assessment. The tsunami also caused 30% damage to 97,250 hectares of coral reefs and 20% damage to 600 hectares of seagrass beds. It destroyed an estimated 30% of forests in the affected area.

Possible contamination by damaged industrial installations was also highlighted in the assessment. Three major sites were damaged - two oil depots run by state owned oil company Pertamina (one each in Banda Aceh and Meulaboh) and the Semen Andalas Indonesia cement factory in Banda Aceh. The actual and potential pollution include oil leakage, copper slag and lubricating oils. Other possibilities are pesticides and fertilizers leaking from damaged storage facilities, but damage information was not available at the time of the report.

*The *Jakarta Post* reports that 40,000 ha of mangroves were destroyed by the tsunami (JP 19/1).♦



Report from a camp...

Last Tuesday evening, 2 persons from..GAM,,were accosted by the military. One was shot, the other captured. The latter has 1 wife and 2 children, who are victims of the tsunami, staying at a camp. On Wednesday, 7 army people came into the camp, while quite a big number of them surrounded the camp. The camp coordinator, a young man, who met them was hit on the face 5 times and twice on his chest just because he was asked if he was the village head, and he said he wasn't. After that, everybody in the camp [was] put under the fierce afternoon sun from 1-3 pm. The captured GAM member was taken to the group, was asked to identify any other GAM member in the group, he said there was none, and was asked to kiss his children goodbye. We did not know as of his fate since then. After, the whole camp was terrified, logistic supplies was stopped.

(Urban Poor Linkage Information Center 5/Feb/05)

The destruction in some areas was complete. Calang was even more badly affected than Meulaboh, but flows of aid only began two weeks after the disaster. Only 30% of its 11,500 population survived. Substantial

numbers of displaced people are gathered in temporary settlements far inland where they have walked to find supplies or relatives. Several thousand IDPs were reported to be in Takengon in the highlands of central Aceh. Corruption, bureaucracy and government fears of the GAM meant aid has been slow to reach the poorest of the poor.

Eyewitness

This is the eyewitness account of Pak Yurian, a man in his sixties who is village secretary of Blangme in Aceh Besar District and is now acting head of the Acehese indigenous network, JKMA Aceh. The earthquake began at around 7.55am local time of 26th December 2004.

"It is hard to describe the disaster. I was at home - to be precise, in the hamlet of Lamkuta, Blangme when this terrifying earthquake struck. About twenty minutes later, there were a lot of people shouting "The water is coming!". I immediately told my family and neighbours to run for the hills across the ricefields at Blang Gentet. When I reached the fields I tripped over a dike because I was looking behind me while I was running. I saw this wall of water about 30 metres high and there was this thundering noise like the sound of an aircraft engine. In just a few seconds I was knocked over and tossed around by the wave. I tried to save myself and suddenly my hand grasped a tree trunk which had been carried away by the seawater. The wave swept me about 500m to the east of Gentet. Then came the second wave which was even more dreadful. That swept me away again right to Gentet which is about 2km from where I started. At that point I had no idea where my family was. Then, when the water went down, I heard two of my children call me and together we walked to the safety of higher ground in Gentet. I knew then that my wife and another of my six children had died, although to this day their bodies have never been found".

Medan was also an important staging post in the initial stages of the disaster response. The small airport in Banda Aceh had been damaged so large cargo planes could not land. Supplies were offloaded onto smaller planes or helicopters. At one point, Medan airport was so congested that relief flights had to wait hundreds of miles south in Pekanbaru, Riau. As the weeks went by, international agencies moved out of Medan, advancing field operations to bases in Banda Aceh and Meulaboh while programme administration was pulled back to offices in Jakarta. Co-ordination between the Indonesian authorities in North Sumatra and Aceh has been poor, to the extent that - by early February - there were still no plans to help several hundred of the most severely injured people return after they had been airlifted from decimated villages in Aceh and the islands off the west coast to hospitals in Medan and Jakarta. There were reports that survivors in state hospitals in Medan had to pay for medical care, whereas those in field hospitals set up by international agencies were treated free.

Conflict

The decades-long conflict in Aceh lies behind many of the difficulties faced in the relief efforts, but this has been played down by some of the international agencies which are reluctant to criticise the host government. In the days immediately after the tsunami, Jakarta was forced to open up Aceh to outsiders - a move welcomed by human rights defenders. Before the tsunami, international agencies were restricted and foreign journalists banned in an attempt to

prevent news of military operations - and human rights violations - reaching the outside world. This sensitivity to foreigners became evident during the relief efforts, as the Indonesian military (TNI) insisted on controlling aid delivery and restricted the movements of emergency relief staff. It was also evident at national level: Syamsir Siregar, the head of Indonesia's intelligence agency, for example, claimed that foreigners had interests in Aceh beyond humanitarian relief and called for 19,000 foreign troops to leave within three months (*Kompas* 22/Jan/05).

Reports from the ground in January said that aid delivery was being delayed because of TNI control and reporting requirements. Communities believed to be pro-GAM were being discriminated against in the delivery of aid, meaning that they may have been going without desperately needed food and daily necessities.

At the same time, many ordinary Acehese tsunami survivors, whose mistrust of the military and the government authorities runs very deep, continue to stay away from the IDP camps, to avoid having their movements monitored by the authorities.

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The appalling images of death and destruction from the quake-tsunami have shocked an international audience through the TV screen. It is, however, important to remember that poverty is an equally deadly but less spectacular killer. Unless the reconstruction of Aceh is based on the principles of sustainable development, large numbers of lives will be lost in the longer term despite the territory's wealth of natural resources. ♦

Community-centred reconstruction needed

For many tsunami survivors whose homes and livelihoods were totally swept away in the early hours of December 26th, rebuilding their lives means starting from scratch. What lies ahead for these shattered communities and who will decide what happens next?

Acehnese civil society organisations are highlighting the overriding need for participation by the affected communities in the reconstruction and recovery processes and for transparency and accountability in the use of funds. They want protection of human rights - including rights to land and natural resources; the rights of tsunami victims to return home to rebuild their lives; the lifting of Aceh's civil emergency status and involvement of civil society in negotiations to end the years of conflict in Aceh.

At the January meeting of Indonesia's creditor grouping, the CGI, planning minister Indrawati said the major focus areas of the reconstruction strategy included restoring people's lives and livelihoods, restoring the economy and infrastructure, and restoring local government. "We need to provide new infrastructure, new houses, education, medical services, and new jobs - urgently" she said. (Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs Press Release Jan/05).

This echoed the recommendations in Bappenas' preliminary damage assessment (PDLA - see page 3), which said the priorities for reconstruction must lie in ways to rebuild livelihoods and the social fabric of the devastated communities, including housing and shelter, generating enterprise, commerce and income creation; rebuilding rural livelihoods - agriculture and fisheries - providing public services, and assisting the newly vulnerable - single mothers and orphans.

Accordingly, a government blueprint for reconstruction is under preparation, along with a World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) assessment of financing needs, due in March.

On 1 March 2005, Aceh governor Azwar Abubakar formally opened the public consultation process on the so-called reconstruction blueprint. The UN office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that the results of nine days of consultations by ten thematic groups would be forwarded to the central authorities in Jakarta, with a finalised blueprint expected by mid-March. UNDP and the World Bank are financing this process and providing expertise (OCHA Situation Report 31, 1/Mar/05).

Concerns

However, the view from the ground is that so far, the government's emergency response and reconstruction planning has been top-down and dominated by security interests, rather than making space for community-led initiatives.

Civil society organisations involved in discussions about reconstruction have



Reconstruction will work best if affected communities decide the direction

raised a number of concerns over the immediate and longer term future for the tsunami victims. Some of these are highlighted below.

♦ Community consultation and participation

The Bappenas report said that decision-makers should focus on the needs of the local population in its reconstruction strategy and that community consultation "is imperative to devising the plan for reconstructing Aceh and North Sumatra." It points to a 'vision for a National Recovery and Reconstruction Strategy' consisting of six key principles outlined by the Government, including a 'people-centered and participative process'.

The call for community-led decision-making - not just consultation or participation - has been a central demand of civil society organisations. The question now is how to provide the tens of thousands of tsunami survivors with time and space to consider and participate meaningfully in decisions about their futures, when the government is already pressing ahead with short-term actions that will have long term impacts on survivor communities.

♦ Corruption

NGOs have called for transparency and accountability in the management of aid, but the expectation is that at least 30% of assistance will be corrupted. Aceh is already ranked as one of most corrupt provinces in Indonesia and Indonesia was recently ranked the fifth most corrupt country by Transparency International (see also page 20).

Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare, Alwi Shihab, has said the government will set up a number of supervisory bodies to monitor reconstruction projects, which will include members of NGOs and donors' representatives. He also committed the government to making monthly official announcements of financial aid already received and what had been spent (icwweb 24/Jan/05).

A number of NGOs have already been requested to monitor aid, setting them against powerful vested interests. The environmental NGO Telapak has highlighted the case of Farid Faqih, a civil society movement activist and Government Watch (GOWA) coordinator who was assaulted by military (TNI) officers at the Indonesian Air Force Base in Blang Bintang, Aceh. The TNI accused Farid Faqih of stealing aid supplies. His group, GOWA, and Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW) had received a formal request from President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono to monitor corruption in the distribution of aid supplies for tsunami relief in Aceh. Farid Faqih had made a public statement on false reporting of tsunami victims' numbers in Aceh (Telapak statement, 27/Jan/05).

♦ Human rights

Amnesty International has stressed the need to adhere to human rights principles in both the emergency relief and reconstruction effort. The concern is that violations against suspected GAM sympathisers and human rights defenders are continuing in post-tsunami Aceh, and may be stepped up once the media spotlight has faded and the international emergency relief presence is scaled down.

There have already been reports of GAM suspects being targeted by the military in IDP camps (see box page 4). The reluctance of many survivors to register with the authorities reflects the widespread fear of victimisation by the military and police. Registration for relocation into shelters for up to 2 years, began on January 30th (see also resettlement and housing sections, below). According to military planning, military forces will be involved in surveying numbers and locations of displaced people as well as relocation planning and preparations (HRW/HRF press release 7/Feb/05).

♦ **Indigenous peoples**

Indonesia's indigenous peoples alliance, AMAN, also expressed concern about military control of relief and reconstruction programmes. AMAN also warned that the involvement of international investors could harm the interests of Aceh's indigenous peoples by putting pressure on land and other customary rights (see AMAN's press statement, page 11).

The regional indigenous peoples' organisation suffered a severe blow with the disappearance and presumed loss of Pak Keuchik Jailani Hasan, local indigenous leader and council member of AMAN (see obituary, page 24).

♦ **Women**

Reconstruction planning needs to make gender justice a major consideration, if women are not to be marginalised from decision-making about their future. As Amnesty International notes, women have already suffered inordinately under the years of conflict in Aceh, due to a "long established pattern of rape and other crimes of sexual violence against women by the security forces in the villages..." (see also DTE 63:2). Amnesty also reports that the risk of gender-based violence is greatly increased by the displacement of large sections of the population and that specific efforts are needed to protect women IDPs. From this embattled starting point, women will need special attention to ensure that their inputs are sought out and accommodated in reconstruction planning (see also page 16).

The Bappenas report warns that the "subordinate position of women in society...makes them targets for physical attacks and abuse, blocks avenues for acquiring necessary skills, and limits their access to resources and power structures", and that "given the current security situation, these challenges may be amplified".

"In many camps, women have little say in the allocation of resources. As reconstruction efforts begin, this lack of voice may translate into poor representation in resettlement planning and an inability to express retraining and financing needs." (PDLA, p 82).

♦ **Land and resettlement**

The tsunami has made 20% of the Acehese population homeless (Bappenas, Jan 2005). Some of these people have literally lost their land as the tsunami washed away parts of the land, permanently changing the shape of the coastline. Others could find it hard to define their plots in the devastated landscape and even less will have any proof that the land is theirs.

"Land control and ownership will become a critical issue, in agricultural areas as individuals try to return to land or settle elsewhere, and in urban areas as individuals try to rebuild on smaller plots," predicts Bappenas. According to data in the January 2005 report, most households in Aceh lived in self-owned houses and less than 10% of homes were rented. Eighty eight per cent had some sort of documentation for their house, but only 9% had land certificates. "Today much of the documentation has been destroyed and the issue of ownership claims may soon become a source of tension in the area".

