



# IRC ACEH RESPONSE - ONE YEAR ON

## International Rescue Committee Empowers Communities

The sheer scale of the devastation caused by the tsunami of 26th December 2004 posed a huge challenge to aid agencies working in Aceh Province. Government estimates put the total dead and missing at more than 230,000, while a further 400,000 people were left homeless. Roughly a quarter of all villages were damaged, and the local infrastructure network was left in tatters.

The scale of the disaster meant that recovery would inevitably be a slow and demanding process, and there were fears the crisis would compound a 30-year civil conflict in the region. In the end, however, the tsunami altered the political environment and led to the signing of a peace agreement, which provides the opportunity to involve all the people of Aceh in reconstruction efforts.

### *Emergency Response*

Within days of the tsunami, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) had deployed five emergency teams to meet the immediate needs of affected communities. Rapid assessments identified villages that were under-served by the main push of international aid. And the IRC targeted these villages with programs based on its traditional areas of expertise – health, water and sanitation (watsan), child protection, and economic recovery.

The IRC had run a small scale aid program in Aceh since 1999, but soon its operation had grown to 300 staff working out of five sites along the west and north coasts. The new teams distributed vital emergency supplies using a network of boats, trucks and helicopters.

IRC staff provided vital medical



The IRC is following a community driven regeneration strategy to empower communities.

services and improved access to water and sanitation. They focused on the many vulnerable child survivors, and provided child-friendly spaces where children could play and learn in a secure environment.

To enable speedy reconstruction, the IRC initially supported cash-for-work initiatives. It paid displaced people to clean-up the devastation, providing families who had lost everything with an important source of income. Yet from the outset, the IRC was developing a community regeneration strategy; one that would put communities in the driving seat of their own recovery and strengthen local organizations.

### *From Relief to Recovery*

By June, the IRC had launched a major livelihoods recovery program – giving grants to restart small businesses, help individuals regain their independence and thus boost local economies.

To build on local skills, IRC staff assisted a wide range of groups,

from community fishing networks to a collective of Acehenese artists that encourages teachers to use art effectively in the classroom. Similarly, environmental health staff trained university students to clean-up contaminated wells and helped communities form their own water management committees.

### *Strong Coordination*

The IRC also partnered with government bodies at an early stage of its response. It worked closely with the Ministry of Education to improve teacher training, and with the Ministry of Health to train staff at local health centers and midwife posts. The IRC welcomed the establishment of the Bureau of Rehabilitation and Reconstruction (BRR) to coordinate reconstruction efforts. All IRC Aceh programs are registered with and report to BRR.

The IRC makes every attempt to coordinate with the United Nations and other international organizations

*Continued on page two*

---

**Turn to Page 2 for IRC's Impact in Figures**

---



# National Staff Crucial to IRC Success

**Dec. 26th, 2004:** First the tremors cracked the IRC office walls. Then the waves flooded the building up to the second floor. As the immediate danger subsided, the IRC's national staff took charge. **"They worked 24/7 to get a field office set up,"** says Gillian Dunn, emergency coordinator, IRC Aceh Response.

Fadhil Yusri Aksa, an environmental health manager, drove eight hours on a motorbike to secure food for the team. Administration coordinator Ian Wirawan let 35 staff use his home as a center of operations.

Today, both Ian and Fadhil are still key members of the IRC team. Ian is field coordinator for the Banda Aceh Field Office, with responsibility for 43 staff and a host of programs.

Now a livelihoods program manager, Fadhil allocates and monitors grants to help restart small businesses across Aceh. **"It gives me great satisfaction,"** he

says, **"to help people who lost their source of income** during the tsunami. We have revitalized a range of small businesses."

Before the tsunami, the IRC Aceh office had 21 national staff. **"Now we have four sub-offices in Aceh and I have been involved in recruiting more than 400 staff,"** says human resources manager Gunawan Yusni, (Gun).

Gun was working as an admin officer when the tsunami hit. He managed to survive, despite being dragged more than 2kms by the waves. His dedication

has been vital in re-establishing a solid human resources system. **"Managing people is challenging, as everyone has very different characteristics,"** he admits.

Dr Tira Aswitama is one of the new employees recruited by Gun's department. As national reproductive health manager, she manages midwifery training along with the Ministry of Health. **"Tira makes things run very smoothly by communicating effectively with all partners,"** says counterpart Bertha Ojany.

The environmental health team's new program manager Variadi Amin recently represented the IRC at a conference in Uganda. He and his team have worked hard to improve the daily life of tsunami-affected communities, providing safe drinking water and sanitation facilities.

