

INTRODUCTION

Unpacking the Challenges of Post-2004 Aceh

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How can we achieve post-disaster reconstruction and development that both rebuilds and protects people from potential loss in future catastrophes? How can we nurture a peace that assuages previous grievances and reduces the possibilities for renewed hostilities between parties with a long history of antagonism? These have been two of the main challenges facing Aceh following the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and the 2005 Helsinki Peace Accords that ended hostilities between the Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM — Free Aceh Movement) and the Indonesian Government. Such questions are clearly important to the people of Aceh, who have experienced decades of conflict and isolation, the sudden devastation of the tsunami, and the painful and drawn-out process of mourning and rebuilding. The future of Aceh has been dramatically transformed by events since December 2004, and it will take years, if not decades, for things to stabilize.

The above questions are of immense importance to the wider international community. The experiences of Aceh will undoubtedly influence the texture and outcome of both future post-disaster responses and peace processes around the world. A large cadre of humanitarian aid workers, people involved in conflict resolution, and reconstruction and development advisers have already begun to bring their experiences from Aceh with them to their next

posting or assignment. A whole generation of NGO staff, policy-makers and academics has been influenced by what happened around the Indian Ocean in the wake of the tsunami. The efforts in Aceh — both conflict and tsunami related — are extensively well documented and relatively transparent, opening possibilities for the kind of in-depth research and appraisal that are often not possible in the aftermath of large-scale trauma. The sheer amount of resources that was poured into the region to deal with the conflict and rebuild the shattered lives of victims of war and disaster warrants — indeed obligates — a comprehensive reflection in which previous standards are questioned and new knowledge generated.

This new knowledge should not be restricted to merely practical “lessons learned” or generic solutions that can be automatically applied during the next major crisis. Organizations, both governments and NGOs, have already put great efforts into compiling assessments of their actions in Aceh. These are widely available; several of the contributors to this volume have been deeply involved in the production of such analyses. While many of these are certainly of great value and necessary to the quality control and oversight processes for such organizations, they come with considerable limitations as well. There are pressures in the policy world that place serious time constraints on such assessments; many organizations typically do not have the mandate to engage in the long-term study necessary to more fully understand the implications and consequences of their work. Furthermore, it is hard to expect truly unbiased research and critiques on specific organizations and the wider humanitarian, reconstruction and development fields from people who are deeply implicated in, or funded, by such organizations.

Unfortunately, it is also typically the case that people with years of valuable on-the-ground experience working with relief, aid and development organizations are not encouraged to approach their work from a truly critical perspective, and are almost never given the chance to properly digest their experiences and distil what they have learned before moving on to the next “situation”. Just as many of the early arrivals in Aceh were schooled in East Timor or the Balkans, many of those who have spent the past several years engaged around the Indian Ocean will inevitably move on to Afghanistan, Darfur, Haiti, Chile or wherever the next emergency arises that garners global attention. This rotation of talent leads to a fragmented view of the complex and long-term processes necessary for reconstituting shattered communities and societies. A brief conversation with staff at any large NGO will make it clear that many intelligent and experienced people have a wealth of insights that never formally see the light of day because of structural and institutional constraints.

It is also very difficult to get solid, meaningful output from academics that can be usefully factored into practical discussions of post-conflict and post-disaster situations. Academics are burdened with their own sets of institutional constraints. Unlike their counterparts in the policy and NGO worlds, very few academics from any discipline have the opportunity to spend enough time on the ground to develop deeper insights into the underlying dynamics of post-trauma situations. While distance and lack of affiliation lend a different perspective, arguably a useful and necessary one, they also reduce sustained, everyday engagement with the situations in question. Armchair reflections, drawing heavily upon NGO progress reports and supplemented by brief field visits, do not automatically give birth to profound new insights. Additionally, most researchers employed by academic institutions do not have to make the difficult decisions under less than optimal conditions that practitioners do.