Rumours that the government was planning large resettlement schemes for tsunami victims began to circulate soon after the tsunami hit, prompting fears of social engineering along the lines of the much-critiqued transmigration resettlement programme, or an attempt to control GAM

Aceh CSOs join together to participate in reconstruction plans

Around Acehese 100 civil society organisations gathered for the first time since the earthquake and tsunami disasters to come up with plans for reconstruction in Aceh, from the point of view of the Acehese themselves. The *Duek Pakat*, or meeting, was held in Medan, after the original plan to hold it in Takengon, Central Aceh, was cancelled by the police for 'security' reasons.

The meeting was organised to meet the February 14th deadline for registration in the provincial government's working groups which will prepare a blue-print for the redevelopment of Aceh.

The timeframe is extremely tight: Bappenas will submit the Aceh and North Sumatra People's Rehabilitation and Reconstruction plan to the President in the third week of March, less than three weeks from the registration deadline.

"There has not yet been any public consultation which has involved the Acehese themselves in discussions on reconstruction and rehabilitation in the province," said a press release, following the meeting.

The meeting ended with an agreement to form the Komite Bersama Aceh Baru - the New Aceh Joint Committee.

The committee has the mandate to ensure that the people's voice is heard at provincial, national and international levels. Different parts of Acehese society have complained that they haven't been told about plans and activities of national and international agencies involved in rehabilitation work. Meanwhile, international and national agencies often find it difficult to identify partners in the field to channel aid and work on programmes that are

appropriate, useful and which directly address people's needs.

The meeting, which was supported by 13 international and national donors, agreed that the most urgent priority was to secure the withdrawal of Aceh's civil emergency status, so that Acehese would be free to participate in planning for rehabilitation and reconstruction work in future.

The *Duek Pakat* also pressed for:

- Acehese, including women and indigenous peoples, to be fully involved in reconstruction planning;

- legal guarantees for the survivors' rights, including in land disputes;

- development in Aceh not to be financed by domestic or foreign debt;

- Acehese to be involved in rebuilding their own houses;

- participation for Acehese in monitoring the effectiveness and efficiency of aid;

- women to have full decision-making participation in each rehabilitation and reconstruction planning process;

- inclusion of civil society components so that peace negotiations are conducted by three parties - the military, GAM and civil society.

The New Aceh Joint Committee consists of 11 elements including women, religious leaders, youth organisations, NGOs, peoples organisations, professionals, farmers, and fisherfolk.

(Press Release forwarded by Yayasan Tifa, 14/Feb/05) ♦

The protection of land rights - key issues:

- ◆ Many people have no proof of their identity, let alone their ownership of land and or property, as they lost all their personal documents in the disaster. It will take some time to replace these.
- ◆ Many people - especially in traditional communities in urban and rural areas - did not have any certification or proof of land ownership.
- ◆ The physical landscape has changed along extended part of the coastal strip. Reoccupation is impossible where dry land has become part of the seabed or muddy swamps.
- ◆ Natural markers which traditional communities use to demarcate their land - such as certain trees, streams or rocks - have been totally swept away or changed.
- ◆ The impact of the quake-tsunami in some places has been so severe that everything has been flattened and there are no traces of even concrete and brick buildings. Elsewhere, foundations have been bulldozed to clear mud and wreckage.
- ◆ In urban areas, there is some evidence of land speculation where people are buying up or claiming to own land where the real owners are dead, in order to get compensation from the authorities during the reconstruction phase.
- ◆ Some records held by local land agency offices or village administrators have been destroyed. Duplicates should be held in Jakarta, but it is not known how efficient the bureaucracy is.
- ◆ There is the potential for land conflict, especially where land is left empty because the original land owners have died or left the area on a temporary or permanent basis.
- ◆ Where survivors want to stay inland, rather than return, there will be more pressure on land and natural resources and again a greater risk of conflict as they seek 'empty' land to farm or build homes.
- ◆ Many people do not want to report to the authorities in areas which the government considers GAM strongholds, because of past experiences of violence, intimidation, extortion, arrests, disappearances and destruction of property.
- ◆ The government has set up 10 teams to draw up land-use plans for the affected areas. An overall 'Blueprint' for redevelopment' originally due in mid-February will not be announced until mid-March. There has been next to no public consultation in this process.
- ◆ The government is trying to move all refugees into temporary accommodation - in barracks or with other families - rather than encouraging or even allowing them to go home.
- ◆ The military has already claimed land in certain places as bases for emergency relief operations and to rebuild its own bases and command posts. Local people dare not complain that their land has been seized.
- ◆ People's land is also being taken over by the civil authorities for relocation centres, new roads and government depots. The government says all land for relocation centres has been rented or purchased. There is some evidence of village officials giving consent on behalf of landowners, without any discussion.
- ◆ Various government spokesmen and international agencies have announced the need for a coastal safety zone where no settlements will be rebuilt. They are proposing a 'Green Line', at least part of which will be planted with mangroves to reduce the impact of any future tsunamis. ◆

sympathisers' activities. There was a concern too, that hurried relocation would take advantage of communities' fear of the sea, before they had had time to assess how long-lasting these fears were.

A forestry department press release outlined one relocation scheme. It proposes swapping land on the coast with inland areas controlled by the forestry department, in order to rehabilitate mangroves and so strengthen coastal defences. The release said the rehabilitation efforts would not be easy because, among other reasons, the plans would have to be 'socialised' to communities who would need to relocate. It said approaches would be made to communities previously living in coastal areas to exchange these areas for forest areas. "It is hoped that the communities will not go back to live on the coast, and can live, instead in forest areas which will be prepared by the Forestry Department, so that, in future, they will be free of the risk of experiencing a similar disaster" (Press Release S. 32/II/PIK-1/2004, 13/Jan/05).

Such schemes appear to leave little room for community-led planning and may exclude the best solutions both for livelihoods and sustainable coastlines. They may also ignore the customary rights of indigenous communities over inland forest areas, where these lands are officially classified as production forest - thus creating more potential for conflict over land in future.

Depending on how these schemes are carried through, there is a strong possibility that they will also violate human rights. Amnesty International is calling on the Indonesian government to assist people to recover their land and property where possible, and to adhere to the UN Guiding Principles of Internal Displacement. These and other international standards state that IDPs have the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose their residence. They have the right to be protected from arbitrary or forcible displacement. "Donors should demand that...there is an absolute prohibition on acts by the security forces or other officials which result in forcible displacement, resettlement or relocation. The free and informed consent of IDPs should be sought at all times" (AI, January 2005).

Acehnese NGOs have also highlighted the right to land in their discussions and demands (see box p. 6).

◆ Housing

The reconstruction of housing for tsunami survivors requires full community participation and environmental impact assessment, if schemes - even the short-medium term projects - are to be socially and environmentally sustainable.

The Bappenas report suggests that:

- ♦ Local housing programmes need to be based on public and participatory planning;
- ♦ Repairing and reconstructing homes could be carried out at the local community level to save costs and generate income at the local level;
- ♦ This could be labour-intensive to provide employment and immediate income to those who lost jobs and livelihoods;
- ♦ Experience in other countries shows that temporary shelter can become permanent in the absence of further reconstruction efforts. Short-cuts in reconstruction need to be avoided.

Yet government plans for rehousing tsunami survivors, including the building of semi-permanent, barracks-style shelters, are already being implemented in ways that go against these recommendations. The lack of consultation and the involvement of the military in setting up the new camps has spread alarm. In early February the US-based NGOs Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Human Rights First (HRF) said that the government's plans to register and relocate more than 100,000 displaced people to semi-permanent camps threatened their right to return home. The NGOs expressed concern that the camps could be misused by the military as a way of controlling the population, unless human rights safeguards were put in place.

"...Given the military's poor human rights record in Aceh, its prominent role in the transport of thousands of Acehnese from spontaneous camps to the barracks sites, involvement in camp management, and aid distribution within barracks would invariably create fear among the displaced population. This could prevent displaced persons from making a free and informed choice on relocation, including the option of returning to their place of origin...."(HRW/HRF press release 7/Feb/05).

In early February, minister Alwi Shihab said that nobody would be forced to move to the resettlement barracks. A report by AFP said there had been protests by some survivors who do not want to be herded into cramped barracks, but want separate houses instead, however small (AFP 2/Feb/05).

According to HRW and HRF, at least a third of people displaced by the tsunami were living in spontaneous camps in early February, while others were staying in public buildings or with friends or relatives. The government promised a monthly allowance for people living with host families, but no clear commitment had emerged to support those who chose to return to their places of origin immediately. The organisations raised concerns that the government was registering displaced people



Top-down planning: barrack-style shelters, Lambaro, Aceh Besar, February 2005.

(DTE)

for relocation, without first offering them adequate information on alternatives.

A report by the Urban Poor Linkage Information Center (Uplink), said that the first relocation of IDPs into the first barracks was attempted on February 15th. "The majority of the IDPs...refused to move into the barracks...the major issue has been [the] gap between the government policy, i.e. to house people in temporary barracks and later relocate them to new residential sites far away from their original settlements, and the people's wish to go back to their original kampungs as soon as possible" (Uplink 23/Feb/05). A later UN report indicated that local government and Jakarta officials from the ministry of public works had agreed that IDPs who wish to stay and rebuild on their former home sites should be allowed to do so.

Only 75 of the 273 barracks planned for the first phase of relocating of displaced people were ready by the 15th February deadline (detik.com 15/Feb/05)

According to national coordination

"I would like to appeal for your assistance in this case. Kindly inform the public in your countries and your government and persuade them to hold their donation unless the government/military agrees to put the people at the centre in the reconstruction process, as the primary actors and decision makers, and to use the momentum created by the disaster for peace and welfare of the people."

(Urban Poor Linkage Information Center, 5/Feb/05)

body, BAKORNAS, 397 barracks, officially called Temporary Location Centres (TLCs), had been completed by late February and displaced people had occupied 142 of them. The Government has increased the number of planned barracks to 997, with each designed to house 60 people (OCHA Situation Report 31, 1/Mar/05).

The Urban Poor Consortium is working with others to counter plans issued by the Department of Public Works to relocate communities away from the coast in the city of Banda Aceh and create two new cities outside the current location. An alternative plan, allowing people to move back to their original plots and create "escape" hills, or areas of higher ground where people can take refuge in future, is being promoted (Uplink 23/Feb/05).

♦ Environmental sustainability

The Bappenas report, which contains a short section on mainstreaming and restoring the environment, recommends that environmental issues should be considered in all sectoral reconstruction planning and actions. This includes the selection of locations for temporary housing and resettlement camps which "should be done in considering potential longer time environmental implications." However, the report also mentions that EIAs (environmental impact assessments) should be conducted "in a swift manner" so that the planned reconstruction projects do not experience delays in implementation.

Currently, Indonesia's EIA system is not given much credit by environmental organisations or communities throughout the country whose livelihoods have been ruined by pollution. The fact is that it is not possible to do an EIA swiftly if public participation is to be meaningful and if the final decision is to take all views into consideration.

♦ **Timber supply for reconstruction**

Reconstruction - specifically the demand for timber for building materials - looks set to exact a heavy toll on Aceh's already depleted forest resources. The forests of Aceh, North Sumatra and the islands off the west coast of Sumatra, including Siberut, are still extensive and rich in biodiversity. They are also the easiest, quickest and cheapest source of timber for future housing and development needs.

WWF Indonesia predicts that at least 300,000 new homes will need to be built for tsunami survivors. Forestry NGO network, SKEPHI, reported in January that soon after the disaster struck, district leaders in Aceh were requesting central government permission to fell timber in their areas to help in the construction effort.

Now, according to the environment ministry, central government is targeting Aceh's Gunung Leuser National Park as a source of timber. The park was declared a World Heritage Site last year by UNESCO because of its unique biodiversity value. Environment minister, Rachmat Witoelar is reported to have rejected the plan to log Leuser and has asked for log donations from other countries instead (*Asia Times* 5/Mar/05).

SKEPHI and other NGOs predict that stripping timber from Sumatra's remaining forests will bring further tragedy in the form of landslides and flooding. In late 2003 around 200 people were killed when flash floods swept through the North Sumatran village of Bukit Lawang. The disaster was blamed on rampant logging within the Gunung Leuser Ecosystem, a 2.6 million hectare area, which includes the national park and which spans the North Sumatra and Aceh border (see *DTE* 59:14). In May last year, further flooding killed another villager over the border in Aceh and forced thousands to leave their flooded homes (see *DTE* 62:1).

The forestry minister has estimated the demand for timber at 8.5 million cubic metres for the construction of around 123,000 new homes. The recently-installed minister, Malam Sambat Kalam, said 6 million m³ would be logs and 2.5million m³ sawn wood. In late January, he said the ministry was considering giving special permits to forestry concessionaires in Aceh to allow them to meet this demand.

