



## **TWO YEARS OF SETTLEMENT RECOVERY IN ACEH AND NIAS WHAT SHOULD THE PLANNERS HAVE LEARNED?**

### **INTRODUCTION**

By December 2006, about 60,000 houses in Aceh and Nias had been already or nearly completed. About 20,000 were under construction and an equal number had yet to be started. There is still a lot of work to be done for the reconstruction. Many people are still claiming housing support – often those who were landless but also many who had been displaced because of conflict or poverty. Settlement and other infrastructure is progressing slowly. The Government Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency ('BRR') started a hand-over and decentralisation policy, but local authorities still felt not enfranchised.

Which lessons can we learn from the first two years that are useful for the next two or more years to come? Are there lessons which can be useful in other post-disaster situations? A further question that we have to ask, however, will be: Considering all the expertise and resources of more than 400 organisations and the expensive institutional structure of BRR, couldn't or shouldn't there be better results?

This paper first evaluates a number of issues concerning housing reconstruction. Subsequently it touches upon a range of experiences in relation to the recovery of urban governance in general and of spatial urban planning in particular. Within the scope of this paper, none of the issues is dealt with exhaustively. However, a key theme is that even though professionals were often well meaning in acknowledging the importance of participatory principles and consultative processes, they often failed in the implementation of these principles and processes. The reasons have been manifold:

- programmes have been supply-driven and disenfranchise people to take recovery in their own hands
- professionals have little understanding of the behavioural drivers of communities taking decisions in a post-disaster context
- professionals only saw a disaster context and were not capable to understand the conflict dimensions and the impact on governance
- professionals allow people only to participate in micro-issues and disenfranchise them to participate in wider governance decisions

This paper is not organised as a theoretical discussion of the above issues, but rather as a testimony illustrating the above points.

### **A. TWO YEARS SETTLEMENT BUILDING**

#### ***More or Less Houses ?***

After a period of two years, the total number of deserving beneficiaries is still moving. Inaccurate lists of beneficiaries might result in unjust distribution, or worse exclude some survivors from the system. For the sake of planning and budgeting at high level there seems to be a need to predefine the figures once and for all. Recently, BRR has undertaken a beneficiary registration, which showed first almost 50,000 more eligible beneficiaries. After further verification, the number went again down to another 30,000 beneficiaries – a number, which is still high.<sup>1</sup>

New factors have emerged causing the needs numbers to fluctuate. New families are formed or split due to remarriages or to deaths. People are also moving a lot, be it out from the barracks to return to their original villages, or be it just for going from one place to another in search for work. It is becoming more difficult to track them into aggregated total numbers. There are also people who have more than one destroyed house in different locations. Sometimes that is simply to secure a house for a daughter who will marry.

The way of calculating the number of houses, which need to be rebuilt varies depending on the purpose of reconstruction: is it done to secure tenure of shelter for survivors? Is it done in order to restore the immobile capital (the properties, house and land) of the people? If the latter is the case, the calculation is very simple: all destroyed houses must be rebuilt, disregarding ownership and the questions whether the former inhabitants are alive or dead, or whether the owner is in possession of other houses. When it gets to securing tenure of shelter for survivors, however, the approach must be different. At present, it is clear that both organisations with an interest in building and people in general with an interest in restoring immobile capital cause the list of beneficiaries to remain pushed upwards.

A good lesson can be learned from Pidie, a district along the Aceh east coast, where survivors from the same village were accommodated in the same barrack, and NGO's were coordinated early enough to avoid overlapping. In Calang, Logica, a programme from AUSAID, is helping BRR's regional office to develop an accurate database. The lesson learned is that accurate numbers can come only from below, from the field, village by village, with clear names and addresses. Local authorities should be involved to determine whether continued housing assistance remains a priority only for Tsunami victims or whether a more comprehensive policy of housing assistance needs to be put in place.