The fragmented nature of academia leads to highly specialized foci on selected aspects of reconstruction and post-conflict situations. It is difficult to pull together and sustain the types of multidisciplinary partnerships that are necessary to foster more holistic research on what are incredibly complex problems. Furthermore, results from research often take years to pass through peer review and publication processes, and end up in journals or edited volumes that are rarely read by practitioners, or even other academics from different disciplines who work on the same broad problems. This can be easily verified by taking a quick look at the bookshelves of NGO workers on location which will often hold a handful of books deemed essential for a long stretch in the field. Rather than finding collections of articles or books by academics, one is much more likely to encounter a local language phrasebook, a Lonely Planet guidebook, maybe Naomi Klein's *The Shock Doctrine* and, in the case of Aceh, Anthony Reid's *Verandah of Violence*.

It is clear that our understanding of post-conflict and post-disaster situations faces serious institutional limits from all sides that need to be overcome. One way to do so is to foster more substantial interaction between practitioners and academics, involving international, national and "local" parties. This was part of the logic behind the First International Conference for Aceh and Indian Ocean Studies, held in Banda Aceh in February 2007, which served as the starting point for this volume. Additionally, it is important to find ways to bring together the valuable experiences and perspectives of members of both of these communities in a mutually constructive dialogue. Unfortunately, the standard formats within which each publishes does not readily support such efforts. Major organizations want pragmatic and focused assessments that can be easily translated into practice, while academic journals

want contextualized and often more abstract discussions of the ideas. The end result is that the circles of academics and professionals working on the same issues are often largely distinct and disconnected.

Our aim with this volume is to provide a venue for the types of dialogue that are often lacking. The contributing authors have been asked to draw upon their varied experiences in Aceh to unpack some of the fundamental concepts underlying community recovery, reconciliation and governance, to name just a few. During the editorial process we respected the different styles and standards that the authors brought, and gave latitude for very different kinds of contributions. These range from academic research papers to broader policy assessments and personal and professional reflections. To begin to understand what has happened in Aceh since 2004, it is necessary to engage with all of these voices and perspectives.

CONTENTS OF THE VOLUME

The volume leads off with a chapter by Kerry Sieh, a leading professor of geology, who outlines the physical processes that resulted in the earthquake and tsunami. This gives the volume its temporal range, and sets the stage for the subsequent discussions of the post-tsunami reconstruction. Sieh goes to lengths to point out the continuing vulnerability in the region to future large-scale seismic events. His work in the region aims not just to produce scientific data about the nature of instability in the region, but also includes a significant outreach programme to inform people at the community level about the results of his team's research. His call for more integration of scientific and academic research with programmes of outreach is a necessary step to ensure that results and valuable information are made available to the people to whom it most matters, and to build up disaster mitigation efforts.

Following this initial chapter, the book is divided into two sections. The first section looks at the post-disaster situation. While it would be almost impossible to cover all of the relevant sectors, given the scale and complexity of operations in Aceh, the chapters were chosen to give a range of perspectives on some of the key facets of post-tsunami Aceh. Unfortunately, there are important issues not included in this book, such as reflections on the economic processes brought about by the relief and reconstruction efforts, and the outcome of the democratic political process. Given these recognized limitations, we hope that this book will make a solid contribution to what will become a vibrant and expansive body of literature.

Part I: Reconstruction Efforts

John Telford, an aid and development consultant and one of the authors of the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC) Report, provides an overview of some of the key findings and recommendations of the TEC, focusing on issues that are faced in many large-scale humanitarian aid missions. He discusses funding, illustrating how the unusual dynamics of funding in Aceh led to considerable overlap in projects, as well as to organizations far exceeding their sectoral or regional expertise. If the response to the tsunami is going to form the blueprint for how the international community engages with future major catastrophes, it is critical to understand core issues of feasibility and standards when large numbers of organizations get involved. In a theme which surfaces in a number of the contributions to this volume, Telford stresses the need for aid efforts to be more centred around and run by people in affected areas, which in spite of constant rhetoric is often far from the case in practice.