He also said confiscated timber (from illegal logging) and timber that had been rejected by exporters could be used. Officials were still compiling inventories of quantities and locations or such timber in late January (*Antara/Jakarta Post* 25/Jan/05).

The 8.5 million cubic metre estimate is far more than this year's logging quota of 5.45 million m³ for the whole country. It means that the minister's proposal to dramatically increase the allowable cut to 20 - 30million m³ is likely to be agreed (*Jakarta Post* 7/Jan/05).

Destructive logging in Aceh is tearing out the forests at a rates of 270,000 hectares per year despite a moratorium on logging concessions imposed since 2001. It is carried out by both licensed and unlicensed businesses, and supported by a corrupt network of government officials, entrepreneurs and military personnel. Indigenous peoples' rights to forests and forest resources have been pushed aside. Logs and processed wood are smuggled out of Aceh from locations on the west and east coasts to Malaysia, China and other countries, causing tens of millions of dollars in losses to state revenues. The military's deep involvement in the logging industry has led activists to conclude that the war against GAM will be perpetuated as long as there are still profits to be had in Aceh's forests. (See *Aceh: Logging a conflict zone* for more background on deforestation in Aceh.)

Back in post-tsunami Aceh, the increased demand for wood is highly likely to make this dire situation even worse. "There's quite a strong likelihood that any tree left standing is going to get grabbed," Moray McLeish of US-based conservation organisation, The Nature Conservancy, told the *Wall Street Journal*. "The danger is that people will go after the timber in the national parks...Those are pretty much the only sources left in Sumatra" (*WSJ* 17/Jan/05).

♦ **Roads - Ladia Galaska**

Closely connected to the problem of deforestation will be the decision-making around the future transport infrastructure, and in particular the roads. Much of the western coastal road was destroyed by the earthquake and tsunami waves, cutting off villages from much-needed medical assistance and food and water supplies. These need to be rebuilt, but NGOs fear that the post-tsunami focus of road-building could move inland. Governor Abdullah Puteh (currently suspended from his post and under

investigation for corruption) has been pushing for the construction of the trans-Aceh Ladia Galaska road, despite the potential for triggering more fatal flooding and landslides that this brings with it. The partly-constructed Ladia Galaska network cuts through the Leuser Ecosystem, and is widely believed to serve the interests of the local logging mafia networks, rather than any rational transport plan. Activists opposing the project have already been targeted by the police and military authorities. One well-known indigenous campaigner, Bestari Raden, is now serving a two and a half year sentence for his vocal opposition to destructive logging in Aceh. He was arrested while taking part in a government-sponsored mission to review sections of Ladia Galaska. (See *DTE* 63:12, 62:1 and *Aceh: logging a conflict zone* for background.)

"We're worried that the tsunami tragedy is being used to affirm the [Ladia Galaska] road construction...We have to stop the road-construction project and prevent Gunung Leuser National Park as the source of logs"

(Longgena Ginting, WALHI, in *Asia Times* 5/Mar/05)

NGOs opposing the road network are now concerned that the tsunami will be used as a rationale to accelerate construction of the road, as, it will be argued, this overland route will not be susceptible to future damage from the sea. The authorities have decided that this disaster clearly demonstrates the need for better overland access to the west coast from the east. One option in the most recent plans is for Tapak Tuan to become the main centre for development and population on the west



Aceh: logging a conflict zone

Eye on Aceh report 2004, prepared by Down to Earth

The report is online at <http://www.aceh-eye.org/>

Printed copies available from DTE.

A German translation of the report can be sent via email.

Contact dte@gn.apc.org or +44 (0) 16977 462 66 for details.

coast. Any new roads to the north and west will go straight through the forests of the Leuser Ecosystem. This presents opportunities for local politicians and entrepreneurs to create a small fortune from felling commercially valuable timber along the roads' route and granting plantation permits. Documents made available to DTE show that the government is requesting funding from the World Bank for construction of roads in this protected area.

The Indonesian authorities say that the road network already exists and just needs upgrading. This is not entirely true. Some roads are little more than dirt tracks extending a few kilometres into the forest from main roads in the east and the west. The Ladia Galaska scheme will join these up and provide a hard surface so that large trucks can cut right across the forest. For example, during February, 75 km of asphalt was laid on the Takengon to Meulaboh route (<http://AcehUpdate.deGromiest.nl/archives/02034.php>).

Yet the price of pushing ahead with Ladia Galaska could be very high indeed. A survey conducted by the EU-funded Leuser Management Unit, predicted that the Ladia Galaska road network construction would double the size of destroyed forest to 40% of the Leuser Ecosystem by 2010 and would risk losses of Rp168.7 trillion (US\$19.8 billion) in predicted natural disasters caused by the forest destruction, not including the possible loss of lives (*Jakarta Post* 3/Dec/03).

♦ Involvement of private sector

The role of the World Bank and the IMF in calculating the financing needs for reconstruction has been questioned by Binny Buchori, former director of the International Forum on Indonesian Development. In an article for the UK-based NGO, Bretton Woods Project, she points to these institutions' role in Indonesia of promoting privatisation, economic liberalisation and

directing infrastructure development towards energy and transportation mega-projects. "What guarantee do we have that these institutions will not put the mega-projects as the priority of infrastructure reconstruction in Aceh and North Sumatra?" (*BWP* 26/Jan/05).

The concern is that large projects will sideline community-based projects and will also channel reconstruction funding to foreign companies. Aceh's experience with foreign multinationals has been less than happy. US-based oil multinational, ExxonMobil, has been the most prominent player for many years. The company is facing legal action over its involvement in human rights abuses by its military security guards, which include using company facilities for torturing and disappearing GAM suspects (see *DTE* 50:1).

According to welfare minister Alwi Shihab, who also heads Indonesia's disaster mitigation team, the emphasis should be on building up local capacity. He said local and international donors would be given opportunities to be involved in the reconstruction efforts, but would have to give priority to Acehnese workers. "Don't get workers from abroad or even from Jakarta. We must empower the Acehnese to show that this is all about them and their homeland" (*icwweb* 24/Jan/05).

The view from the ground is that local businesses are being sidelined. A report in *Serambi* said that local businesses were complaining to the Acehnese authorities that they were being completely overlooked in the reconstruction efforts. National or Jakarta-based companies were selected for contracts rather than local businesses, according to Let Bugeh, the owner of one Acehnese company. "We are not even invited for consultations, let alone given any support, although we've lost so much. We are just observers, left on the sidelines of Aceh's redevelopment", he complained (*Serambi* 28/Feb/05). ♦



Destroyed homes, Banda Aceh, January 2005

(DTE)

Disaster response becomes a political football

The Indonesian press has made much of tensions between President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) and his deputy, the powerful businessman and head of the GOLKAR party, Jusuf Kalla. SBY had placed great political store in fulfilling his promise to the electorate of real action within his first 100 days of office. As the weeks passed into months, some political commentators were questioning whether anything had changed when the quake-tsunami struck. SBY was characterised as indecisive and slow to act compared with his dynamic deputy. So it was inevitable that the government's response to the disaster would become part of Jakarta's political in-fighting.

Ironically, SBY was in West Papua over Christmas, boosting his political capital by visiting the victims of November's quake in Nabire. He had visited Aceh precisely one month before. Kalla was quick off the mark. People were impressed by the way that he arrived in Banda Aceh the day after the disaster. The way that he then issued instructions to government ministers to visit Aceh and set up measures to be taken to tackle the response was received less favourably. Kalla established a new national agency, under the National Agency for Disaster Management, with himself as head. Some MPs said it was unconstitutional for the vice-president to issue decrees, rather than the president, in the event of a national emergency. Others were affronted that parliament was not recalled or even consulted.

The disaster opened up new possibilities for negotiations with GAM and even before he became vice-president, Kalla had been tasked to work behind the scenes on an Aceh peace settlement. Hence it was Kalla, not the foreign minister who went to Helsinki to meet GAM representatives at the end of January.

Both the president and vice-president have, in public, played down any rivalry between them. "Everything Kalla does, is on my instruction", said SBY. Nevertheless, some political observers see this as just the start of Kalla's campaign to become president of Indonesia in 2009.

(Source: *Tempo* 23/Jan, 6/Feb/05) ♦

Give the people of Aceh the right to rebuild their territory themselves

Alliance of Indigenous Peoples of the Archipelago (AMAN) Press Statement

All that's left for the survivors now is the thin thread of life and a stack of questions and fears.

The government has a three-stage plan to tackle the disaster in Aceh and North Sumatra. The emergency stage programme will be the priority until December 2005, when aid will be directed towards clothing, food and health. The emergency funding amounts to Rp1.35 trillion. The second stage, rehabilitation of infrastructure, with a time-span of one to one and half years from now, will need Rp1.35 trillion. Finally, the reconstruction stage will take ten to twelve years and will cost at least Rp10 trillion.

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has announced four priorities: integrated cross-sector and cross-agency operations to tackle the earthquake and tsunami disaster in Aceh and North Sumatra; distribution of food and medicines; relocation of refugees; and the search for bodies and missing persons. All these measures are not running properly yet, despite the substantial amount of aid which has been received to date. The Alliance of the Indigenous Peoples of the Archipelago (AMAN), along with various civil society organisations, believes that it is important to comment on the way this whole programme is being carried out.

- 1) The facts show that what the President calls an integrated cross-sector and cross-agency operation, is actually not integrated but is being largely controlled by the military. This means that a lot of refugees are not getting proper assistance both in terms of timing and quality. Some supplies have been damaged because they were not handled properly, safely and quickly.
- 2) There have been cases of refugees dying because food and medical aid has reached them too late. Meanwhile, the lack of clean water still remains a problem.
- 3) The Aceh and North Sumatra Reconstruction Programme, which will be handled by the Special Authority Agency (BOK)*, has yet to show the Achenese and the general public a significant emphasis on the socio-cultural aspects of Acehnese society in the reconstruction efforts.
- 4) The characteristics of this long term programme, which involves large investors and global economic players like

the World Bank and industrialised countries, could harm the interests of Aceh's indigenous peoples by putting serious pressure on land rights and other socio-cultural rights. A number of countries have already openly stated their desire to get involved in building infrastructure in Aceh.

- 5) This pressure is serious cause for concern, given the government's tendency to prioritise the interests of large investors and global economic players over the interests of indigenous peoples. The concern also arises from the government's reluctance to accept the offer of a debt moratorium made by several creditor countries including the UK, Canada, Germany and France (G-7 countries) on the grounds that this will affect Indonesia's credit rating on the international market. In the meantime, there are indications that the effort to rehabilitate Aceh and North Sumatra will create new debts amounting to US\$3 billion.

On the basis of these observations, AMAN urges the government to:

- 1) Put into practice the principle, in the interest of rebuilding Acehnese society in accordance with their basic rights, of giving the people of Aceh the right to rebuild their territory themselves;
- 2) Tackle the impacts of the disaster during the emergency phase. In particular, more attention must be paid to the immediate supply of appropriate food, clothing and medicines to those refugees in greatest need;
- 3) In the distribution of aid, the needs of the victims must be put first, and not political or business interests behind the aid donations;
- 4) The security concerns put forward by the military must be kept in perspective, or they will hamper the efforts of civil society organisations in assisting the refugees. The military should just provide protection for the delivery of aid to refugees so that it is done safely and smoothly, without security disturbances; they should not make difficulties for others distributing aid, especially civil society organisations who know just as much about the condition of refugees;
- 5) The short-term Rehabilitation Plan, which has been announced with a time-span of 6 months to one year, should not only

focus on the improvement of public infrastructure, but must also pay attention to sufficient preparations for securing the assets and property rights of the Acehnese, especially land and resource management areas of Aceh's indigenous communities. These preparations should involve community and customary leaders, including women, so that they participate in planning and preparing the re-structuring of land use and resource management in Aceh, under post-tsunami development planning;

- 6) The Aceh and North Sumatra Reconstruction Programme to be handled by BOK should not just focus on rebuilding infrastructure. Socio-cultural and environmental aspects must be given equal consideration throughout the reconstruction programme. The development of BOK itself must guard against recentralisation of the NAD [Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam] administration. It must be based on the desire to return special autonomy to the Acehnese;
- 7) In relation to rights over land and other natural resources, all the indigenous peoples of Aceh who are currently dispersed in various refugee camps, must be intensively involved in these matters, particularly in devastated areas;
- 8) The plan to accommodate - homeless people in 24** centres in NAD needs to take into account the socio-cultural aspects of communities formed long before the disaster struck and long before they were forced to become refugees. There are various indigenous groups whose social character is different and whose cultures differ from each other. The majority of disaster victims are also indigenous coastal dwellers who have cultural ties to their customary coastal lands. Of course these people can't be relocated to areas far from the coast just like that. The principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) for indigenous peoples and for all groups of local people must be the main principle on which the relocation programme is based. The continuation of the Civil Emergency in Aceh should not become a justification for the government and the military alone to decide on the sites for relocation centres.