### ***Transitional Shelters and Permanent Houses: Towards Phased Houses***

All through the two years, which have past since the Tsunami much energy was put into debating the issue of transitional versus permanent shelter. In the first month, the Government put the emphasis on the construction on 'barracks', in essence army-style compounds. When discussing the pro's and con's of the barrack solution, arguments do not only circle around its temporary nature, but also around the fact that it prevents people from "camping" outside, on their land, where their villages of origin used to be. Barracks were the government's response in effect, out of panic and hysteria that people would return to the dangerous coastal areas.

The transitional shelters as provided by the Interfederation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies ('IFRC') were developed one year after the Tsunami, out of despair that it is impossible to build permanent houses in time while tents and temporary barracks are beginning to degrade. <sup>2</sup> It is politically and maybe also culturally correct to call them 'transitional shelters'. However, from a technical and environmental point of view it is not: anti-rust steels and well treated timbers are certainly no temporary materials. Moreover the method of assembling the materials makes it possible to re-assemble them and so to create a permanent, though movable house. The value of this kind of shelter should certainly not be wasted. It proved to be particularly useful in isolated areas where logistics, infrastructure and labour skills are limited. These 'transitional shelters' have started to become permanent houses in many west-coastal villages, in a sense that they were built on locations that are adequate for permanent houses, and that people who have no plan to dismantle or move them in the near future have upgraded them with extensions and furniture.

If IFRC transitional shelters were provided earlier within the original villages of the survivors, all the permanent houses would have been completed earlier. Transitional shelters in original

villages would have given some time for proper planning and would have facilitated the participatory process. It would be better, however, to incorporate the transitional shelter into the construction of a permanent house. An incremental approach can empower communities to take their decisions on phasing and rebuilding, however, good technical assistance is still required. The construction responses also vary depending on the availability of materials.

### **Community-Based Reconstruction**

A seminar on lessons-learned which was organized by UN-HABITAT in Yogyakarta (Indonesia) on August 29<sup>th</sup> 2006<sup>3</sup> came to the conclusion that community-based reconstruction is not at all unrealistic. Contrary it has proven to be faster and to deliver results of higher quality and satisfaction than other reconstruction methods. A fact that was underlined by a survey conducted by the University of Syah Kuala (UNSYIAH) (see box on next page). According to this survey the highest scoring clusters of houses are organised by UPLINK which bases its activities on multi-layer community participation.

There is a consensus that community-based housing reconstruction can respond quickly to urgent needs and thus can achieve relief at an early stage; furthermore it mobilizes solidarity among the members of a community and therefore creates social capital; moreover it allows women to be a part of the reconstruction work; in addition it strengthens local institutions; it achieves good planning which leads to high quality results; it can limit disaster vulnerability; and last but not least it can be done with good monitoring und thus achieve transparent accountability. Mr Parwoto of the WB stressed that the experience from Aceh has shown against all prejudices and misconceptions that Community-Based Development (CBD) can be done on a large scale. CBD helps building social capital. Community-based reconstruction experiences also show the least miss-targeting of beneficiaries.

	Construction Quality	Satisfaction Score	Accountability Score
	0 to 4	-9 to 9	0 to 10
All organisations in 2006	2.58	1.2	6.0
All community org. progr.	2.67	2.1	6.7
All contractor-built progr.	2.55	0.8	5.9

*In 2005, BRR encouraged Universitas Syiah Kuala, in co-operation with UN-HABITAT, to provide 3rd party monitoring and evaluation. Ever since the Banda Aceh based State University monitored settlement recovery in 161 villages. All results were made public in full. UN-HABITAT also contributed evaluations of the progress and of issues of settlement recovery, which were published in BRR reports.*

*The above results provide scores for samples of realisations of specific housing programmes in specific villages. Construction quality is rarely complying to the Indonesian Building Code as it is applied in Aceh and Nias. In the above table, a house conform to the Building Code should score 3. A construction becomes truly worrisome when the score is below 2.5. The majority of houses built in Aceh are in the gray zone in-between. The fact that contractor-built houses score lower than those made in community-organised processes is no surprise: many houses built by small local contractors, with funding of BRR, were of bad quality, especially those contracted through the Provincial Administration in 2005. Beneficiaries are clearly more satisfied with community-driven programmes.*

Doubts about community-based approaches come from lack of understanding, experience and knowledge of the way in which it can be organised. There is wide spread fear of chaos

and an evident shortage of professionals who are well-trained in CBD implementation. We encounter furthermore concern that the community based approach will take too much time for a post-disaster situation. However, Parwoto said that there is an important factor that could make CBD a success in Aceh: and that is a common interest. Since the funding is also secured there is no reason to hesitate any longer.

