

The Acehnese Gampong Ten Years On

A post-post Tsunami Assessment



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This research was made possible through the generous support of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Earth Observatory of Singapore and the International Centre for Aceh and Indian Ocean Studies. The statements, opinions and recommendations contained in this document do not necessarily reflect the views of DFAT, EOS, ICAIOS or Monash University.

www.earthobservatory.sg/research-group/aftermath-aid

Acknowledgements

The Research into Village Governance and Livelihoods Ten Years after the 2004 Tsunami Project has been a collaborative endeavour of Monash University researchers and a group of local field researchers from numerous universities and institutions in Aceh, administered by the International Centre for Aceh and Indian Ocean Studies (ICAIOS). This research project was made possible through the generous financial support received from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), specifically the Disaster Response Unit at the Australian Embassy in Jakarta, and the Earth Observatory of Singapore (EOS), an institute of Nanyang Technological University. The Village Governance Research Project is a subset of a larger multidisciplinary effort entitled Aftermath of Aid (AoA) jointly undertaken by ICAIOS and EOS.

Many people contributed to the Village Governance Research Project, and it is not possible to name them all here. The research team would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to a few key individuals who helped bring the project to fruition, in particular Dr Saiful Mahdi and the rest of the team at ICAIOS who provided invaluable support across academic and administrative matters, and without whom the project would not have been possible. Similarly, we extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to AoA Team Leader Dr Patrick Daly, without whose enthusiasm and perseverance this project would never have come to fruition. At Monash University, we acknowledge the support of Associate Professor Haripriya Rangan and Business Development Manager Beverly Baugh, who helped navigate the Monash bureaucracy to allow the research project to be funded. We acknowledge and appreciate as well the support we received from key staff members of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade working at the Australian Embassy in Jakarta. The Australian Aid LOGICA2 project had just ended when this research effort got underway, we are grateful for the opportunity to discuss current trends and issues with outgoing LOGICA2 leadership and staff, and for the loan of office furniture we were able to use at the AoA office.

The Village Governance Research team is particularly indebted to the *Geucik*, village leaders and community members, and *kabupaten* and provincial government officials, who shared their time, insights and experiences with our researchers. It is our sincere hope that this project and this report will contribute to positive change and to the realisation of better governance outcomes for Acehese villagers.

As the research project unfolded, we received invaluable inputs and insights from Dr Eka Srimulyani, who also took time out of her busy schedule to accompany field researchers to several villages to help facilitate women's focus group discussions. We acknowledge as well the assistance we received from Dr Marzi Afriko, who joined the project midway to assist with the analysis of raw data accruing from field interviews, observations and focus group discussions, and to help guide remaining field research and the development of case studies. Special thanks as well to Dian Agustin, who first joined the project as an enumerator, but evolved to become a crucial member of the team, providing important logistical and administrative support to the senior and field researchers. Finally, to the field research team members, it has been a pleasure and a privilege to work with you. We look forward to collaborating again in the future.

The opinions expressed herein are the authors', and do not represent the views of DFAT, EOS, ICAIOS or Monash University. The authors bear full responsibilities for any errors of fact or analysis. Questions or requests for additional information should be directed to Craig Thorburn Craig.Thorburn@monash.edu or Bryan Rochelle bryanrochelle1@gmail.com.