Jakarta, January 15th, 2005

(see next page for notes)

Fishing communities

Fisherfolk in Aceh are particularly vulnerable in the process of Aceh's recovery and reconstruction. They lived in coastal communities that were worst hit by the disaster. Many were poor and used to live very traditional lifestyles. Typically, their homes were small thatched huts close to the seashore. Their whole way of life was completely dependent on local marine resources. This was basically subsistence-level fishing. They would go out in small boats to the reefs or inshore waters overnight or in the early mornings, then sell their catches at local markets, repairing their nets and resting in the afternoons.

Before the disaster, fishing rights along the coast of Aceh were still governed by customary regulations (*adat*) in many areas. Customary leaders, called *panglima laot*, each had authority over several traditional fishing communities. They determined where, when and how much fishing could take place and settled local disputes. The *panglima laot* also played an important role in representing small-scale fisherfolk's interests to the local authorities. They took up local fisherfolk's complaints about the intrusion of large trawlers on their fishing grounds and the use of illegal fishing methods like cyanide poisoning or bombing and protested about falling catches to government officials, the police, the navy and customs.

When the tsunami waves hit, some fishermen were at sea. They returned to find their homes and families gone. Whole villages had been swept away. Countless nets and boats were damaged or destroyed. Boats were even carried several kilometres inland in the worst hit areas. In the weeks immediately after the disaster, fisherfolk whose boats were undamaged were reluctant to put to sea for fear of catching in their nets some of the tens of thousands of bodies washed out to sea. For the same reason, even people in parts of Banda Aceh untouched by the tsunami did not want to eat fresh fish.

Some fisherfolk are so traumatised that they cannot contemplate going back to their former way of life. But many more are desperate to return. They fear the loss of their identity and culture as fisherfolk and



Fishing boats washed inland, Banda Aceh, January 2005

(DTE)

most have few other livelihood options. They do not want to stay in relocation centres or villages away from the coast where they lack the skills, equipment, experience, capital and land to become farmers or traders. "We want to rebuild our lives and make some money", said one.

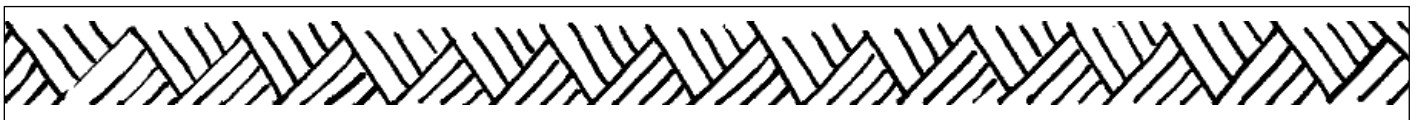
Many factors are acting against them. The very shape of the coastline has changed in some areas and the former locations of many fishing villages are now under water. Elsewhere, the places where fisherfolk sold their catches, and the people, who bought them have gone. Roads and transport systems in coastal areas have been destroyed or badly disrupted, as have supplies of ice, making it hard to transport catches further inland for sale. Dramatic changes in the seabed have also occurred. This could change local sea levels and currents, bringing coral reefs nearer to the surface and altering conditions where fish, crustaceans and other marine life feed and spawn. In addition, the government does not want to allow people to resettle before official land use plans have been redrawn and announced. Meanwhile various national and international agencies have made public statements about plans for a coastal safety zone and mangrove replanting schemes in which no settlements will be permitted within a certain distance of the sea (see page 15).

These plans are likely to have a serious impact on local livelihoods. Small-scale subsistence level fishing may well be wiped out. The structure of traditional fishing societies has been completely disrupted as communities have been dispersed between friends, families and refugee camps. Central government legislation in the 1970s and decades of conflict had already weakened traditional decision-making systems, like the *panglima laot*. The deaths of a disproportionate number of older people - those most familiar with traditional law - will hamper the revival of *adat*.

It is likely that government and NGO aid programmes will try to introduce modernisation in the name of 'development'. The danger here is that urban-based entrepreneurs and larger operators will find it easier to get access to loans and grants for bigger boats. Traditional fisherfolk will lose control over their livelihoods and become no more than hired hands in bigger commercial operations.

* * * * *

The Directorate General of Fisheries and Marine Affairs has promised help for fishing villages in Aceh. UNHCR is currently undertaking a study of coastal communities and is due to report in March. ♦



(continued from previous page)

[A list of supporting organisations is attached to the original document].

NOTE from DTE:

*The government announced in mid-January

that a Special Authority Agency was to be set up to handle the emergency and reconstruction programme in Aceh. However, this plan was soon withdrawn after criticism from various national bodies that it would merely result in duplication of disaster co-ordination efforts.

**The number of proposed official relocation centres has risen since this statement was written to around 50.

[Translation by DTE] ♦

Relocation camps: a report from Aceh

The following account was compiled By DTE staff in early February.

Around week 2 post-quake, there were serious concerns about the plight of hundreds of thousands people made homeless by the tsunami-quake disaster. These IDPs (internally displaced persons) were living under tarpaulins or in tents in overcrowded conditions, made worse by heavy rains. Fears of epidemics of typhoid, cholera and other diseases drove the authorities to take emergency measures to establish 'temporary accommodation'. So they identified some sites and ordered private companies to build wooden barracks. These are intended to last for 1-2 years while more permanent accommodation is constructed. Plans were drawn up very quickly with no consultation and announced only 4 weeks before the first phase of relocation was due to completed.

The details of the plans are changing all the time and many aspects are still far from clear. The Public Works Department is responsible for the building programme and the Department of Social Affairs for registering people, moving them and supporting them. The two departments' plans are not well co-ordinated, so the details depend on who you talk to. All the important decisions seem to be made in Jakarta by the National Disasters Co-ordination agency, Bakornas, rather than by SatKorLak, the local level agency in Aceh. The relationship between these agencies and the police and provincial government is an important issue to watch, especially if Aceh is to remain in a state of civil emergency. Decisions about the rehabilitation and restoration of Aceh are, at least in part, due to various political power struggles in Jakarta - particularly between SBY and Kalla. 'Security' in Aceh is a major issue for the government (see p10).

The '*relokasi pengungsi*' (refugee relocation) programme is:

- ♦ massive scale
- ♦ top down
- ♦ standardised very basic accommodation
- ♦ culturally inappropriate
- ♦ socially disruptive
- ♦ environmentally unsound
- ♦ being rushed through.

It shows many of the same elements as the transmigration programmes of the 1980s. NGOs in Aceh and Jakarta suspect that the whole programme is designed to exert tighter control over Aceh's people.



Construction work on semi-permanent barracks, Aceh, February 2005

(DTE)

In theory, the options open to IDPs are:

1. move to 'relocation centres' (barracks);
2. stay in the homes of neighbours, extended family or friends;
3. return to their original locations and repair or rebuild their homes;
4. move to new locations (provided by the government?) and build new homes.

People are not being given sufficient information about the available options and so cannot make an informed choice. Current government plans are highly skewed towards moving people into 'relocation centres'. The government says that relocation to compounds of barracks will be voluntary. However, various officials have made public statements about the impracticality or undesirability of allowing people to move back to their former settlements. The degree of devastation in Banda Aceh city and along the west coast is such that moving people to completely new, 'greenfield' sites is clearly a much cheaper option for the government than cleaning up and rebuilding their communities.

Of the official total of 400,000 IDPs, approximately 200,000 are in 'camps'. These include public buildings like schools and government offices; mosques; tarpaulin shelters; large military-style tents and smaller tents. 200,000 more IDPs are being housed by friends, families or neighbours. There may at least 20,000 displaced people in and around

Medan, but these are not included in the current plan. Numbers of refugees in North Sumatra were not clear at the time of writing. The North Sumatra governor has said that all these people will be returned to Aceh, but no official plans for how and when this will take place have been announced.

All the IDP sites in Banda Aceh have been mapped and given codes by UNDP, who are now working on mapping the sites in the district of Aceh Besar. Many, but not all, of the places to where other refugees have fled are also known to the authorities and aid agencies. However, groups of people are still moving around and there are a number of 'spontaneous' sites in 55 sub-districts.

Registration

Registration for 'relocation centres' started last week. The authorities have started by issuing forms to people in IDP camps. It is not known whether they are telling people about the other options before they sign up for relocation. There is a risk that people will be confused about the purpose of the forms as many IDPs are suffering from 'assessment fatigue' because they have now been surveyed numerous times by different, separate agencies.

The same forms may also be used to register people staying in other's houses, but the various government agencies have not apparently given this careful thought yet. Many of these people may have reported to

the local authorities as temporary residents. However, some have not and will be hard to trace. There is a danger they will become invisible to the authorities, especially if they have lost their ID cards and official papers in the disaster. This means that they will not be eligible for any social support, in terms of the monthly payments or other benefits.

The Phase I plan was to move 55,000 people (14,000 families) in Aceh onto 28 sites by 15th Feb 2005. The remaining 150,000 people in camps in Aceh were to be moved into barracks by 15th March (Phase II). Various international agencies tried to engage with the government to modify these plans (particularly with respect for provision for women and children), but the authorities came back within the week with plans for increased numbers of sites and relocated people on the same time schedule. There will now be over 30 sites with a total capacity of 62,000 people (because there were more IDPs than the authorities thought) in the initial phase and probably be over 50 sites in total.

Many of the original sites were deemed unsuitable after assessment by UN agencies. So have some 'replacement' sites. Some of the sites are on 'public' land like the village football pitch or marginal land such as roadsides or river banks. Others are on privately-owned land. Some may be on 'state' land. Some of these sites look like flooded fields, but are supposed to house several thousand people within 2-3 weeks. The Public Works Department estimates it will take 10 days to build each barrack. This will require major water and sanitation supplies, in addition to construction of buildings and moving the people. The construction of the barracks is well behind schedule.

The private sector is heavily involved even at this early stage of reconstruction in Aceh. Contractors are building the barracks and now local companies are being employed to speed up the process. These companies have been selected directly (the timescale makes open tendering difficult). The minister urged the companies to get on with the housing plan quickly and to a high standard, "as the eyes and ears of the world will be on us". The estimated cost per family/unit is US\$1,000*.

The barracks are all a standard plan: 11m x 40m. They are made of timber with a galvanised iron roof. Each barrack will be divided into sections 3m x 4m. The original intention was 'one family per room', but was changed to 4m x 5m for bigger families. So now there are two standards. Each barrack will hold 20 families ie possibly 100 people. In the original plan, eating, sleeping and praying would all have to be done by the whole family in one room. The outside area under the roof overhang was intended for cooking and there were 2 toilets/bathrooms for each barrack. The modified plans show separate cooking

huts and washing blocks, with a covered platform for prayers and meetings. The spacing between barracks is very close, but was originally even worse before the UN assessments. The UN claims that the 'relocation centres' will now meet international (SPHERE) standards.

The management of these new camps is an issue as well as their construction. It is not known how much freedom of movement will be permitted in and out of the camps. The compounds will not be surrounded by barbed wire, but there will be security patrols (*ketertiban dan keamanan*) presumably to prevent contact with GAM.

Permanent housing

Plans for permanent housing are equally worrying. Plans for a pilot scheme of 1,000 houses are well advanced. Many of the IDPs believe that the government is going to provide them with new, permanent homes - similar to their old ones, or better. On current evidence, this is highly unlikely. The case of the resettlement of IDPs in the Gunung Leuser area may be relevant. Javanese transmigrants expelled from Aceh during the pre-tsunami conflict were given a lump sum and a permanent site in return for giving up their IDP status, but their presence in the National Park has been problematic, as they had no means of legally making a living.

People living in the barracks will be supplied with food and other basic supplies. They will be totally dependent on government handouts. They will have no means of making a living and no work (other than possible '*padat karya*' labour-intensive or food for work schemes).