He says: **"Our goal is to serve the Acehenese community; we have all been affected."**

## The International Rescue Committee has:

- \* Reached 110,000 persons with safe drinking water
- \* Supported the polio vaccination campaign in Aceh, which vaccinated more than 400,000 children
- \* Treated over 58,000 persons through IRC mobile health clinics and re-equipped Ministry of Health clinics
- \* Held more than 90,000 days of play and learning for children
- \* Engaged approximately 600 parents or guardians through child friendly spaces
- \* Provided \$1.3m in grants to 175 livelihoods projects, ultimately benefitting 600,000 community members
- \* Distributed almost 15,000 hygiene kits
- \* Constructed & maintained over 700 sanitation facilities

## IRC Remains Committed to Recovery of Affected Communities

(Cont. from Page 1)

to compliment and support each other's work. For example, the IRC has teamed up with agencies to conduct joint distributions, and builds watsan facilities where others have constructed buildings.

By the end of October, IRC aid had reached about 135,000 persons. This achievement was made possible by the generous support of donors

like the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office, Stichting Vluchteling and the US Agency for International Development.

### Looking forward

One year on, the IRC remains strongly committed to supporting the recovery of affected communities

and the peace building process. Its community driven regeneration program is expanding and will continue to empower Acehenese people to lead the reconstruction of their communities and economy. The IRC will build on its existing relationships to strengthen local institutions to improve services and create opportunities for growth.

## LIVELIHOODS

# RESTORING PEOPLE'S INDEPENDENCE

Standing right on the shoreline of Pante Gurah Village, fisherman Dahlan Yusuf hadn't heard of a tsunami. All he knew was that a huge wave was coming towards him and he needed to act quickly.

"I started running as fast as I could," says Dahlan, "But the water carried me away. It dragged me about a kilometer inland and I don't know how I survived. The wave was so powerful it tore off all my clothes and left me with only my underwear."

Today, Dahlan runs the local ice store, which acts as a thriving hub for this east coast village. Most evenings, fishermen off-load the day's catch into huge baskets of ice, and fishmongers load up their bikes with kilos of fresh tuna.

Dahlan's original ice store was obliterated by the tsunami, destroying his livelihood and leaving him dependent on handouts. Thanks to an IRC grant, he has been able to rebuild his shop and business is once again good.

"I have built a new store and restarted work. I am no longer dependent on anyone," says Dahlan.



IRC has put 340 boats back in the water.

"That's very, very important to me; I want to be able to support my family."

Nodding his head in agreement is fellow fisherman Julizar. He's busy hauling in an impressive catch from a boat that was also rebuilt with IRC help.

"I was going out to sea when the big wave hit," says Julizar. "I managed to stay on my boat, but I was very scared. Some of the wood was broken, but I was very lucky, unlike many of my friends."

### *Reviving communities*

Julizar was out of work for several months while his boat was repaired. And it's not only his livelihood that suffered. Each boat provides work for up to 20 men, so getting one boat back on the water is cause for multiple celebrations.

"The tsunami did not affect the fish," says Julizar. "We can catch 150 kilos of fish on a good day, and that means plenty of money to share around. It's great to have my boat back out there."

IRC grants have helped to restart dozens of small businesses across Aceh, from fishing and peanut farming, to flower-gardening and clothes-making.

Program co-ordinator Fadhil Yusri Aksa say: "Poor people have been made even poorer by the tsunami. Many don't know how to get started again since they lost most of their property and money.



A small IRC grant helped Julizar repair his boat and get back to what he does best — fishing off the east coast of Aceh.

Fadhil stresses the IRC is focusing on aiding marginalized people. "We are helping these people to restart work so they have something tangible to rely on," he says. "And by supporting small businesses, we are also stimulating trade and other economic sectors in the hardest hit areas of the Sumatran coast."

The IRC consults local people about which businesses to support. Holding community discussion groups ensures that vulnerable people, such as women and the elderly, get their opinions heard.

To date, the IRC has provided \$1.3million in small grants to 4,000 individuals in 175 projects — thus benefitting about 600,000 people in the surrounding communities.

The Acehenese people have the skills, incentive and ability to implement many of their own reconstruction projects; they just need a small amount of help to launch them. The IRC will continue to support these communities financially and technically, so that they can quickly achieve economic and social self-reliance.