Aftermath of Aid Project:
www.earthobservatory.sg/research-group/aftermath-aid

Glossary of Acronyms, Indonesian and Acehnese Language Terms

ACARP	Aceh Community Assistance Research Project
<i>Adat</i>	(Indonesia, Arabic) Custom, or customary law
AIPRD	Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Reconstruction and Development
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
BAPPENAS	(Indonesia) <i>Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional</i> : National Development Planning Agency
<i>Becak</i>	(Indonesia) Bicycle or motorcycle pedicab
BPD	(Indonesia) <i>Badan Perwakilan Desa</i> : Village Representative Board
BRR	(Indonesia) <i>Badan Pelaksana Rehabilitasi dan Rekonstruksi Aceh dan Nias</i> : The Agency for the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Aceh and Nias
<i>Bupati</i>	(Indonesia) District Head
CIGS	Community Infrastructure Grant Scheme (LOGICA Program)
DFAT	Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
<i>Dusun</i>	(Indonesia) Neighbourhood or hamlet; sub-village territorial unit
GAM	(Indonesia) <i>Gerakan Aceh Merdeka</i> : Aceh Independence Movement
<i>Gampong</i>	(Aceh) Village
<i>Geucik (or Keucik)</i>	(Aceh) Village Head
<i>Gotong-royong</i>	(Indonesia) [Tradition and institution of] mutual assistance and voluntary labour
<i>Guru</i>	(Indonesia) Teacher
<i>Haria Peukan</i>	(Aceh) <i>Adat</i> community leader in charge of village market
IDP	Internally displaced person(s)
<i>Imuem Meunasah</i>	(Aceh) Imam of the village mosque
<i>Kabupaten</i>	(Indonesia) District
<i>Kaur</i>	(Indonesia) <i>Kepala Urusan</i> : Village Government Section Head
KDP	Kecamatan Development Program
<i>Kecamatan</i>	(Indonesia) Subdistrict
<i>Keujreun Blang</i>	(Aceh) <i>Adat</i> functionary responsible for assisting the <i>Keucik</i> in the management of irrigation for agriculture
KPMD	(Indonesia) <i>Kader Pembangunan Masyarakata Desa</i> : Village Community Development Cadre
LKMD	(Indonesia) <i>Lembaga Ketahanan Masyarakat Desa</i> : Village Community Resilience Institution, a relic of New Order era village government reforms
LMD	(Indonesia) <i>Lembaga Musyawarah Desa</i> : Village Consultative Council, another New Order era village government institution

LoGA	Law [no 11 of 2006] on Governing of Aceh
LOGICA	Local Governance and Community Infrastructure for Aceh Project
<i>Meunasah</i>	(Aceh) Small mosque structure, used for prayer and religious study, as a dormitory for young men, and a meeting hall
<i>Mukim</i> (or <i>Kemukiman</i>)	(Aceh) Territorial and social unit, comprising about three to ten villages. Also, the customary (<i>adat</i>) functionary who oversees matters of land and resource allocation, inheritance, marriage and matters of customary (religious) law in the <i>Kemukiman</i>
<i>Nanggroe</i>	(Aceh) State
New Order	Government (and era) of ex-President Suharto, 1966-1998
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
<i>Pancasila</i>	(Indonesia, Sanskrit) The Five Principles forming the philosophical foundation of the Indonesian State
<i>Panglima Laot</i>	(Aceh) <i>Adat</i> leader in the fishing community in charge of custom and traditional practices in marine fishing, including managing fishing areas and settlement of disputes
PAUD	(Indonesia) <i>Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini</i> : Early childhood education
<i>Pawang Glee</i>	(Aceh) <i>Adat</i> community leader in charge of custom and traditional practices relating to management of community forest
<i>Pengajian</i>	(Indonesia) Religious teaching or sermon
<i>Peutua Seuneubok</i>	(Aceh) <i>Adat</i> community leader in charge of custom and traditional practices relating to management of community gardens and [non-irrigated] agricultural land
<i>Pilciksung</i>	(Aceh) <i>Pemilihan Keucik Langsung</i> : Direct <i>Keucik</i> elections
PKK	(Indonesia) <i>Perhimpunan</i> [now <i>Pemberdayaan</i>] <i>Kesejahteraan Keluarga</i> : Family Welfare Association
<i>PNPM Mandiri</i>	(Indonesia) Program <i>Nasional Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Mandiri</i> : National Program for Self-reliant Community Empowerment
<i>Polindes</i>	(Indonesia) <i>Poliklinik Desa</i> : Village maternal health care unit
<i>Posyandu</i>	(Indonesia) <i>Pos Pelayanan Terpadu</i> : Family planning and health care unit
<i>Qanun</i>	(Aceh, Arabic) Canon. Regulations issued by the provincial and district governments of Aceh
<i>Rabana</i>	(Indonesia, Arabic) Frame drum, chanting of Koranic verses with drumming
<i>Reformasi</i>	(Indonesia) Post-New Order period, or reforms
Rp	(Indonesia) <i>Rupiah</i>
<i>Teungku Imeum</i>	(Aceh) Imam of the village mosque
TNI	(Indonesia) <i>Tentara Nasional Indonesia</i> : Indonesian Armed Forces
<i>Tuhapeut</i>	(Aceh) Village Consultative Council, comprised of representatives of village government, religious and customary (<i>adat</i>) leaders, intellectuals, and, under new provincial regulations, women. Focuses on governance and legal issues