The location of official accommodation for people made homeless in the disaster is another issue. The government's stated aim is to move whole communities from IDP camps to the new compounds, keeping people from one area together. However, members of many communities are already split between several IDP sites and the 'relocation centres' for Banda Aceh are a long way from the city centre. There are strong indications that people will not be allowed to resettle along the coastal strip which will be planted with mangroves as a flood prevention measure. As yet, a new 'Blueprint for Aceh' has not been made public by the authorities and all land-use planning/zoning will have to be redone.

Environmental implications

Very little thought has been given to the connection between deforestation and Aceh's reconstruction programmes. A senior UN official's response to questions about the environmental implications of the large amount of timber needed for construction of the barracks was that this was "up to the

government. In response to a disaster like this, it is important to do everything at the appropriate time... that may be part of the long term planning". The chief consultants for the permanent housing scheme said that "certified timber from Java or elsewhere in Indonesia was the preferred option", thus showing a lack of understanding about the problems of obtaining sustainably produced timber in the country. There has been little public discussion of land rights issues by the major agencies or big international NGOs.

The government is moving so fast that the UN agencies and major NGOs did not have time to agree a joint response before these plans were put into action. Many are extremely concerned, but dare not voice direct criticism for fear that the government will close access to Aceh for all foreigners. (There were some visa problems for aid workers in the early weeks.) The international NGOs seem to be coalescing into 2 groups: those like OCHA & World Vision, who are working closely with the government and putting much funding directly into the relocation programme to improve it; and those who would prefer to spend their funds in other ways than making the relocation programme more workable.

The latter group have decided to adopt a strategy of focusing on providing aid (education, health, sanitation programmes) at sub-district level where IDP sites are located. They hope this will reduce the possibility of tension between those inside and outside camps as they will all be able to share the same facilities.

They are also trying to assess the numbers of people who want to return home and to gauge what kind of support they might need to do so. UNDP is embarking on a major survey of IDPs in 55 sub-districts within the next 10 days (ie before the deadline for the first phase of the relocation plan). It will collect information on their current conditions and future aspirations, plus the implications for the provision of health, education and water/sanitary facilities plus livelihood options. The original plan to survey all IDPs' needs has been scaled down to a rapid assessment of a sample population. OXFAM is already undertaking a more detailed study in 10 sub-districts where there are IDP sites at present. The results will then be presented to the government in an attempt to persuade the government that returning home may be a feasible option for affected communities.

February 2nd, 2005. ♦

* Official plans were presented at a public meeting at the governor's office in Banda Aceh, 26th January 2005

Rehabilitating mangroves

Coral reefs, seagrass beds, mangroves and peatlands, if maintained in a healthy state, reduce the severity of tsunami impacts. Several reports have highlighted the fact that mangroves and coral reefs, where they still remained, helped save lives on December 26th by acting as a buffer and absorbing the impact of the giant waves. Where they were absent, more lives were lost. As the chief of Aceh's environment agency Hasballah Daud put it; "If there had been mangroves, there would have been fewer victims." (*Chicago Tribune* 15/Jan/05).

In Indonesia, and globally, this natural protection is under severe pressure. The US-based NGO, Mangrove Action Project, estimates that over half of world's mangroves, which once covered up to three quarters of tropical and subtropical coastlines, have been lost, and that less than 16 million hectares remain. More than half of what's left is degraded. The mangroves have been felled to make way for industrial shrimp farming, tourism and other coastal development projects. In addition, over 70% of world's coral reefs have already been destroyed (WRM, *Guardian* 6/Jan/05).

Indonesia once hosted a third of the world's mangroves, but vast tracts have been destroyed - much of it for shrimp farming. By the Indonesian forestry department's own admission, almost 80% of the country's mangroves have been destroyed, especially due to "conversion into shrimp and fish farms, which after use, become barren and are abandoned" (Forestry Information Centre Press Release S 32/II/PIK-1/2004, 13/Jan/05).

Industrial scale shrimp farming projects in Indonesia have been associated with human rights abuses, land seizures and poor working conditions for shrimp farm workers (see DTE 58:13).

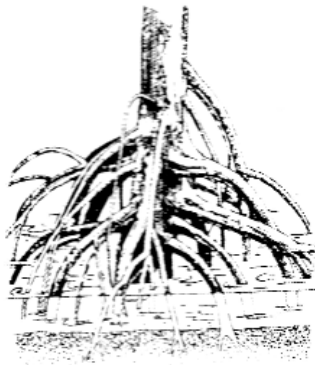
The tsunami has drawn global attention to the value of these coastal biodiversity-rich and protective resources, which also provide nurseries for fish and shrimp. Indonesia's forestry ministry has announced it will spend Rp800 billion (around US\$85 million) on a project to rehabilitate 150-200,000 hectares of mangroves and coastal forests (including pine and almond trees) along Sumatra's western coast. A Forestry Information Centre press release quoting data from 2000, said there were 30,000 hectares of mangroves in good condition in Aceh, including on Simeulue island; along with 25,000 hectares of damaged mangroves

and 286,000 ha in medium condition. According to the Bappenas preliminary damage assessment, the 25,000 hectares of degraded mangroves were destroyed in the tsunami.

Forestry ministry secretary-general Wahjudi Wardojo said the rehabilitation would start in two or three months and cost Rp5 million per hectare, with total funding for Aceh alone at Rp200 billion. It is part of a five-year programme targeting 600,000 hectares. A \$30,000 grant from the International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO) will be used to hire consultants to draft a proposal for the project. (*Jakarta Post* 19/Jan/05)

Again, the indications are that this project is being planned top-down, with little or no decision-making role played by local people. It invites questions over future land ownership and access to coastal resources, including traditional fishing grounds. The plans involve relocating people away from coasts onto forestry department land (see main text page 7) with their involvement limited to being the target of information campaigns.

Mangrove Action Project's Alfredo Quarto has warned against using plantation-style approaches to mangroves rehabilitation. A scheme in Thailand tore out existing mangroves in order to plant uniform seedlings and planted mangroves where they didn't grow. "It was a terrible job and had very low success," he told *Reuters* (*Jakarta Post* 14/Jan/05)



Before the tsunami....

EFFECT OF MANGROVE DESTRUCTION ON ACEH'S COASTS IS CRITICAL

This is an edited version of an article, which first appeared in the Acehnese daily newspaper Serambi 2/Feb/2000. We present this as a tribute to Mohammad Ibrahim, director of WALHI Aceh, and his wife and child, who lost their lives in the quake-tsunami disaster.

The felling and destruction of mangroves which is taking place along the coasts of Aceh Besar and Banda Aceh districts has reached critical levels. People's homes all along the coastal strip are at risk of flooding from the sea. "The effects of mangrove destruction are very worrying", said Mohammad Ibrahim. The coast is at risk from erosion and there will also be a loss of marine life.

Chairul Azmi of the local NGO PASE, a member of WALHI Aceh, explained that several factors were behind the mangrove destruction but the main one was shrimp farming. He said there had been a marked reduction in the extent of mangroves in Aceh Besar district from Peukan Bada to Krueng Raya as people were clearing the coastal forest to create shrimp ponds. Most of these entrepreneurs were outsiders, not local people, and were much more interested in a quick profit than environmental protection. It was common practice for them to bribe the authorities to get the required permits.

"The government should not just sit back and watch this happen. It must be proactive in protecting the environment", urged Mohammad. The local environmental activist appealed to local people to take action themselves, instead of just waiting for the government - especially in view of the authorities' slow response. "At the very least, don't destroy what's left", he said.

If the community programme is to succeed, it is vital to revive traditional management agencies like the village leader (*mukim gampong*) and fisheries controller (*panglima laot*). WALHI Aceh will be monitoring developments and carrying out activities throughout Aceh, through its members, which include PASE (Aceh Besar), Papan (West Aceh and South Aceh), Simeulue Lestari (Simeulue), Pugar (East Aceh) and Ekowisata Aceh (Sabang). ♦

The impact on women

Far more women, children and the elderly died in the quake-tsunami than teenagers and men. In Lambada village, there were only 105 survivors from a population of over 2,100; of these only 5 were women. This is not atypical. The overall gender balance in Aceh may have been changed by 20% or more.

The reasons why so many women died may never be known. Many stayed to save their children when the first tsunami struck. Others could not run fast enough to higher ground while carrying babies and toddlers. Some were not physically strong enough to withstand the battering from the debris-laden waves.

Those women and young girls who did survive are in a vulnerable position in a society where men have traditionally been regarded as the head of the household and main wage earner. Aid workers talk off the record about incidents of violence,

intimidation and sexual harassment in camps, but cannot report these to the authorities where the perpetrators are the military. There are now serious concerns about conditions in the new relocation centres which are guarded by security patrols.

Teenage girls are particularly at risk. Many of the larger aid agencies, such as UNICEF, only provide support for children up to the age of sixteen. Older girls who have lost one or both parents have little chance of continuing at school or getting skills training. Trafficking of young women to Java, Malaysia or the Middle East for the sex trade or as domestic servants was recognised as a problem in Aceh before the disaster. Sale into early marriage is another risk, given the high proportion of single and widowed men. There are fears that unscrupulous procurement agents may be preying on girls still traumatised by the disaster who have no-one to protect them.



Women at a lunch to commemorate civil society organisation members who were lost (DTE)

(continued from page 20)

- ♦ stop all forms of military operations and demilitarise the areas affected by the tsunami;
- ♦ prohibit the entry of military personnel and other non-state armed personnel into relief camps;
- ♦ establish a system of accountability for the use of aid to ensure that governments do not use the aid money for military purposes or other events and

programmes (ACHR Review 12/Jan/05).

Japan and Germany, two of the biggest aid donors, have also linked peace efforts to aid. At the CGI meeting, Japan (which hosted failed peace talks between GAM and Jakarta in 2003) requested that the reconstruction efforts in Aceh also include reconciliation. Earlier, German foreign minister Joschka Fischer said he would urge Indonesian and Sri Lankan leaders to prioritise "national reconciliation". He said Germany's aid pledge of US\$664.5 million (ECU500m)

Pregnant women have special needs which are easily overlooked in standard provisions for refugees. National and international aid providers are striving to assess these needs in displaced populations and supply expectant mothers with the clothes, vitamins, medical care and sanitary facilities they require.

Gender issues are firmly on the disaster management agenda, with OXFAM and UNICEF taking the lead. UN guidelines for protection of women and children have been circulated, in Bahasa Indonesia, to all the civil and military authorities operating in Aceh and a code of conduct is in preparation.

Women's organisations in Aceh, such as Flower Aceh, RPuK (Relawan Perempuan untuk Kemanusiaan, Women Volunteers for Humanity), LBH-Apik, (Legal Aid Organisation- Association of Indonesian Women for Justice) and Abiyuka, have been hard hit. They had little freedom to operate during the years of military and civil emergency and now their staff and local project co-ordinators have been depleted by the disaster. The offices of Flower Aceh in Banda Aceh and LBH-Apik in Lhokseumawe were destroyed. Most have suspended their programmes to work with international agencies on providing humanitarian assistance, needs assessment and trauma counselling among women and children in the smaller camps and lodgings.

Women's NGOs in Aceh, supported by national organisations such as Solidaritas Perempuan, are also trying to ensure that women are fully consulted in plans that affect their future, including resettlement and reconstruction. They lobbied the minister for women's empowerment Meuthia Hatta during her official visit to Banda Aceh in January, calling for more attention to be paid to the rights and needs of women survivors. ♦

was not conditional on conflict resolution, but said his country would check that these leaders' fulfil their public commitments to peace initiatives (*Financial Times* 14/Jan/05).

Talks between GAM and the Indonesian government have resumed tentatively, with the next round planned in Helsinki in April. GAM has reportedly agreed to drop demands for full independence, but are insisting on the removal of 50,000 troops and police (INFID SNO 24/Feb/05). ♦

After the tsunami: more disastrous debts?

Will the tsunami disaster bring a greater debt burden for Indonesia's future generation?

An international summit to raise funds for relief in countries affected by the Indian Ocean tsunami, was held in Jakarta on January 6th. United Nations secretary general Kofi Annan called for \$977 million in immediate funds for the next 6 months' emergency relief for tsunami victims. Pledges amounting to US\$2 billion had already been coming in from some 44 countries, the biggest from Japan, with US\$500 million (*Financial Times* 3/1/05). Less than a week later, donors had pledged \$717 million for immediate emergency relief alone - a total that UN officials said was an unprecedented response to a natural disaster (*WB* 13/Jan/05).

On top of the government pledges, public appeals had raised millions of dollars, as ordinary people responded to the scenes of devastation and human suffering on their TV screens. In the UK, the tsunami appeal launched by the Disasters Emergency Committee, an umbrella group of 12 charities, raised £60 million in its first week. A total of £300 million had been donated when the appeal closed at the end of February (news.bbc.co.uk 27/Feb/05).