## HEALTH

# REBUILDING LOCAL CAPACITY IS KEY

The potential for a major disease outbreak was high after the tsunami. Aceh's displaced people were living in crowded shelters or in private homes packed with displaced relatives. To compound matters, many medical workers had been killed in the disaster and health facilities destroyed.

The IRC's health team worked tirelessly to provide emergency health services, treating more than 4,500 people between January and March. They also coordinated with the Ministry of Health (MoH) and other aid groups to carry out a successful measles vaccination campaign across the province.

## Helping Local Health Centres

"From the start, we were determined to help staff at local health centers get back to work," says Regina Saidca, a senior field monitor. "They were overwhelmed. There were so many people to help, but their clinics had been damaged and they had no drugs or supplies."

The IRC repaired and re-equipped ten health centers, which improved access to health care for about 80,000 people. They also ensured local staff received the latest information in diagnosis and treatment. Indeed, as the emergency phase subsided, training for Indonesian health professionals became the centerpiece of the IRC's health strategy.

"It's crucial we work through local partners to rebuild the skills lost during the tsunami," says the IRC's health adviser Dr Atilio Rivera. "The Ministry of Health lost a considerable number of staff and



IRC has collaborated on standardized training for Acehenese midwives.

training is needed now more than ever. We are collaborating at various levels to improve service delivery in primary health care across Aceh."

One good example of this collaboration is a reproductive health program underway in Banda Aceh. The IRC, the MoH and the Association of Indonesian Midwives (IBI) have restarted standardized training for Acehenese midwives. A first workshop for 30 midwives began in October, and they will in turn mentor 120 colleagues from across Aceh.

## " We work through partners to rebuild skills "

Suriaty Mahmud, head of the midwives' association, says: "It's very important to restart standard training. At the moment, there are many training programs, but we need to focus on quality not quantity."

The training workshop involves a lot of practical demonstrations and this is something that midwife Budi-an Berma intends to replicate when

she does her own teaching. "I have learned that training is a two-way process," she says. "I must get my trainees actively involved if they are to benefit fully."

The IRC is backing the training with a program to rebuild and repair midwife clinics, (*polindes*). The IRC's Dr Rivera says every village should have one of these clinics, so that its midwife can live and work in an environment that's safe and accessible for her and the pregnant woman.

At the moment, many midwives have to go to a patient's house to deliver the baby, which can cause security problems at night.

The IRC hopes the clinics will encourage more midwives to practice in villages. This is vital as higher numbers of women die during childbirth in more remote locations, due to complications and lack of an effective and timely referral system.

## Community Health Workers

The IRC has also trained more than 170 community health workers — members of tsunami-affected communities who attend weekly sessions on how to improve basic health practices in their areas.

The community health workers visit households to raise awareness and promote good hygiene habits, but they also collect data for local health centers on potential problems in their communities.

Erlinawati is living in Cot Patish Barracks because her home was destroyed. "I became a health worker as I knew what people had been through," she says. "I can bring hope by explaining facts; I feel useful."

## CHILD & YOUTH PROTECTION & DEVELOPMENT

# MAXIMISE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Teacher-trainer Salami and her colleagues collapse in a heap of giggles on the classroom floor. They're supposed to be kneeling in rows, learning the basics of Acehenese dancing, but they've forgotten the moves again and – if you didn't know better – you'd think the room was full of naughty school children.

The trainers are taking part in an IRC-sponsored course to make teaching more lively and child-centered. That means a move away from the traditional approach of 'chalk and talk', where teachers stand at the front of the classroom and lecture their pupils. Instead teachers are encouraged to get children more involved in their lessons by using activities like story telling and dancing.

In short, it's about making lessons more fun. Children can relax, open up and express the fears they experienced during the tsunami.



Teachers learn to make lessons more lively.

As Salami says: "The training is more enjoyable than anything I've done before because it's more hands on. I think my students will love it. It's great to use art materials and think about how I can adapt them into lessons."

Salami and her colleagues work at the Islamic State Institute (IAIN)

in Banda Aceh. They are responsible for developing the teachers of tomorrow. What they learn from the IRC course will filter through the Acehenese education system – a system that lost more than 5,500 teachers to the tsunami and is in urgent need of qualified recruits.

### *Building local skills*

The training at IAIN is being run by staff from Bangkit Aceh, a group of local artists who promote the use of art in teaching. Wherever possible, the IRC works through local partners like Bangkit Aceh to build skills and make courses culturally appropriate. For example, the tsunami destroyed many teaching materials and so the artists use readily-available items, such as shells or twigs, in their lesson plans.