<i>Ulama</i>	(Indonesia, Arabic) Religious leader
<i>Uleebalang</i>	(Aceh) Commander, or Sultan's Military Officer, later favoured by Dutch colonial officials to counter the influence of <i>Ulama</i>
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UUPA	(Indonesia) <i>Undang-undang</i> [No 11 Tahun 2006 tentang] <i>Pemerintahan Aceh</i> : Law [no 11 of 2006] on Governing of Aceh, LoGA
Village Facilitator	An individual, trained and employed by an NGO or donor project, who lives in or near a village for an extended period, to support and oversee recovery and development initiatives there
<i>Wali Nanggroe</i>	(Aceh) Guardian of the State – a ceremonial position tasked with safeguarding Acehnese culture and values
<i>Wirid Yasin</i>	(Indonesia, Arabic) Chanting of Koranic verses

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Glossary	4
Introduction	8
The Aftermath of Aid (AoA) Project	8
ACARP Revisited: Research into Village Governance and Livelihoods Ten Years after the Tsunami	9
The 2014 Aceh Village Governance Study: Parameters, Premises and Concepts	10
Premises and Hypotheses	10
Key Concepts: Governance, Social Capital and Capabilities	11
Governance	12
Social Capital	13
Capabilities	14
Setting the scene: Governance and Development in Post-Tsunami Post-Conflict Aceh	14
Peace Comes to Aceh	15
Democracy Aceh Style	15
Village Government in Aceh	16
The Acehnese <i>Gampong</i> Ten Years On: The State of Acehnese Villages Post-Post-Tsunami	19
<i>Normalisasi</i>	19
Capacity Building and <i>Resident Capabilities</i>	22
Governance and <i>Enabling Environment</i>	27
Gender Sidelining	38
Relocation Villages	42
Conclusion	46
References	48
Appendix: Summary of ACARP (2007) Findings	51

Introduction

The Indian Ocean tsunami of December 2004 was a disaster of unparalleled proportions, killing nearly a quarter million people in 14 countries and devastating the lives and livelihoods of millions more. It also prompted an unprecedented international response, in terms of both its scale and complexity. Billions of dollars were raised for relief and reconstruction, and hundreds of aid agencies mobilised thousands of people from around the world to participate in recovery efforts.

This response sought not just to recreate what the tsunami had destroyed, but to leave the affected communities better, fairer, stronger and more peaceful than they had been before the disaster struck. This aspiration – encapsulated in the phrase ‘Build Back Better’ – became the recovery effort’s guiding principle. Within months, the recovery came to be regarded as a means not only to rebuild assets and capabilities directly affected by the disaster, but also to build the capacity of institutions and individuals; expand access to services such as health and education; reduce poverty and strengthen livelihood security; advance gender equality; and to empower and open up spaces for civil society (Fan 2013).



Field Researchers discussing findings in Banda Aceh between field visits.

The area first and hardest hit by the tsunami was the Indonesian province of Aceh, where more than 221,000 people died, and another 500,000 were left homeless. Entire villages were virtually wiped off the face of the earth; more than 116,000 houses were totally destroyed and a far greater number heavily damaged. Along the entire western coast of the province, nearly all bridges were destroyed and over 60 per cent of paved roads were ripped away, submerged by the sea, or buried in

mud. As many as 750,000 people lost their source of livelihood, including 30 per cent of Aceh’s agricultural sector and the entire fisheries sector. Provincial and local government in Aceh, already severely strained by 30 years of armed conflict between Acehnese separatists and the Indonesian military, was further devastated by the loss of more than 4,000 lawmakers, civil servants and village leaders.