Along with the pledges, however, came the questions about the money - where would it come from? How could it be used effectively? What about the high levels of indebtedness of tsunami-affected countries?

At the Jakarta meeting, Kofi Annan pleaded for the US\$2bn pledged to be fresh money, and not diverted from existing aid budgets (*Guardian* 6/Jan/05). Past experience has shown that pledges are often 'recycled' from existing aid and that initial promises of aid fail to materialise once the media spotlight has moved on. A spokesman from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which is leading the response to the disaster, told the *Guardian* "The figures look much higher than they really are. What will end up on the ground will be much less". Another OCHA staff member said "A lot of the money will be swallowed up by the military or will have been diverted from existing loans". Exactly a year before the Asian tsunami, the Bam earthquake disaster in Iran elicited pledges of US\$1.1bn, but only US\$17.5m was actually sent (<http://www.guardian.co.uk>).

Call for debt relief

As leaders began to think about debt relief as a means of assisting the affected countries, there was also concern that such measures may substitute the necessary additional spending. Oxfam cautioned that any debt

relief needed to be additional to aid, while the Jubilee Debt Campaign said there was a fear that if debt cancellation was given, measures to provide resources for eliminating extreme poverty and meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) would be abandoned. (*Financial Times* 3/Jan/05; see DTE IFIs Factsheet 36 for background on the MDGs and Indonesia).

In the run up to the Jakarta aid summit, the idea of debt relief for tsunami-affected countries had already been raised by European countries, including Britain and Germany. The *Financial Times* reported that British Chancellor Gordon Brown would back calls to write off some of the debts of the worst affected countries and that Britain wanted to announce a deal on debt relief at



Jakarta Post cartoon from a previous year's CGI loan meeting

the 'Paris Club' meeting of Indonesia's creditors later in January (*FT* 3/Jan/05). German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder said he expected the G8 to be able to agree a programme of debt reduction, but it was too early to say whether this would be a moratorium or a debt write-off (*FT* 6/Jan/05).

NGOs too, had begun to renew calls for a solution to Indonesia's long-standing debt burden. Less than a week after

the disaster, the International NGO Forum on Indonesian Development (INFID) pointed to the fact that Indonesia's US\$134.85 billion debt, would cripple the country's ability to finance emergency relief and recovery programmes in Aceh and North Sumatra. In a statement entitled "Indonesia needs more than debt moratorium to recover from the biggest human tragedy: Tsunami in Aceh and North Sumatra", INFID called for:

- 1) debt relief for Indonesia and other affected countries to allow them space for prioritising reconstruction and recovery programmes;
- 2) emergency aid from the international community to be in the form of grants not loans;
- 3) negotiations for a comprehensive debt solution;
- 4) transparency and accountability on the part of the Indonesian government in the channelling of aid to Aceh, North Sumatra and other affected areas. (INFID statement 31/Dec/04)

This and subsequent statement by INFID welcomed the offer of a debt moratorium, but only as a 'breathing space' for Indonesia to access funds for emergency relief and recovery in the tsunami-hit zones and to allow room for negotiations on a sustainable solution to the debt (see INFID statement <http://www.infid.be/statement-beyond-moratorium.pdf>).

Debt cancellation

Meanwhile, Jubilee South, a south-based civil society network on debt, launched an international petition calling for unconditional debt cancellation for all affected countries. "In the face of this massive destruction, northern and international creditors should not continue to hold South peoples in bondage for debts that have, in large part, only contributed to their impoverishment and deprivation." The petition called for immediate debt cancellation in addition to emergency relief operations and rehabilitation. It called on southern governments not to prioritise debt service: "Stop paying onerous and illegitimate debts! Prioritize relief and rehabilitations, basic social services, clean and safe water and other human development programs!" (Petition circulated by Jubilee South: *In the face of Debt and Disaster: Long-lasting Relief for the Peoples of the South!* www.jubileesouth.org).

Table 1: Who offered what

The following table shows a selection of aid pledges from bilateral and multilateral donors. The data has been compiled from the various press and non-media sources and may not reflect countries' final aid contributions. Where possible, the table also shows whether these commitments are in the form of grants or loans as this has a bearing on Indonesia's future debt burden (see also 'Grants or loans?' section in text). Finally, the list includes one corporate donor, ExxonMobil, the US-based oil multinational which operates Aceh's natural gas fields. ExxonMobil has been accused of involvement in gross human rights violations committed by military personnel guarding its installations and is currently subject of an alien tort court case in the US - see DTE 57:2, DTE 50:1 and <http://www.laborrights.org/> for background. ExxonMobil was the fifth biggest US corporate donor to the tsunami relief effort as of January 5th.

Pledge from:	All affected countries	Indonesia	grant/loan	timeframe	source
World Bank(CGI)		\$300m of which \$125m	Reallocation within existing projects and new funds Mostly grants and interest-free loans payable in 40 years	2-3 years in 2005	WB 20/Jan/05
IMF			Assessing / considering		Bwp 7/1
ADB (CGI) Multi-donor fund Total	600m 775m	\$126.37m \$100m	Reprogrammed loan grants & loan		Detikcom (INFID) JP 22/1 Xinhua 17/feb/05
Japan	\$500m	\$177m			FT 3/Jan/05; JP 22/Jan/05
UK	\$96m				FT 3/1
Italy	\$95m				Bappenas
France	\$64.57				Bappenas
Norway	\$181.9	\$1.64			Bappenas
Denmark	\$47.8m	\$0.025m			Bappenas
China	\$200m				Bappenas
US	\$350m				FT 3/Jan/05
Netherlands	\$34m	17.27			
Sweden	\$75m				FT 3/Jan/05
ITTO (mangrove rehab)		\$30,000	Emergency fund		JP 19/Jan/05
Australia	A\$1 bn				Gdn 6/Jan/05
Germany	\$664.5m		(Sri Lanka and Indonesia)	5 years	FT 6/Jan/05
CGI total		\$1.7bn	1.2bn grants \$500m interest free loans for rehabilitation		JP 22/Jan/05
ExxonMobil	\$5m				FT 6/Jan/05

Sources key: Bappenas: *Bantuan Bencana Alam Tsunami Dari Sumber Bilateral dan Channeling PBB* 17/Jan/05, Direktorat Pendanaan Luar Negeri Bilateral - BAPPENAS; BWP - Bretton Wood Project; FT: *Financial Times*; Gdn: *The Guardian* (UK); JP: *Jakarta Post*. WB online: World Bank online media briefing

Debt for Development

A proposal from the German NGO, Pro Regenwald, suggests a 'debt for development' arrangement, where a percentage of the debt would be channelled into funds controlled or administered by NGO and/or social movements. This would make funds available for small-scale development controlled by groups usually left out of the development process or without access to funds and would prohibit elites, whilst still reducing the debt. (For more information or to comment, contact Hermann Edelmann at info@pro-regenwald.de).

The Paris Club and CGI meetings - and the moratorium

In the event, the Jakarta meeting did not come up with any proposals on debt relief; this was left to the Paris Club, an informal group of rich countries which are owed money by some of the tsunami-hit countries, and the Consultative Group on Indonesia (CGI), the creditor grouping which decides how much to lend Indonesia each year. (See DTE IFIs Factsheets 17, 19, 24 & 32 for more background on the Paris Club and the CGI).

According to INFID, the Paris Club meeting on January 12th agreed to offer an 'immediate and unconditional' debt moratorium to the affected countries, with the precise terms for Indonesia to be decided after an assessment of Indonesia's reconstruction and financing needs became available at the beginning of March 2005. The World Bank and the IMF have been charged with carrying out this assessment (see press release at www.clubdeparis.org).

INFID said that the strings attached to the Paris Club's 'unconditional' offer would make it unattractive to Indonesia's government, which has significantly reduced its ties to the IMF over the past year (see DTE IFIs Factsheets 30 and 32.) Indonesia owes about US\$47.8 billion to Paris Club creditors, with \$3.15 bn in principal and \$1.36 bn in interest due in 2005, according to Bank Indonesia (AFX 25/1).

Indonesia and other regional leaders welcomed the moratorium initiative at the January 6th aid summit in Jakarta, but Indonesia soon after appeared less than enthusiastic. Foreign minister Hassan Wirayuda led a visit by a special team to Europe the following week to follow up proposals by the governments of Germany, France, Italy and Britain. He said that his government preferred instead a combination of mechanisms, including grants, concessionary loans, trade facilitations and debt swaps. (Source: *Financial Times* 14/Jan/05, Tsunami Declaration 6/Jan/05 on www.thejakartapost.com/tsunami_declaration.n.asp).

The CGI, which met a week after the Paris Club, is a 30-member group of bilateral and multilateral donors to Indonesia. Chaired for the first time by the Indonesian government, the meeting agreed on \$1.7 billion in aid for reconstruction in Aceh - in the form of US\$1.2 billion in grants and \$500 million in soft loans. Jakarta says that funding from international donors will make up around half of the funds needed for Aceh's reconstruction, estimated at US\$4.5 billion (Rp42 trillion) (AFX 25/Jan/05). The CGI Aceh money is in addition to the US\$2.8 billion in new loans to help plug the gap in the government's finances.

At this meeting, on January 20th in Jakarta, the government again indicated it would not take up the Paris Club's debt moratorium offer. One report quoted Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs Aburizal Bakrie, as saying that Indonesia didn't need a debt moratorium as it had secured pledges of \$1.7bn from the CGI (AFX 25/Jan/05). A different report (*Jakarta Post* 22/Jan/05) cited Bakrie as saying that a debt moratorium, plus commitments for debt swaps from Germany, France and Italy, would be discussed after a full damage assessment of the disaster.



Indonesia's investment potential

So, Indonesia looks set to take on more loans this year as well as make payments on its huge existing debt. (See table 2 for a breakdown of the external debt.) Why is Jakarta seemingly not interested in taking advantage of the 'breathing space' offered by a debt moratorium and starting negotiations on a sustainable debt solution which may include debt cancellation?

One reason is that the government doesn't want to see a further decline in Indonesia's international credit rating or to reduce its prospects of attracting private overseas investment flows into the country. According to foreign minister Wirayuda, Indonesia fears that a moratorium could "affect our good standing in the markets,

especially as we now try to attract more foreign investment" (*Financial Times* 14/Jan/05).

Before the tsunami disaster, President Yudhoyono had already made it clear that he would continue the pro-foreign investment policies of previous governments as a means of rebuilding the economy. These policies, which favour the large-scale exploitation of natural resources, have marginalised millions of Indonesians whose own access to these resources is denied. They have led to widespread and systematic human rights violations, as state security forces are brought in to deal with public opposition to mines, oil and gas installations, plantations, timber operations and other resource extraction projects.

Indonesia held a high-profile 'Infrastructure Summit' late in 2004, as a means of pushing for more foreign investment specifically in infrastructure projects - a move that is in accordance with a renewed emphasis by multilateral agencies such as the World Bank on financing infrastructure projects. NGOs have expressed fears that a return to the days of mega-dams and road projects will bring more environmental destruction and social disruption while pushing aside more sustainable community-based programmes. (See DTE IFIs Factsheet 31.) (Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs Press Release Jan/05 via Joyo Indonesia News).

Grants or loans?

There is a real concern that the international response to the tsunami, while offering some short term advantages, could lead to a greater debt burden for Indonesia in the medium to long term. This would make it harder to lift tens of millions of Indonesians out of poverty and make the Millennium Development Goals even less attainable. According to World Bank figures, poverty levels were 17.4 percent in 2003, or about 37.50 million people. In January this year, however, the figure was much higher: the Bank told the CGI that more than 110 million Indonesians can now be categorised as poor, with a daily income of less than US\$2 (*Asia Pulse/Antara* 24/Jan/05).

The Indonesian government announced targets of gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 6.6%, a reduction in the unemployment rate to 5.1% from the current 10%, and a halving of the poverty rate to 8.1% by 2009 at the recent CGI meeting (*Jakarta Post* 22/Jan/05).

According to Economics minister Bakrie, Indonesia's debt service payments for 2005 amount to US\$5.5 billion, and the target debt-to-GDP ratio for 2005 is 60% (AFX 15/Jan/05).

The high levels of poverty and debt have prompted NGOs to call for genuine donations for Aceh and North Sumatra - money in the form of grants, not loans.