Nevertheless there are important lessons to learn:

There is a need for a standard definition for the terms 'participation' and 'community based'. There are reports about situations where community-based approach clusters are surrounded by non community-based projects, resulting in confusion among beneficiaries. A community-based approach also requires a fair lead-time, even though this is compensated by the speed and satisfaction in the later stage. Most failures in the community-based approach are caused by the delay in its start up, leaving little time for the participatory process. In some cases there is a genuine shortage of capacity to conduct a community-based approach, despite genuine good intentions to satisfy the aspiration of the community. The shortage of community facilitators is serious. The lesson learned is that there is a need to train more facilitators quickly.

Prof. Bobby Setiawan of Gajah Mada University summed up<sup>4</sup>: "We must also be realistic about both the pluses and minuses in the process of community-driven development. The lesson learned is that community-based reconstruction is not all rosy and smooth. Not all communities are as romantically communal as we thought. We just have to be rational to deal with them in order to make community-based development work. Although communities are not "ideal", it is however proven that negative prejudices are not all true either in Aceh. We need to be responsive to the varying communities. Facilitators need to be trained in that respect. They need to be able to respond to unexpected varying demands, and capable to coordinate various clusters of resources." He added that a community-based approach requires that the government makes policies to support, regulate and encourage this training. 'Community-based' does not mean 'leaving the governments behind'.

A minimum standard of community participation is viable. There are references that can be used and adapted. The level of participation (from mobilisation to decision making) can be determined by referring, for example to Sherry Arnstein's ladder<sup>5</sup>. Participation can also be specified for different aspects and stages and/or aspects of the reconstruction process: organisation, planning of houses, villages, settlements and cities; procurement, construction, evaluation, etc. A matrix could be developed for this purpose by combining levels of participation and specific participatory activities in each stage and aspects of reconstruction.

GTZ and Prof. Reinhart Goethert's 'Community Action Planning (CAP)', UN-Habitat's practices, the World Bank and Parwoto's community-based approach and UPLINK's relentless participatory practices at all levels are among the resources that should be exploited to formulate the minimum standard of participatory community-based practices.

### ***Towards Sustainable Reconstruction***

In 2005, UN-HABITAT called for a "Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction" policy in post-conflict, natural and human-made disasters. It concluded that disasters can provide opportunities for sustainable development, but sustainable relief and reconstruction requires that rehabilitation efforts are integrated into long term development strategies.

Specifically, sustainable relief and reconstruction requires permanent links between emergency relief and reconstruction on the one hand and the transitional phase of development and the development of local government capacities, which operate as active partner in the process on the other hand. It requires also: development of productive

economic activities; development of broad-based and long-term reconstruction and shelter strategies; protection of land and property rights of affected populations and development of long-term solutions for land and property dispute resolution; vulnerability reduction and disaster management; security of tenure; the equal rights of women; and the creation of strategic partnerships and alliances at all levels.

Is the current state of reconstruction of Aceh and Nias satisfying these requirements? Without a committed overall vision and "master" plan, the bits and pieces of what has been and will be built will not by themselves become sustainable and contributing to long-term overall sustainability. The later this overall vision and "master" plan gets committed, the less sustainable the Aceh and Nias reconstruction will be. BRR and all actors should now focus on this vision and make revisions and corrections wherever necessary. An environmental-, economic-, and socio-cultural- impact analysis can only be conducted and evaluated if this overall vision exists.