This next contribution draws heavily on the experiences of the TEC. Christoplos and Wu, both academics with extensive consulting and project evaluation experience, turn their attention on the Links between Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD), which has become a major element in post-conflict and post-disaster situations. As part of their chapter, they present a nuanced argument for the usefulness of having a more integrated reconstruction and development policy, and discuss some of the institutional shortcomings that disrupted the effectiveness of LRRD in Aceh. One of their main conclusions deals with the need to better ground LRRD efforts within local institutions to ensure suitability and sustainability. In what has become a standard part of post-disaster recovery vocabulary, LRRD emphasizes the need to focus not just on immediate solutions, but also on approaching underlying vulnerabilities to mitigate future disasters.

The next chapter, by Wolfgang Fengler, Ahya Ihsan and Kai Kaiser, looks at the mechanics of finance for post-tsunami operations from a more technical perspective. Given the scale of the budgets, and the serious reservations about accountability and transparency in Aceh, a number of institutions and oversight boards, such as the Multi-Donor Trust Fund, were put into place to monitor and attest to the distribution of donations and aid. This chapter brings a wealth of practical experience, obtained while Fengler was the head economist of the World Bank's Jakarta office, dealing with large-scale reconstruction finance, and it discusses some of the key dynamics in managing the diverse streams of funding that fuelled the recovery efforts around the Indian Ocean world. It also provides a useful starting point for better understanding how post-

conflict and post-disaster reconstruction operations are funded and managed, while stressing the functional and budgetary differences between emergency humanitarian situations and longer-term development projects.

Daniel Fitzpatrick, drawing on his years of experience as an Indonesian land law expert and legal academic, contributes a chapter that looks at issues of land ownership and titling following the tsunami. Many basic aspects of reconstruction are predicated on having a workable plan for formalizing land ownership in cases where such issues are unclear. This complex process, led by the RALAS initiative of which Fitzpatrick was part, needed to contend with informal and customary notions of land ownership, Islamic legal guidelines, destruction and lack of records, and complex webs of inheritance. Additionally, it was necessary to reconcile such disparate notions of land ownership with the expectations and requirements of donor agencies, which included explicit consideration for issues of gender and inclusiveness. Interestingly, his research indicates that an emphasis upon formal inclusion of “gender-sensitive” programmes with regards to land titling did not always have the intended results. In fact, he suggests that in some cases such programmes excluded the very people they were designed to include.

Saiful Mahdi’s paper, drawing on his experience as both an academic and prominent figure in Acehese civil society, looks at how mobility has been used as a strategy by the Acehese in response to both the conflict and the tsunami. During heightened times of conflict, and in the immediate post-tsunami period, internally displaced persons (IDPs) moved widely around Aceh. This chapter, grounded in a deep understanding of Acehese cultural practices, emphasizes the cultural orientations of Acehese towards movement, travel and hospitality, and the social capital implicit within village networks. He asks critical questions about the impact of aid efforts upon Acehese responses, and suggests that many of the organizations involved in post-tsunami work neglected to adequately factor in the communal strengths and cultural attributes of the Acehese.

Finally, the chapter by Rodolphe De Koninck, Stephane Bernard and Marc Girard gives us a deeper historical perspective on the nature of land change in Aceh. Their analysis of maps of forest cover and land use make it clear that there has been a definite increase in the rates of deforestation over the past several decades. Perhaps ironically, as they point out, the ending of the conflict opened up new possibilities for logging, as previously inaccessible lands became more open. Furthermore, efforts to connect disparate areas of Aceh also grant access to the deeply forested interior regions, facilitating logging operations. The forests and biodiversity of Aceh might be one of the

most important and intact ecosystems in all of Southeast Asia; pressures of expanding agriculture and harvesting timber need to be balanced against the long-term social and economic importance of preserving Aceh's forests.

Part II: Conflict Resolution

The second section of the book looks at the peace process that ended the long-standing conflict between GAM and the Indonesian Government. Given the chronology of events in Aceh, it is only natural that the peace process and post-tsunami response have become conflated both in discussion and to some degree in the administrative mandates of government agencies and NGOs. While this connection does have some validity, and the two will remain linked in popular imagination, it is important to see them both as very different sets of processes, and to more fully understand the unique dynamics of each, as well as the areas of genuine overlap. All the contributing authors in this section have been deeply and, in some cases, personally involved in the conflict and peace process.