Table 2: Indonesia's external debt (as at Sept 2003, in US\$)

Total external debt:	132.762bn
Government	77.093 bn
- bilateral	28.492 bn
- multilateral	28.394 bn
- export credit	17.539 bn*
- leasing	0.325bn
- Commercial	2.343 bn
Private Sector	53.597 bn
Domestic Securities owned by non-residents:	2.072 bn

(Source: World Bank website)

*This includes money owed to UK arms companies, guaranteed by the British government's Export Credit Guarantee agency - see page 21.

Yet some of the pledges made already are in the forms of loans, as can be seen in table 1 - including US\$500 million through the CGI, AUS\$500 million in interest-free loans from Australia; and interest-bearing tied and untied loans from Spain (Directorate of Bilateral Overseas Funding, Bappenas 17/Jan/05).

Tackling corruption and promoting peace

Concerns over aid accountability, raised by INFID, have been echoed by many Indonesian and international aid agencies as well as governments and multilateral institutions contributing to the relief effort.

Japan's Ambassador Yutaka Imura said "we request accountability in the coordination of aid for Aceh.." Japan is Indonesia's biggest bilateral donor in the CGI and has pledged \$177 million for Aceh (Jakarta Post 22/Jan/05).

The new President, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, was voted in on promises to tackle corruption - but many people remain sceptical that change can be effected rapidly and that SBY is the right person to deliver it.

Accounts of military corruption of aid already filtering in from the ground, indicate the problems ahead. There have been reports of military personnel using the disaster as a business opportunity, by forcing tsunami victims to pay for aid, for example.

This would come as no surprise to Aceh's population whose natural and economic resources have been exploited by the military for decades. The military's involvement in illegal logging, for example, is an open secret (see DTE 63:12). Aceh, which has been inflicted with inflated levels of military and police personnel for years, is known as one of Indonesia's most corrupt provinces.

Indonesia is consistently ranked one of the most corrupt countries in the world by Transparency International. Last year, it was considered to be the fifth most corrupt nation, suggesting that reforms since the ousting of former President Suharto in 1998 have failed to reduce corruption significantly in the country. Indonesia's Minister of Finance, Yusuf Anwar, responded to Transparency International Indonesia's most recent report, by saying "I don't care" (INFID SNO 21-18 Oct/04 & 24/Feb/05).

It is generally believed that at least 30% of overseas aid channelled through the government fails to reach its target due to corruption. An October 2003 World Bank report found that "corruption flourishes in Indonesia because there is little likelihood of being caught and even less of being punished." It said that "the agencies charged with enforcing the rules are weak, poorly funded and ill-equipped and riddled with corruption" (Far Eastern Economic Review 29/Jul/04).

This year's Country Governance Assessment Report by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) found that law enforcement agencies and the judiciary are among the state institutions most prone to corruption (Jakarta Post 25/Feb/05).

The January CGI meeting saw donors calling again for drastic measures to eradicate corruption. Indonesia's Supreme Audit Agency (BPK) has announced that it will collaborate with donor countries to audit all financial aid channelled to Aceh, starting from April, after an ADB-sponsored conference is held (INFID SNO 17/Feb/05). However, it remains to be seen how much of the CGI's US\$1.7 billion will be used for the benefit of the victims and how effectively it will be monitored and accounted for.

Debts on tsunami-destroyed projects should be written off

Head of economic affairs at the non-governmental group, Professional Civil Society (MPM), Dradjat Wibowo, said debt-funded projects in Aceh and North Sumatra amounted to over US\$5 billion, including roads, irrigation, telecommunications and small-scale plantations. The Meulaboh to Banda Aceh road, for example, financed by Japan and European countries, was totally destroyed in places and damaged to varying degrees in others. He recommended that the debt for projects which had sustained 60% and above damage should be written off and that payments on debts for projects damaged less than this should be reduced or subject to a moratorium.

Dradjat criticised the government for hurriedly agreeing new loans with the ADB when many countries had offered debt relief or moratorium initiatives. (detikcom: MPM kecam MoU utang RI-ADB, <http://www.detikfinance.com>).

Conflict resolution

There have also been calls for international aid to be linked to conflict resolution in Aceh. In a January 5th publication, the Asian Centre for Human Rights said donors should recognise that effective delivery of aid to survivors hinges on peace on the ground in the both tsunami-hit conflict zones of Aceh and northern and eastern Sri Lanka. The Delhi-based group called on aid donors to:

- ♦ urge for a ceasefire between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Indonesian government so that aid agencies could distribute supplies without intimidation or interference;

(continued on page 16)

Resources:

INFID - International NGO Forum on Indonesian Development
 Anti-Debt Coalition - Koalisi Anti-Utang
 Jubilee Research
 Jubilee South
 Eurodad
 Odious Debts
 World Bank

www.infid.org
www.kau.org
www.jubilee2000uk.org
www.jubileesouth.org
<http://www.eurodad.org/>
www.odiousdebts.org
www.worldbank.org

Indonesia's 'odious' arms debt to the UK

Indonesia owes around US\$1.76 billion to the British government. While it is true that this represents just a small fraction of the overall external debt of US\$132 billion, it is still a significant sum, far outstripping, for example, the \$96 million that the UK government has pledged to the tsunami aid effort.

Most of Indonesia's debt to the UK (US\$1.408bn) is in the form of export credit facilities, owed to Britain's Export Credit Guarantee Department (ECGD). The ECGD underwrites Indonesian contracts with private UK companies. And a large portion of this export credit debt - amounting to over half the total debt - is for defence contracts (see table).

This means that public funds in Indonesia - which could be used for health, education, emergency relief and other beneficial purposes - are paying for weapons, which are used to suppress political opposition in Indonesia. In Aceh, where this UK-made equipment has been deployed, local people suffer the double impact of violence at the hands of the military and poverty thanks to Indonesia's huge debt burden.

Campaigners argue that this kind of debt is considered 'odious' because the money has been used for internal repression and to strengthen the hand of an authoritarian regime, rather than for the good of the state as a whole (see www.odiousdebts.org for definition of the term).

In 2002, the International NGO Forum on Indonesian Development (INFID) and Jubilee Research launched a campaign to find an independent solution for Indonesia's massive debt problem. The organisations argued that it was deeply unjust that Indonesia's creditors "who acted rashly and irresponsibly in running up the debt...should now dictate terms of repayment that penalise the most vulnerable sections of the community in a country they have effectively helped to bankrupt." The campaign urged that a "consultative body under a neutral mediator be appointed to take stock of Indonesia's debt burden, and suggest that a solution based on an independent assessment of the situation be adopted in place of the present Paris Club plan."

Jubilee Research, a group based in Britain, also called for a review of the portion

of UK debt directly related to the sale of military equipment: "We consider this unethical and unproductive debt to be odious, and suggest its immediate cancellation by the British government." (see <http://www.jubilee2000uk.org/>).

Three years on, the tsunami disaster has brought Indonesia's unsustainable debt under the global spotlight. Down to Earth has written to the British government calling for cancellation of Indonesia's debt to the UK, drawing attention to the fact that much of the debt consists of money owed for arms sales. The letter also called on Britain to stop supplying defence equipment to Indonesia or providing export credit for arms sales.

Jets and tanks

Britain's continuing supply of defence equipment to Indonesia is the little-publicised flipside of UK aid for tsunami victims in Aceh. It sits uncomfortably with the British government's wish to project a pro-poor image internationally. Here are some of the elements of the odious debt relationship:

- ♦ The defence equipment for which Indonesia still owes funding to the UK includes: Hawk jets (£382.7 million) and Scorpion and Stormer Vehicles (£80.7 million). The last payment for these debts as agreed with the Paris Club is June 2021 (Hansard 13/Jan - see <http://www.parliament.uk/hansard/hansard.cfm>).
- ♦ Through the Paris Club, Indonesian debt has been rescheduled under three agreements. The last payment is due in June 2021 (Hansard 13/Jan).
- ♦ This equipment was deployed by the Indonesian forces in Aceh during the 2003-2004 period of martial law when the military launched an all-out war on GAM. This breached Indonesian assurances that British equipment would not be used for offensive or counter-insurgency purposes.
- ♦ Tapol, the Indonesia Human Rights Campaign, argues that Britain is breaking UK and EU export control laws which state that licences for arms sales should be refused if there is a clear risk of the

equipment being used for internal repression (*Tapol Bulletin* 175:8).

- ♦ Britain continues to sell arms to Indonesia - in 2003 licences for sales worth £12.5 million were approved. The equipment is mainly spare parts for the jets, tanks and armoured vehicles sold to the Suharto regime - despite repeated use of this equipment in East Timor, West Papua and other conflict areas, in addition to Aceh.
- ♦ In October 2002, the British government lifted the ban on Indonesia deploying the equipment in Aceh and removed a requirement for Indonesia to notify the UK in advance of any possible deployment - but this relaxing of conditions only became known eight months later. The same year, Britain authorised a 20-fold increase in the value of arms sales to Jakarta. (See *Tapol Bulletin* 175:8).
- ♦ There is high-level corruption involved too. Last year it was revealed that UK arms manufacturer Alvis had paid a £16.5 million bribe to Suharto's daughter in order to secure contracts worth £160 million with Indonesia in 1995 and 1996 to supply Scorpion armoured fighting vehicles (*Guardian* 7/Dec/04).

Aguswandi, an Acehnese human rights defender working with Tapol, said the Alvis corruption allegations further strengthened the case for a freeze on British arms sales to Indonesia. "This immoral and corrupt trade will do nothing to promote democracy or development in the country. It will only serve to intensify the conflict, poverty and the abuse of human rights" (*Tapol* press release 8/Nov/04).

Tackling poverty?

On the international stage, Britain is keen to promote its commitment to tackling poverty. In the CGI creditor group, Britain co-chairs a working group on poverty reduction. Yet, by maintaining an unjust debt relationship with Indonesia, which includes inflated prices for arms, Britain remains part of the poverty problem.♦

Table 3: Indonesia's debt to UK

Type of debt	Amount	Date	Source
Bilateral ODA	\$355.4 million	Dec 2003	Bank Indonesia website
Export Credit Guarantee of which arms related	\$1,408m (£749million) \$1,035m (£551m)	Nov 2004	Hansard 10/Jan/05
TOTAL	\$1,763.4m		

Letter from Banda Aceh

A personal view from Aceh, by a member of DTE staff, written late January

No-one had warned me that it might be much more difficult to get to Aceh from Medan than from Jakarta. So many people are trying to leave Aceh to stay with relatives elsewhere and so many Acehnese from Medan and Jakarta want to look for missing relatives, or to help surviving members of their families, that it is hard to get any kind of ticket. Enterprising ticket touts have bought up all available tickets and are selling them at increased cost. I wanted one, but they are all in Indonesian names, and I could not pass as Ibu Suryawati or suchlike. Fortunately, all the night buses were fully booked for the next 3 days too. Not my favourite option. Travelling by road at night in Aceh is not something to be undertaken lightly at the best of times as there are frequent landslips in the wet season and also many, many army road blocks where identity cards are checked and money demanded.

So I went by Hercules. In theory, to go on the military flights from Polonia airport, you need 2 photos, a completed application form and a letter vouching for your status. In practice you need a good deal of patience and politeness. A small army of military and civilian bureaucrats sit at a number of desks under a large tent, next to a now empty hanger where all the aid was stored a couple of weeks ago. You are questioned and your documents inspected, stamped, photocopied at successive desks, before moving to another section where the whole process starts again. Two hours later, they announced that all the flights were full for today: I should come back tomorrow.

I joined a group of returning refugees and military personnel at dawn on the tarmac and all fifty of us were eventually loaded into the hold with sacks of flour, rice, sugar and clothing. In-flight entertainment consisted of a 20cm centipede running over a woman's leg! Next to me, a man returning to Banda Aceh shouted questions over the engine noise to an army administrator also based there. Their matter-of-fact conversation was incredibly grim but, I later realised, normal for post-disaster Aceh. "I'm worried about what I might find in my house." "I found five bodies in my garden when I first went back. The important thing is to check if the doors and windows are still intact. If they are not, call in the Evacuation Team and they'll deal with any corpses. You'll know by the smell too."

As we came in to land, everyone stood on the canvas seats, clutching onto the webbing



Tsunami-damaged car, Banda Aceh (DTE)

to look through portholes. My first view of Aceh - and how beautiful it is! Spectacular mountain ranges with forested slopes above the bright green paddy fields spreading down to the palm fringed coast. Then the plane turns and there is the devastated coast and at least a third of the city flattened. It looks like pictures of Dresden and Nagasaki. Even after weeks of TV coverage, it comes as a shock. No-one was talking any more.