Participatory community-approach in all sectors, not only in house building, but also in local economic recovery and development is clearly the only hope for a truly sustainable formation of social capital. Therefore, enforcement and improvement with a clearly formulated minimum standard of participatory community-based practices is a must. It is late, but never too late to promote and up-scale it more intensely. What is needed is a strong political will. The expertise is there. Further delay will result in difficulties to mobilize human resources since most competent facilitators will leave Aceh soon.

BRR's decentralisation since July 2006 through establishment of several regional offices is a genuine hope, too. However, it raises questions when the housing sector is not decentralised through the same regional offices. Moreover it can only contribute to sustainability if it truly aims at empowering and building local capacities. This means that the process is as important as the end-result, and that the participatory decision-making culture needs to be institutionalised. Technical skills clearly also require improvements. The only remaining "central" role for BRR should be the facilitation of the capacity building process through exchange and other methods. BRR also needs to focus on providing a framework for collaboration, coordinating and directing the enormous resources currently available in Aceh. Such a framework should lead towards timely and quality decisions with regards to macro level plans, such as city-wide and regional spatial and infrastructure plans. Furthermore it should secure quality standards in housing. To be really successful in this, BRR should even consider withdrawing itself from being an implementer in the field. True sustainability is at stake.

## **B. TWO YEARS PLANNING AND COORDINATION**

### ***Planning And Coordination – Revisiting the NGO Role***

Rebuilding housing with communities was started by more than 100 organisations. They went in with ample funding and were received with open arms by communities as people were aware that large programmes were likely to fail in a conflict area. The people of Aceh and Nias intuitively knew that it was better to trust operations of small and agile actors under the radar screen than large organisations with bureaucratic planning. For this reason 100 organisations engaged themselves in housing – many for the first time.

Almost all organisations could agree to a few simple reconstruction guidelines on land mapping, village planning and reconstruction. Many showed their house designs to local Public Works departments for approval. Once they were approved, however, a more complicated task was ready to be tackled. They had to go back to the different communities in order to find materials, workers, and skilled supervisors. Moreover the organisations had to

develop adequate processes to find agreements with communities and agreements with their head offices.

Many organisations, especially the smaller ones, started building without a clear overall concept. They worked in the limelight and often failed. In the best of cases, they then dropped out, halted or stopped their programmes. Other postponed their start-up endlessly, such as many Red Cross Movements. In the worst cases organisations like Oxfam and Save the Children built many bad houses and had to acknowledge costly defeats. The UN-HABITAT monitoring programme with UNSYIAH University of Banda Aceh was designed to give early feedback to organisations on built achievements and failures and on the aspirations and satisfactions of beneficiaries. It tracked many problems but could not always prevent early mistakes.

UN-HABITAT's policy and sector support programme never questioned the critical need to let the multitude of non-governmental organisations take part in housing reconstruction in Aceh. These organisations created a swell of activities, to the desperation of the logistics planners. They accumulated critical experience on housing and delivered more roofs to the people of Aceh than probably would have been possible through careful planning. The organisations fostered early-on empowerment amongst communities, which were coming freshly out of a decennia-long armed conflict. They accepted that people returned to Tsunami affected villages and often unwittingly prevented large-scale resettlement of people to locations with uncertain tenure security and historically untested sites in terms of earthquake safety – the swamps, the peat soils, the quickly filled-in areas, which were being acquired at cheap prices by many a local authority.

BRR and UN-HABITAT stimulated simple consensual guidelines amongst organisations on land mapping, pricing indicators, equitable rights and options for renters and squatters and community-empowered resettlement. Moreover, with leaflets on housing rights and with cartoon-booklets on good house construction, UN-HABITAT and its partners reached also directly out to beneficiaries communicating their rights and responsibilities. Food distribution programmes and civil society organisations, which before had only worked on conflict issues, were the intermediaries to reach people in often remote locations. UN-HABITAT also appointed Indonesian research institutions to survey background issues concerning problematic settlement and urban recovery.

In the years to come, it is likely that the remaining NGO budgets will more and more be used in development work, which aims to eradicate poverty. BRR will execute Public Works, but from next year on its operational budgets will decline. Settlement recovery will need to encompass genuine development and to reach out to all community members, including those who did not lose their house.

