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The Indian Ocean Tsunami Disaster, its Reconstruction Programs and the Current State of Recovery
The Case of Banda Aceh City



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Tsunami is a natural hazard which is unpredictable and powerful enough to cause devastating impacts. On 26 December 2004, Aceh was hit by tsunami which was generated by a magnitude 9.1 earthquake making it a memorial event for Acehnese people, especially people who lived in Banda Aceh City. Tsunami almost destroyed all the places in Banda Aceh which the wave reached, approximately 5 km from the coastal area. Sadly, most of the people who suffered and experienced the tsunami in Banda Aceh did not know about what happened at that time. The people barely knew about the big wave from the ocean called tsunami.

Actually, research conducted in 2005 in a cave called Gua Ek Luntie discovered that a tsunami occurred 7,400 years ago. On 4 January 1907, a big tsunami occurred and destroyed Simeulue Island of Aceh and caused the death of 70% of the total population in this island. The survivors recorded their experiences as an oral story and passed those to the next generation through buai-buai (lullaby) in family daily lives, nafi-nafi (advice) from old generation to the youth and through traditional poems and songs called Nandong that are performed in communal events in Simeulue. In the mainland Aceh, a folklore known as hikayat about “big wave”, was documented and local people call it “ie Beuna” .

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Notwithstanding, the Indian Ocean Tsunami 26 December 2004 (also known as Aceh Tsunami) which massively devastated the people both physically and mentally and destroyed the environment drastically were not acknowledged by the people in Banda Aceh. There were 61,065 people missing and dead because of the tragedy. Looking at many victims of the tsunami, it could be because of several factors including it being the closest area to the epicenter, no early warning system, lack of information about tsunami, and poor disaster management in Indonesia at that time. The loss of the family members resulted in the deepest sorrow and trauma. Therefore, after the disaster, many rehabilitation and reconstruction programs have been implemented by Aceh local government and Indonesian government with the help of the international community.

In addition, the majority of Acehnese population are Muslims who believe that disaster is a kind of warning from God. The people can accept that this disaster was a warning to do better in the future, it was a destiny that must be accepted. Given the religion viewpoint, Acehnese people tend to easily adapt to it, and there was no suicide or long frustration.

Meanwhile, the huge damage to the infrastructure made it very difficult to restore to the original situation. The destruction of the tsunami was massive, many buildings were destroyed including, 21,751 house units, 169 units of education, 25 units of health (hospital and clinic), 302 km roads, 63 units of government offices, 9 units of market buildings, and 46 social facilities. However, with the support from different sectors, the reconstruction was progressively enforced. The settlement area and vegetation were started from zero. Step by step, the settlement area has been restored to the original situation as before tsunami, and there was some increase in the demand of development of the area (295 Ha to 335 Ha).

In addition, to recover from a disaster, there are several strategies and goals that we can implement. For instance, (1) to restore the community to the conditions existing before the disaster or better, (2) to return to a condition where the situation is considered stable, (3) to imagine what the community might have become should the disaster have not happened

including its economic and demographic evolution, (4) recovery is seen as the development of social fabrics, political systems and the economic activities in order to anticipate the disaster risk faced by the society.

To date, it is needed to find a balance between speed and quality of recovery. The consideration of the affected population's needs and recover quickly must be taken into account. Hence, it is essential to build a sustainable society for future generations (Gardoni and Murphy, 2008). Besides, the economic recovery is very comprehensive, the land and building tax show how the tsunami affected area has recovered from the loss of infrastructure especially land value and building. After reconstruction of building, the tax will be associated with the land and building. As a result, coming from those ideas, the reconstruction and recovery from the tsunami should be carefully considered in terms of how to implement them and tackle the problems.

In short, the recovery of housing for tsunami survivor was started in May 2005 and led by NGOS and followed by BRR (Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency). The housing reconstruction plan by BRR in one village in Banda Aceh City namely Alue Deah Tengoh Village was completed in 30 months after disaster (mid 2007), 30% by the end of 2005 and 90% by the end of 2006. It was done due to sponsorship by many donors from different organizations. Some donors were quick to disburse the allocated fund resulting in the provision of houses quickly and with the least amount of effort. However, there were limitations due to lack of materials and limited labor.

Housing reconstruction is the main mandate of reconstruction program and almost 50% of recovery budget was used for housing reconstruction (RAN Database, 2009). One of the issues on long term recovery is housing reconstruction with permanent houses. Besides, competition among NGOs to support the affected areas is encouraged. However, there were some changes of the regulation (spatial planning) due to recovery process. It is demonstrated that in 2006 the temporary settlement area was changed in 2009 to permanent settlement due to survivors returning and building their home and village, mostly fishermen or fishpond farmers. As a result, it can be identified that

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Besides, in the sector of education, Banda Aceh city together with Universitas Syiah Kuala has developed 11 model schools for disaster preparedness. Banda Aceh City has improved the curricula and has been conducting regular activities related to disaster awareness education for some elementary and junior high schools. Besides, with the support from BNPB (National agency for disaster management) Banda Aceh City has established a new tsunami evacuation plan and made a disaster hazard map for the whole city.

There are several activities implemented at school, university and in the community including disaster preparedness school, tsunami evacuation drill at school, annual conference and publications on DRR, community based DRR campaign, establishing tsunami and disaster mitigation research center, establishing disaster sciences master degree, establishing resilient villages, tsunami evacuation drill in community, DRR competition at school level, and other efforts to improve awareness and the quality of life for the people of Banda Aceh.

To sum up, the Aceh Tsunami was a memorable event that Acehnese people cannot forget. However, with support from many sectors, the people in Banda Aceh city have progressively moved forward to build their stability mentally to support the development of themselves and the place where they live. Besides, the city has been progressively restored to the condition before the tsunami and even better condition right now. The government is still planning to build and create the city as a comfortable city to live and to visit by implementing more hazard signs for evacuation routes, entertainment from the remains of tsunami like building remains sites and museum and educational programs like doing a drill at school and conducting more research related to the tsunami. As a result, joint research and cooperation in close partnership between Aceh and Japan is needed to further study about reconstruction and recovery programs in order to have a positive long term impact.

*昨年 10 月 17 日の遠隔方式研究会講演の要約