The tiny airport in Banda Aceh has become the centre of relief operations. It is like a film set for M.A.S.H. Various nationalities of foreigner striding around in army fatigues or flight jump suits. A big UN emblazoned cargo plane landed just after us. The air is filled with aircraft fuel, dust, testosterone and the noise of helicopter rotors. Around 350 helicopter flights per day are being made out to Meulaboh and the small islands. I talked with one of the crew who was at the same dinner table at the hotel where OXFAM's operations are based. They've been everywhere - Afghanistan, Iraq, Serbia, but Aceh is bad even by their standards.

Many NGOs, aid agencies and volunteer teams are now based in kampongs about 8km from the sea. Away from the coast, it is almost possible to forget this is officially a disaster area. True, the main road from the airport does not have much traffic apart from military jeeps, trucks, motorbikes and motorised rickshaws, and everywhere there are large banners with company logos proclaiming their support for the relief efforts. But the market on the outskirts of town is bustling and shops and banks are open again there. It was several days before I went to what was the city centre.

We are living in a large two storey house in the leafy suburbs. The usual mixture of activities goes on for nearly 24 hours a day:

people typing at computers, talking, eating, praying, watching TV or just sleeping in a corner - all at the same time. The garden has a few fruit trees, a concrete well and a few sagging armchairs. Skinny cats prowl around scavenging. Meals are cooked for us. Rice and veg in chilli sauce three times a day, if you have the time and energy to eat. And lots of thick sweet coffee, of course.

But the normality is only superficial. This house is accommodating at least ten times more people than usual. A team of twenty or so medical workers arrives from Yogya at around the same time as the truckload of student volunteers from Palembang return from visiting an IDP camp. The people who've volunteered to recover bodies now live in another house/office down town. The garage is used for dispensing medicines.

Several volunteers who have been here for two or three weeks still sleep in tents in the garden for fear of more quake damage. The aftershocks are still strong - apparently another 5.5 or 6 last night. I slept through it - a luxury afforded only to those who did not suffer the trauma of the initial quake. Several local people rushed outside and didn't sleep again that night. It's not surprising that when a 6.5 quake struck Palu in Central Sulawesi the other day, there were scenes of mass panic as people fled for fear of a tsunami. Before, that would just have been another quake.

The abnormal quickly becomes normal. The motorbike rickshaw driver makes polite conversation as we drove along the river yesterday, just as if commenting on the weather: "Looks nice & clean today. No corpses. Not like last week." Three of the eight pages of the main part of the daily newspaper in Banda Aceh are taken up with photos of missing people - happy, smiling faces in wedding photos, baby photos, graduation photos, school photos. All with date of birth, distinguishing features and often a contact mobile phone number. The worst of this tragedy is that it comes on top of so much suffering from the conflict. But most of those 'missing' pictures were of young men who had been disappeared by the military and militias; these are mainly women and small children.

A standard protocol seems to exist for people from Aceh meeting for the first time. The usual opening gambit in a conversation has a special significance. "Where do you come from?" now means "How badly has

your family been affected by the disaster?". Everyone has been hit in some way. The stories are tragic. One of the lovely women who does the cooking sits in the kitchen telling a nurse from Yogya how a stranger helped to carry her six-year old daughter to safety when the tsunami hit. She lost her older child and her husband in the confusion and has not seen them since. When the other woman names her home area, no-one has the heart to ask further questions: the whole area is now underwater. A local man described how he and some friends were trying to help someone trapped in under a building after the quake, when the tsunami hit. The crushed car outside belongs to a young activist who lost his wife and both daughters: one was saved from the wreckage to die in hospital with mud-filled lungs.

Along the road, small hand-written boards point down dirt tracks, saying "Members of X village here". In other words, this is where refugees from a particular area are staying with relatives of family friends and they want to let any other survivors know they are there. It is wonderful how people are looking after each other. When you see the news on TV, it looks as if it is all international agencies and foreign military teams that are doing the work, but ordinary folk here are doing extraordinary things.

The American volunteer who turned up a couple of days ago speaks no Indonesian. She's on her own; her sending organisation cancelled the rest of the team. She went off today with the office driver to the city to see the damage. They happened to pass an area where bulldozers were clearing the remains of housing. The body recovery team cheerfully called her over to see the remains of 3 people after 4 weeks in tropical temperatures. I am not ready for that yet.

The Australian woman took me to the body recovery team's mess this evening. I have huge admiration for these people. We talked with a new team of volunteers from Singapore who'd had their first day in the

field. Meanwhile, health workers checked over Indonesian volunteers who'd been there for a couple of weeks. They'd had some basic training, but nothing can really prepare anyone for devastation on this scale and the awful things that have happened. That unit had taken out about 300 bodies today, including pregnant women, babies and whole families crushed in their own homes.

There are too many crazy things in one day to describe. Today I travelled to or from town on the back of a bike, truck, ambulance and air-conditioned car. An American surgeon at the governor's office asks me to translate for a couple who he thinks may be GAM supporters trying to get food for their village. The woman has glaucoma and her boyfriend just wants medical treatment for her. He says they look just like the other couple. Schools have just restarted, but hundreds of pupils gather outside buildings which cannot be used as they are still filled with mud, chunks of twisted metal and broken pieces of wood. A car is still embedded in one shop. Another cavalcade of cars with sirens zooms past which means another bloody politician from Jakarta or international head of state has arrived, so the whole relief operation has to stop 'for security reasons' and, of course, lots of interviews with the press.

Small mosques stand shining white in the midst of stinking mud and wreckage. Why they have survived I do not know. Were they built to a much higher standard than most buildings? Or is it to do with their open structure of arches? Their survival has enormous significance to people here who are mostly deeply religious. The closest parallel I can think of is the way St Paul's Cathedral became a symbol of hope for Londoners during the Blitz. In Islam, you are supposed to accept your loss and move on without making a big fuss. But, four weeks on, there are people quietly crying in corners late at night.

It makes me so angry that the Indonesian authorities have announced that the emergency phase is now over and we're in transition to the recovery phase. And of, course, the UN etc follow suit. It denies the reality of what is happening here. If bodies were lying unburied 3-4 weeks after a disaster and whole families were walking for days to get food supplies in any country in Europe, America or Australia, it would be called an emergency, not transition. It's all part of the politics here. The military and the nationalists in Jakarta have worked up a frenzy about the presence of foreign troops on Indonesian soil. They are terrified Aceh will go the same way as East Timor and want to close the place to outsiders again. US agencies are taking a pessimistic line and think foreigners will be expelled from Aceh soon. They are advising international NGOs to pull back to Medan, but that's unlikely to happen yet.

Also, everyone is jumping on the tsunami bandwagon. All this talk about a tsunami warning system. The conservationists are already talking about mangrove replanting to prevent damage from tsunamis in future. And the plans to set up a people-free buffer zone along the coast. The whole of Indonesia is an earthquake zone, but tsunamis only happen once every 100-200 years. There's little point putting up barriers around the north-west coast, when the next quake could be centred around Padang or Bengkulu! It all sounds horribly like a scheme to keep the 'little people' out and let big business in. All that empty flat land is ideal for large-scale shrimp cultivation and big palm oil plantations.

I'll write again when I get back to Jakarta. Internet access is still very limited, unless you go down to the information centre at the governor's house. But that is full of army, government and probably military intelligence. Anyway, there's too much to do here. ♦

(continued from back page)

In his work for the indigenous movement, Pak Keuchik faced a major obstacle once a state of military emergency was declared in the province of Aceh. This effectively prevented him from pursuing his goals. He admitted that the military situation made it difficult to go to the field to consolidate indigenous groups. When their gatherings were interrupted by members of the Aceh Freedom Movement (GAM) and the separatists asked what the meeting was for, they replied that they were discussing

indigenous issues. The GAM members would say "There's no point. We will be free soon". The military would also come and ask the same question. "So it was hard for us to do anything there," said Pak Keucik.

Nevertheless, the state of military emergency in Aceh never made Pak Keuchik lose interest in the struggle for indigenous rights. As a customary leader who had been selected by the community by popular consent, he continued to bear the heavy responsibility of pressing for indigenous peoples' rights to their land, forests and other

natural resources.

These are just a few memories of someone who made an important contribution to the indigenous and environmental movements and who struggled against all the odds for state recognition of indigenous peoples' customary rights. A man who dedicated his life to bringing about real change in Indonesia: changes which would bring an end to oppression, get democracy back on track and realise people's economic, social and political rights. ♦

Pak Keuchik Jailani

The well-known indigenous and environmental activist, Keuchik Jailani, was one of the victims of the quake-tsunami in Aceh. He did not come from a privileged background and had little formal education. He always described himself as an ordinary farmer. But Pak Keuchik - as he was always known - was not an ordinary man. He was a community leader who was chosen to be village head of Riseh Sawang and customary leader because he was an honest, hard-working, principled man who was a skilled negotiator and not afraid to speak out. Pak Keuchik was a good listener as well as a good public speaker. His sound advice and warm sense of humour were valued by all who met him. He was always willing to share his considerable knowledge of customary practices in Aceh and to learn from others. He was a close colleague of Bestari Raden (see DTE 62 & 63).

After Pak Keuchik was selected as a member of AMAN's Council* in October 2003, he spent more time in Banda Aceh where he had a house with his third wife. The office of the local indigenous people's network, of which Pak Keuchik was also secretary, was next to that of the environmental NGO WALHI Aceh. A devout Muslim, he spent two days over Christmas in the office, writing up some information about palm oil plantations which were threatening indigenous communities in Aceh. The last that was heard of Pak Keuchik was early in the morning of December 26th when he was going for a swim on the beach. His death is a loss to the whole indigenous movement as well as to his extended family, his community and his many, many friends and colleagues.

OBITUARY:

Keuchik H. Jailani Hasan Riseh

This piece is an abridged translation from the Indonesia edition of Gaung AMAN, the newsletter of the indigenous peoples' movement in Indonesia.

* AMAN is the Alliance of Indigenous Peoples of the Archipelago



Pak Keuchik at second AMAN congress, 2003(DTE)

Never-ending dedication

As the Indonesian saying goes "One step forward and don't budge an inch back": that was the approach to life of Keuchik H. Jailani Hasan, Co-ordinator of AMAN's Council and head of the network of indigenous peoples in Aceh (Jaringan Kerja Masyarakatah Adat - JKMA).

The struggles of Aceh's indigenous peoples are a testimony to the determination of this man from Riseh Sawang in North Aceh. One of their successes was the suspension of 21 logging permits by the Indonesian government. Pak Keuchik put his life on the line to achieve this goal. He faced threats, intimidation and violence from agents sent by companies whose strong financial position allowed them to strip indigenous communities' forests with impunity. He literally stood in front of thugs employed by the company to stop them brutalising and evicting people who were holding onto land which the loggers said they had no right to. "If you want to hit someone, hit me, not them - I can take it", Pak Keuchik challenged the company's 'bully boys'.

Pak Keuchik never retreated, despite the threats, intimidation and other forms of violence which he faced. His

consistency was founded on his firm belief in indigenous peoples' sovereignty over their natural resources and their traditional wisdom to manage them.

As an indigenous peoples' activist, Pak Keuchik realised that large-scale exploitation of the natural environment would bring about the destruction of ecosystems. This was obvious from the extent of forest granted as logging concessions: around 152,000 hectares in the districts of North, Central and South-East Aceh. He was particularly concerned as this area was part of the Leuser Ecosystem (the buffer zone for Gunung Leuser National Park).

In the long term, indigenous peoples would suffer directly from this ecological destruction. Their rights to manage the land had been superseded by investors whose prime concerns were financial and would strip natural resources. Once Aceh's forests had gone, so would supplies of water for farmers' crops. Even the infrastructure and irrigation provided by the government would have to be abandoned due to flood damage. Pak Keuchik predicted that the over-exploitation of nature would result in severe flooding in Aceh. "Companies, investors and rich people can stay in a hotel when it floods, but we ordinary people are left to swim," he joked.

On the issue of the 21 suspended logging concessions, Pak Keuchik said that local people should manage the land for farming. "Adat communities are using the land. I have told them that it is their duty to manage the land sustainably, even though they have no official certificate of ownership," he said.

Consistency in his ideals and his struggle

Pak Keuchik continued his fight with the authorities long after the logging licences were withdrawn. That was because the government had still not acknowledged indigenous peoples' rights.

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DOWN TO EARTH is the newsletter of the International Campaign for Ecological Justice in Indonesia. If you want to receive the newsletter on a regular basis, please fill out the form provided. We would welcome information about your work in the field of environment and development in Indonesia.

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