### ***Planning while Building***

After almost two years of building and planning simultaneously, there is an increasing demand for more committed planning, especially at macro-, city-wide- and regional-coordinating level. Where is the land-use plan? Where is the city-wide tsunami-preparedness spatial plan? Where is the master drainage plan? As organisations begin to build infrastructures for villages and clusters, they need to connect them to city-wide or region-wide infrastructures. Why is there a delay in planning these necessities? Is BRR trapped in a conflict of interests because it regulates and executes at the same time? Is the conflict preventing it from taking up the role that it should have taken up more strongly, namely planning?

So far a single committed macro-level spatial plan for Banda Aceh and Aceh province does not exist. The schematic plan (misguiding called "the blueprint") by BAPPENAS has been rightly abandoned for lack of specificity and realism. What has been done instead ?

What is true for planning in general, is certainly true for spatial planning. Apparently, there has been no single spatial-planning approach adopted or coordinated. Different organisations do planning only so far as it is directly necessary for their programmes or clusters. Local governments seem to be too busy and weak to take control and make decisions on this issue. The creation of a wider infrastructure is now being prepared. This comprises for example the sea dykes along Banda Aceh's coast line and the new road segments along the west coast from Banda Aceh to Meulaboh. The engineers, however, who were appointed to do macro infrastructure planning for Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar are first painstakingly doing the micro engineering for the district of Meuraxa. In 2006, Aceh was being rebuilt house by house. In the coming two years, it will apparently be reconstructed drain by drain and road by road.

### ***From Action Planning to Spatial Planning.***

In the first months after the Tsunami, many organisations were tempted to exaggerate the planning needs for the devastated settlements or for new resettlement areas. Many villages and neighbourhoods were not extraordinary at risk to a new tsunami. UN-HABITAT and other experienced organisations tried to limit village planning to small improvements of basic infrastructure, including escape roads and other facilities. UN-HABITAT assisted communities by facilitating the elaboration of their own village planning. This was part of a Community Action Planning process, which took place prior to community contracting and house building.

In Banda Aceh, the Government is now preparing the wider infrastructure. This comprises for example the sea dykes along Banda Aceh's coast line and new arterial escape roads. There is now an increasing demand for more committed planning, especially at macro, city-wide and regional coordinating level. The infrastructure for villages and urban neighbourhoods needs to be connected to city-wide or region-wide infrastructure.

Yet the macro spatial plans are not ready or are responding poorly or slowly to the reconstruction activities on the ground. The engineers who were appointed to do macro infrastructure planning for Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar are first painstakingly doing the micro engineering for the district of Meuraxa.

### ***Challenges for Urban Recovery***

Overall, virtually each settlement in Aceh and Nias, whether urban or rural, will confront four issues of longer-term reconstruction: managing water resources and the environment in general, reaching out to the poorest, sustaining better services for all and rebuilding a peace-time economy. UN-HABITAT sees these four issues most critically turning up in the reconstruction of Banda Aceh.

Building better houses and more houses for poor people is a start. Investing more into infrastructure is an absolute necessity. The greatest challenge is the reestablishment of city governance and the maintaining of the freshly gained power of communities and their involvement in urban rebuilding and management. This will require a lot of assistance to the city government and to the province government.

Herein also lays a role for the numerous housing organisations. Many aid organisations who are engaged in housing on local level should become civil society organisations. This could be the second wave of involvement, an empowerment and a longer-term compensation for the early hasty efforts that were pursued by poorly prepared humanitarian organisations.

Finally there is a disaster preparedness planning, but it will require more time and it will need a process of consensus building. It has proven unhelpful to confuse it with urgent reconstruction of shelters. Creating new spatial plans right after the disaster creates new problems and it is impossible to achieve consensus amidst hysteria and over-anticipation following the disaster.

All districts of Banda Aceh had pre-existing spatial plans. They are formally still legal, too. These plans were a sufficient basis for quick reconstruction. The basis for an improved response to disasters of the future can be created by adopting respective measures in the now on-going revisions of the spatial plans.

