



Rebuilding Aceh and Nias



On the 26 December 2004, the most powerful earthquake in 40 years erupted 150 kms off the coast of Aceh. Forty-five minutes later the tsunami wave hit Aceh, sweeping clean an 800 km coastal strip up to five kms inland in some areas. Some 167,000 people lost their lives or are missing. An additional 550,000 were displaced. Thailand, Sri Lanka, India and the Maldives were also severely affected by the tsunami.

By David Kelaher



In addition the loss of life in Aceh, public infrastructure (including 461 health facilities and some 2,500 schools) and utilities (e.g. electricity, water, roads), and livelihoods were wiped out or damaged, and land boundaries and titles were destroyed.

On 28 March 2005 another powerful earthquake added to the toll in the southern parts and the islands of Nias and Simuelue. Here, 900 people died and 22,000 were displaced.

These events caused immense social, economic and environmental devastation to areas that were already poor, while initiating unprecedented emergency support. The Indonesian military forces and military forces from various countries, including Australia, led the search and rescue, relief distribution and immediate clean up activities.

The United Nations launched a USD\$800 million "flash" appeal for tsunami affected countries. This was followed by further assistance by many donors and NGOs. Major bilateral programs of grants and soft loans were offered by the Australian Government through AusAID, and many other generous governments. In addition, international NGO's and organisations such as the Red Cross, CARE, PLAN, Save the Children, and World Vision raised record funds to support and continue on-going relief and recovery efforts.

On 16 April 2006, the Indonesian Government established the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency (BRR) located in Banda Aceh, whose role is to coordinate and manage the reconstruction effort, revitalise the economy and empower local government. Further hope for a sustainable recovery came from the signing of the peace accord between the Indonesian Government and the Free Aceh Movement in August 2005.

AusAID, through the Australian Indonesian Partnership for Reconstruction and Development, has been very responsive to the developing needs of the BRR and Aceh and Nias and is supporting a wide range of reconstruction and development activities including health, education, governance, housing and village hall construction.

Cardno Acil has supported AusAID and the BRR by the provision of advisers David Kelaher in the Health and Education Sector and Robert Rice in Economic Recovery. Nick Mawdsley assisted AIPRD in Banda Aceh to undertake community mapping. AIPRD also funded an adviser to the Multi Donor Trust Fund, managed by the World Bank.

The BRR is required to approve all projects being undertaken in Aceh and Nias. David and Robert consider the work exhilarating, working long hours, dealing closely with many of the UN Agencies and 124 international NGOs, 430 local NGOs, various government agencies and others working on the reconstruction effort.

The recovery exercise has been beset by major challenges which no amount of planning could have averted. Plans had to be put in place to cope with land clearance of millions of tonnes of debris, large areas of land that is now unsuitable for housing or agriculture because it is flood plain, as well as supporting public infrastructure and the restoration of public utilities.

Understandably, 12 months after the tsunami, those who have been displaced or lost their livelihoods are frustrated that progress has not been faster. However, shelter has been provided for those displaced, in tents, temporary housing or host families. Food aid is being provided and there has been no public health crisis. Temporary facilities have been provided where schools and health facilities have been damaged and children are back at school.

While emergency relief is still needed, BRR is now focusing its efforts on reconstruction and progress is being made on many fronts. Almost 1,000 reconstruction projects are underway with heavy emphasis on housing, health and restoring primary industry livelihoods, including fishing.

The reconstruction program is accelerating and 2006 will be a critical year for the recovery of Aceh-Nias. BRR will continue to improve coordination activities, reducing bottlenecks to facilitate; the provision of housing; rehabilitate essential infrastructure; strengthen institutional and human capacity; and restore livelihoods. ■



Cardno Acil assists British Red Cross building high quality housing in Aceh

With stories about many houses being pulled-down or abandoned due to inadequate quality of construction, Brian Adams, Executive Director Engineering Infrastructure is pleased to report on a highly successful post-tsunami reconstruction project.

On the island of Pulau Aceh, a two-hour fishing boat chug or a half-hour adrenalin burn by speed boat from Banda Aceh, British Red Cross Society is building over 250 new houses as a pilot project ahead of its larger program at Teunom on the west coast of Aceh Jaya. Cardno Acil is providing construction management services to BRCS in a teamwork arrangement.

The houses are part of the reconstruction of the delightfully named villages of Gulgop, Seurapong, Uleh Paya, and Teunom Baru, where people have been living in barracks, tents, or makeshift homes since help eventually arrived after that fateful day in December 2004. Being somewhat offshore, help was slower to arrive than on the mainland, and the survivors lived on coconuts and whatever else edible they could scavenge. Virtually every building was wiped-out, as were wharves and other infrastructure.

The majority of the new houses are being constructed from reinforced concrete frames, in-filled with bricks for the walls – which are subsequently cement-rendered then painted, and topped with timber trusses supporting metal tile cladding for the roofs. Apart from some local soil and rock fill, all materials are barged-in – a major logistical challenge.

The BRCS-Cardno Acil team lives and works in temporary accommodation, and communication with the outside-world is via satellite-internet. However, the challenging conditions are offset by the beauty of the island and the wonderfully natured local people. They of course wait with great anticipation to move into their new homes. The sad thing is that several plots will be vacant – a testimony to the tragic loss of lives.

Cardno Acil is supported by its local partner Kogas, which has supplied the site supervisors who work under the leadership of Cardno Acil's Gabriel Constantine as construction manager. Gabriel has set stringent standards for the quality of construction to be achieved by the building contractor – Wijaya Karya, and he has made a major contribution to the success of the project under the direction of David Merrett and Brian Adams. Roberto Koli is the coordinator for the project. He is from Cardno Acil's Indonesia regional office in Jakarta which has provided administrative support in conjunction with Australia based resources.

The project is a credit to all involved, and has given British Red Cross an excellent benchmark for its subsequent programs. ■

By Brian Adams