Michael Morfitt, in a very well-documented chapter, starts the section with a comprehensive discussion of how the peace process played out. Using his access to the key figures involved, he charts a narrative that began well before the tsunami, spanning several presidential administrations in post-New Order Indonesia. In addition to providing a very useful overview of the steps leading up to the signing of the Helsinki Accords in 2005, he clearly maps out the main actions and stances of all the pivotal players involved, ranging from the Indonesian President and Vice President and GAM leaders, to professional and "amateur" conflict resolution personnel. The story of peace in Aceh should not be subordinated to a secondary impact of the tsunami, but rather be seen for what it took: immense amounts of concerted efforts by various actors, bold decisions and stances by the political leadership on both sides of the conflict, and deep and engaged support from the international community. Finally, this chapter touches on the broader implications of the peace process for Indonesia, and for wider reforms within the country.

This chapter is nicely followed up by a more personal account by Pieter Feith, who oversaw the Aceh Monitoring Mission, charged with overseeing the implementation of the Helsinki Accords. Feith, an established figure in the conflict resolution field, emphasizes some of the key factors that so far have allowed the peace process to proceed with relative success. He provides a very different perspective on the situation and expands on the steps needed to ensure the successful maintenance of an enduring peace. While peace in

Aceh never could have occurred without the actions of the Acehnese and Indonesian leadership, it is equally unlikely that the implementation of the Helsinki Accords would have progressed smoothly in the absence of a firm and effective monitoring team. The presence of a third party that both sides could trust, and that could also bring the weight of EU financial, political and practical assistance to bear, has been a major part of the post-conflict story in Aceh.

Leena Avonius's chapter takes a more from-the-ground-up approach, looking at important issues of justice in post-conflict situations. It provides a theoretical overview of different forms of justice prevalent within the conversation of post-conflict situations, such as human rights courts and truth and reconciliation commissions. Additionally, drawing upon extensive personal experience in Aceh, Avonius makes a strong case for the need to better appreciate and work within Acehnese constructs and understandings of justice. As there are a number of different levels of authority within Aceh, including "official" government institutions, Islamic Sharia courts and village-level customary laws, it is essential to find a balance that is both broadly understood and applicable, while also sensitive to Acehnese customs, practices and institutional frameworks.

Finally, Rizal Sukma discusses the vast challenges of managing the peace in Aceh. As the international spotlight shifts from Aceh, the burden is increasing on local actors to assume full and unfettered responsibility for building a peaceful future for Aceh and a successful relationship between Aceh and Jakarta. This chapter presents a important Indonesian perspective on the events surrounding the peace process, as well as a focused perspective on the issues that still need to be resolved to ensure the area remains stable. Critical are continued improvements in the capacities for governance in Aceh, as well as a broader agenda of economic development throughout Aceh, in particular in areas that were not directly involved in the tsunami but nonetheless remain mired in poverty.

Overall, the two sections bring in a range of voices, all from people who have been deeply involved in various facets of the post-disaster and post-conflict processes in Aceh. These voices represent Indonesian, Acehnese and international parties, as well as academics, NGO workers and policy-makers. Some of the perspectives deal with macro-level institutional issues, while others focus more on smaller-scale issues. One of the threads that ties both together is the repeated emphasis within the chapters for post-disaster and post-conflict interventions to be firmly in line with "local" processes to maximize "local" ownership of such endeavours. This ensures a higher level of investment by people on the ground in Aceh to take responsibility for core

decision-making and implementation, which leads to capacity creation and development. Furthermore, it is essential to long-term sustainability that all programmes fit within the blueprints that the Acehnese have for their lives post-2004. With the conflict over and communities moving forward from the trauma of the tsunami, Aceh has greater scope now to shape its future than at any other point in its recent history.