### **C. CASE STUDY : MEURAXA, BANDA ACEH UN-HABITAT'S SPATIAL PLANNING WORK AS A LOCALISED RECOVERY ACTIVITY**



One year after the Indian Ocean Tsunami of December 26th, 2004 the UN agencies initiated, within the framework of UNDP's ERTR programme for sustainable reconstruction, the UN-Joint Programming (UNJP) in Meuraxa, Banda Aceh, and in Teluk Dalam, South Nias. The overall purpose of UNJP was to promote a well planned and coordinated recovery at local level, by means of joint UN actions and assistance programmes for communities and local authorities. In 2006, UN-HABITAT entered into partnerships with local government institutions and non-governmental organisations. In both locations, it facilitated an Urban Forum. It delegated teams of facilitators for spatial planning to the forum.



UN-HABITAT's spatial planning benefited from the joint programming, because it became closer connected to the context. In Meuraxa, a community radio programme and a community forum were organized during the planning exercise. Newsletters were published to facilitate the dissemination of information. A community centre was constructed to house and conserve spatial planning information for a

longer period. The information is available in form of photo-books, videos, maps etc.

UN-HABITAT's spatial planning exercise follows a strong participatory approach. UN-HABITAT also carefully coordinated its planning work with other planning programmes that were conducted by different organisations, including BRR, the Government Reconstruction Agency and the Banda Aceh City Government.

Within the capital city of Aceh Province, Meuraxa is an important and complex coastal sub-district with a rich heritage. It was also the most heavily destroyed area, where massive loss of life occurred. UN-HABITAT aimed not to rush the completion of legal land use plans. Instead it facilitated consensus building on such issues as the basic spatial structure, major

infrastructure reticulation and general visions and scenarios - elements and levels where the participation of the survivors proved to be possible.

UN-HABITAT's support for planning has been an opportunity to strengthen local capacity and governance, which will still be needed in the years of reconstruction to come. Planning activities by UN-HABITAT have also been an instrument for the formation of operational links between reconstruction and long-term development goals. It turned out to provide space for a proactive conflict management based on the development of common visions, goals, and a forward-looking thinking.

### ***From House Building to Assisting Urban Governance***

By mid 2005, UN-HABITAT had started building houses in Banda Aceh. As of late November 2006 its Banda Aceh programme financed and facilitated 6 village organisations and 127 community groups, which all together completed 1372 houses. Infrastructure is presently being built by other organisations. Infrastructure planning was prepared by UN-HABITAT.

UN-HABITAT helps out in village planning. As part of the collective UN recovery assistance for Meuraxa UN-HABITAT started the coordination of many individual village plans drawn up earlier in 2005. Local communities were intensively involved. Facilitation teams visited all 16 villages to discuss village plans and then brought village stakeholders together to discuss how to connect separate urban neighbourhoods.

At the same time UN-HABITAT assessed together with YIPD the environmental management and planning issues. Furthermore, UN-HABITAT regularly facilitated meetings of the Sub-district Forum Korrexa on a wide range of local issues. It contributed to the local radio station and published a community newsletter. Moreover it is now completing a community centre near the future office of the sub-district administration.

All this work has entailed the outline spatial plan for Meuraxa. Consultations with Meuraxa stakeholders indicated that the so-called "Green Meuraxa" vision was most appropriate: wide boulevards and low densities allow a slower-paced redevelopment for the years ahead and provide escape routes in times of peril. A final choice is to be made next year after fully consolidating the plan with neighbouring sub-district plans and new city-level plans.

Meanwhile BRR and the city administration are working on a new spatial plan for the city. Various engineering teams have started working on a range of infrastructure problems. GTZ and BRR are taking care of spatial planning in 5 other urban sub-districts. Initiatives are now being started to bring all this planning together, so that spatial- and infrastructure plans are coordinated and become supportive to each other. GTZ will moreover support the city with a GIS system to keep up the planning work.