To further build local skills, the IRC teamed up with the Ministry of Education to invite four U.S. professors from the University of Pennsylvania to train teacher-mentors at Syiah Kuala University, Banda Aceh. The new mentors will train teachers across the province.

### *Child Friendly Spaces*

Outside of the classroom, the IRC is continuing its successful work with child-friendly spaces. When the tsunami struck, the IRC quickly established dozens of these spaces – safe and structured environments where children and youths can play, learn and begin to heal after their harrowing ordeal.

The results are exceptionally moving, with children beginning to express their feelings through



Young children can express their feelings through art.

pictures and stories. "I felt my world become dark, wiped out by the tsunami which took all my happiness," writes young Mutia.

"I lost my beloved brother, sisters, grandma, relatives and my friends. But time always runs and my sadness is less. I see my peers. They lost their parents but they are still strong, so why not me. In the future I want my Aceh to be safe."

Thousands of children suffered extreme loss in the tsunami and many had to take on extra responsibilities, such as looking after siblings. Child-friendly spaces allow children like Mutia to be children again.

The day-to-day activities in child-friendly spaces are managed by community members who have been trained as 'animators'. These animators are typically young people who have had previous experience working with children, and their job is to manage the play activities like drawing or singing.

"The IRC provides ongoing support and educational supplies, but it is community members who run the spaces," says Donnie Irawan, IRC program co-ordinator. "They take care of the children, and help them have fun. This is true to the IRC's core value that children should be cared for within the family and within the community."

## ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

# RESPONDING TO LONG-TERM NEEDS

The tsunami stripped the residents of Meulaboh town of virtually all their sources of safe drinking water and destroyed their sanitation facilities. The huge waves of salt water contaminated wells, washed away structures and filled latrine pits with silt and debris.

An estimated 40,000 people in Meulaboh were killed in the disaster, including many water and sanitation workers. Not only did the town lose the majority of its facilities, it also lost the people with the skills to maintain and repair them.

The situation in Meulaboh was mirrored throughout Aceh, but the IRC's environmental health (EH) team was quick to respond. They distributed emergency items such as water tanks, hygiene kits and collapsible jerry cans. They trucked in water; cleaned, rehabilitated and constructed wells; drilled boreholes; provided water storage equipment; established water treatment systems and built latrines.

As displaced persons moved to temporary living centers, the IRC also built boardwalks, upgraded septic tank systems, and constructed several kilometers of drainage. They trained community health workers to organize garbage clean-ups, conduct hygiene promotion

campaigns, and ensure that everyone has equal access to water.

"We didn't have any fresh-water source in our village until the IRC installed tanks," says Nurbadri, a community health worker in Seuneudon. "Now we make sure everyone gets what they need, especially more vulnerable people like women and the elderly."

## Clean water for 110,000

EH staff have provided almost 110,000 people with access to safe water projects. The IRC strives towards the international SPHERE standard, which is 20 liters of water per person per day.

Looking forward, the IRC will continue to maintain facilities in temporary living centers, but more and more will work to improve conditions in villages where the displaced are returning to.

It will also prioritize long-term solutions, a good example of which is a new water treatment system in Calang town, which filters, treats and pipes natural spring water to communities of about 4,000 people.

"People prefer to drink the water from this system," says Calang's EH acting program manager Danda Buana. "It's fresh, pure and clean."

For all of these programs,



Colorful posters promote good hygiene.

community participation is essential. The IRC will work with district and sub-district governments to rehabilitate and rebuild damaged infrastructure, including waste management facilities and water monitoring programs.

The EH team is also encouraging communities to form water and sanitation committees, to ensure all facilities are kept clean and in good working order. IRC staff continue to promote good hygiene practices, giving talks to communities and placing colorful hygiene promotion posters in every new latrine.

These posters are particularly attractive to children, who are also being targeted with activities at school. Small groups learn to wash their hands, or brush their teeth, and they take part in a drawing competition to show what they've learnt. The best drawings can then be displayed throughout the school.

	<p>International Rescue Committee Jl. Fatahillah No 2. Geucee Kayee Jatho Banda Aceh, Indonesia</p>
	<p>Tel: +62 (0) 651 741 0713 Fax: +62 (0) 651 49858</p>
<p><b>Press contact: Joanne Offer</b> Tel: + 62 (0) 811 926 653 Email: <a href="mailto:info@aceh.theIRC.org">info@aceh.theIRC.org</a></p>	

<p><b>With Grateful Thanks To:</b></p>	
	
	
	