UN-HABITAT asked several Indonesian research institutes to study issues of urban change: Dr. Saiful Mahdi of Yayasan Masyarakat Iqra investigated the fate of inhabitants of Punge Jurong who failed to get houses; Dr. Suparti of ITB examined the periphery of Meuraxa, an area which had been spared from severe damage but where urban management services stopped functioning; and Dr. Kamal Arief of UNPAR analyzed the history of master planning in Banda Aceh, in particular the ring road controversies which arose from the 2003 official city master plan.

More realistic and less controversial ideas for the northern ring road are now being probed. The environmental management issues of the seashore areas are still daunting. Infrastructure building will start in earnest next year. It is important to establish effective public participation mechanisms, so that all communities will be informed of road widening programmes and other less pleasing but necessary endeavours. Urban services are still

offered freely by means of grants. Women and children have left the city in large numbers for better care in East Coast areas. New migrants are streaming into the city, looking for work, houses or both. Urban beneficiaries of new houses are often disappointed because the small houses with yet little surrounding infrastructure do not meet their expectations.

The seaport Ule Lheue and the grounds of the three defence rings give rise to a mixed suburban neighbourhoods of small industries, fishing villages, squatters and wealthy people. All were caught by the tsunami. Map © UN-HABITAT and Dr. Kamal Arief.



### Planning never starts after a disaster.

In May 2006, UN-HABITAT invited Dr. Kamal Arief to resume his research Banda Aceh's urban planning history, a topic which he had studied for his PhD thesis. UN-HABITAT asked Dr. Kamal to expand his study with regard to master planning for Banda Aceh during the last 25 years. The analysis showed that post-disaster planning does not start from a void, but must carry along the legacy of pre-disaster events and planning work. For present-day Banda Aceh the legacy of failing to deal with the dangers of the sea dates back to more than a century.

Banda Aceh has been a city under siege for the past 100 years. The Dutch army built its own buffer zone, not towards the sea but towards the hostile Aceh Besar interior. In some places this is still noticeable: the drain canal diverting Krueng Aceh River was dug at the location of the eastern defense line of the city. Outside the defense line there is a small number of marginal settlements such as leprosy village near Alue Naga. Poor fishing hamlets dot the coastline. In the past thirty years many people have fled the countryside and crowded into the limited dry areas of the seashore of Banda Aceh. This movement was not limited to the poor since more affluent residents of Banda Aceh also considered it as a safer area.

The city slowly woke up to the need to start dealing with the problems which arose from these spontaneous seashore settlements, especially after the disastrous high tide floods in 2000. A northern ring road was proposed that was to be built on a protective sea dyke. The concept was integrated into the official 2003 master plan of the city, but remained controversial: existing mangroves and fishponds were doomed; fishermen were threatened to be cut off from the sea, while on the other hand land speculation blossomed and grand ideas for property development cropped up. In late 2004 Syiah Kuala University was asked to give advice on the issue.

Most city officials know the challenges. BRR at times is blamed for lack of progress, but wiser people admit that strong local governance processes need time. Mr. Zaehrudin, the previous head of the City Planning and Development Agency, who is now in charge of roads and water works said: "It is not just the Tsunami that weakened local governance. Decades of conflict caused people to have little trust in the civil service."

Here indeed lies the real challenge: how can the community proceed from the early rebuilding work as it is facilitated by many NGOs; and how can this process be documented

and integrated into local governance? Spatial planning as done in Meuraxa offers the chance to influence the coordination by indicating directions. For the city the mission now ahead is to grasp the opportunity to link planning with urban management and urban management with communities.

## CONCLUSIONS

This paper elaborated the following lessons-learned from the Aceh experience:

- needs assessments should involve communities and local institutions;
- transitional shelter should be provided early and allow people to return to their homes;
- community-driven housing development needs to be mainstreamed but also to be improved;
- sustainable recovery requires people to take charge of their recovery at an early stage;
- for sustainability reasons assistance should not be organised in segmented sector programmes;
- NGOs have a vital function in mobilising human resources and in approaching communities in conflict areas;
- planners should acknowledge that building is more important than planning in post-disaster situations;
- planning and spatial planning in particular can be used as genuine recovery tools geared towards rebuilding and restoring consultative governance.

In crisis management, a central tenet is that errors and failures prior to disasters will be repeated and amplified during the course of disaster response. Metaphorically one could say that one shouldn't blame the fire but blame the fire brigade if a disaster response goes awry. Disasters rarely are opportunities to immediately start anew, because in fighting disasters, the legacies of the past are often not overcome but simply amplified. In the Aceh context, poor consultative processes prior to the disaster made it difficult to achieve strong consultative processes during the response. Did we expect people to participate only, as long as they agreed with the preconceptions of the planners?

In the introduction, we explained that the behaviours of people experiencing a disaster is often poorly understood. For instance, how could the Blueprint ordain both buffer zones and community-driven rebuilding? Why did so many professionals lament the lack of planning, while the Government and the donors upheld an absolute right-of-return, made possible by means of RALAS, the free-of-charge land titling programme of the World Bank and BPN? Why was the Tsunami seen as a unique opportunity – to build back better, to redesign Banda Aceh, to reconsolidate land use in villages – while people insisted on early return, on reclaiming their assets and on rebuilding their houses as they had been before?

The behaviour of the victims went against the preconceptions of the planners – continuously and systematically. Survivors opted for recovery, not for re-planning. The planners, too, acted against their own textbooks, even though today they are also claiming that planning cannot succeed through tabula rasa methods and that it requires institutional settings where consultation and mediation are possible. In Aceh these settings were already broken before the Tsunami. Nurturing them back to life required time and is still on-going, through small subdistrict undertakings, in ad-hoc workgroups and in a multitude of recovery programmes.

---

<sup>1</sup> The needs numbers are more various and also include those who claimed assistance for repairs and others who claimed assistance for land lost to the sea, or for the loss of rental tenure.

<sup>2</sup> About 20,000 units of transitional shelter (TS) worth over US\$ 100 million have been built by the IFRC. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) has also built thousands of houses for temporary use. The Red Cross version can be dismantled and reassembled, while the IOM kind is likely to break in the dismantling process. Some of these temporary shelters were constructed on places where no permanent structure is supposed to be built, for example on the banks of rivers and canals in Banda Aceh. Since no sustainable solution

is apparent yet, there will be a significant environmental problem in the near future. The question is, if these huts will be ever removed or instead develop to permanent slums.

<sup>3</sup> *Mendampingi Masyarakat Korban Bencana untuk Membangun Kembali Rumah yang Lebih Baik. Belajar dari Aceh dan Nias.* (Facilitating Communities affected by Disaster to Rebuild Better Housing. Learning from Aceh and Nias)

<sup>4</sup> Concluding remark during the seminar in Yogyakarta, August 29<sup>th</sup> 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Arnstein, Sherry R. "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," JAIP, Vol. 35, No. 4, July 1969, pp. 216-224.

**Bruno DERCON, Human Settlements Adviser, UN-HABITAT**  
**Marco KUSUMAWIJAYA, Housing and Urban Expert**

Bruno Dercon has been Housing Policy Adviser for UN-HABITAT's Aceh Nias Settlements Support Programme, since September 2005. He was engaged in post-tsunami Aceh as of March 2005, first for DFID (UK). Marco Kusumawijaya is an Indonesian housing and urban expert. He joined Komisi Darurat Kemanusiaan untuk Aceh dan Nias (KDK) on January 4th 2005 to assist civil society's humanitarian response and to promote integrated and community-based reconstruction, including a call for establishment of a national reconstruction coordinating body to be located in Aceh. He worked in Nagan Raya on the west coast of Aceh. Between February and April 2005 he joint Koalisi Masyarakat Sipil untuk Aceh dan Nias (KMS) and subsequently between May and December 2005 with UPLINK. UN-HABITAT's Aceh Nias Settlement Support Programme (ANSSP) invited Marco Kusumawijaya to review the reconstruction of housing and settlements in Aceh and Nias in the period between August and November 2006.