It was clear from the outset that the recovery and reconstruction effort would take years to complete. In the immediate aftermath to the disaster, Indonesia threw open what had been a highly restricted military zone to foreign aid workers and journalists. Within a year, \$4.9 billion in international aid had been pledged to aid Aceh’s recovery, approximately 34 per cent of the \$14 billion committed to the entire tsunami recovery effort. Hundreds of organisations arrived and began to set up shop, competing for housing and office space, local and national staff members, and logistical and subcontracting support.

The task of coordinating such a massive and complex recovery and reconstruction effort was entrusted to the Agency for the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Aceh and Nias (*Badan Pelaksana Rehabilitasi dan Rekonstruksi Aceh dan Nias* – BRR), established by the Indonesian government in March 2005 with a mandate to ‘coordinate and implement rehabilitation and reconstruction projects based on the implementation guidelines set forth in national policy, and facilitate and coordinate the implementation of rehabilitation and reconstruction programs by the central and local government and international institutions such as NGOs and donor agencies’. The Indonesian government set an ambitious four-year target to complete the main tasks of reconstruction, after which the BRR would be disbanded and responsibility for further development and disaster risk reduction coordination transferred to the provincial and district governments of Aceh.

Today, ten years and some \$7 billion of Indonesian government and international donor funding later, Aceh is transformed. The highly visible and largely successful rehabilitation and reconstruction of the province’s physical infrastructure and facilities has been accompanied by social and political changes hardly imaginable just a decade ago.

The Aftermath of Aid (AoA) Project

An endeavour as significant as Aceh’s recovery and reconstruction has received scholarly attention from many disciplines (Clarke *et al.* 2012), generating new knowledge across a variety of sectors of relief and development work, including aid delivery modalities (e.g., Doocy *et al.* 2006); settlements and housing (Daly and

Brassard 2011; Kennedy et al 2008; Kitzbichler 2011; Steinberg 2007); land administration (Fitzpatrick 2008); health and health care (Phillips et al. 2008; van Rooyen and Leaning 2005); gender equity and mainstreaming (Srimulyani 2013; Jauhola 2010a, 2010b); livelihoods (Thorburn 2009; McCarthy 2013, 2014); and governance and aid accountability (Brassard 2009). Aceh today provides an opportunity to investigate the sustainability of outputs, outcomes and impacts of post-disaster recovery and reconstruction aid in one of the largest and best-documented post-disaster reconstruction efforts ever undertaken in a developing country. Supported by Earth Observatory Singapore (EOS), the Aftermath of Aid (AoA) project comprises a multi-sectoral collaborative effort to investigate the sustainability of reconstruction and development projects carried out in Aceh after the tsunami, and assess the degree to which reconstruction efforts have strengthened local capacities, transferred skills and knowledge, and reduced risk among Acehnese communities. The AoA project is presently the only substantive interdisciplinary study of the longer-term endurance of aid projects after the cessation of post-tsunami funding support in Aceh, and addresses critical questions about what happens to local communities once aid efforts finish.

The AoA project embarks from the premise that the expenditure of over \$7 billion on over 12,000 discrete relief, reconstruction and development projects should lead to some level of capacity building and skill transfer to different segments and levels of society in Aceh; particularly given that capacity building and empowerment were explicit goals of many projects. To answer the basic question 'Are there long-term benefits from the reconstruction effort that persist after the cessation of direct aid funding?', the AoA project draws upon detailed data collected from key reconstruction sectors to address a number of critical questions:

1. Is Aceh safer and more resilient following the reconstruction?
2. Did five years of massive reconstruction efforts lead to a marked increase in the capacity of Acehnese citizens and institutions to conceptualize and manage complex projects, and has this had a notable impact upon business, governance and civil society?
3. Did the hundreds of programs aimed at promoting economic development lead to a noticeable change in the Acehnese economy (and therefore is linking relief, reconstruction and development a feasible goal in post-disaster situations)?
4. To what degree have citizens and institutions in Aceh become more aware of the nature of hazards, risk and vulnerability as a result of the stated emphasis on disaster risk reduction?

ACARP Revisited: Research into Village Governance and Livelihoods Ten Years after the Tsunami

The *Research into Village Governance and Livelihoods Ten Years after the 2004 Tsunami project* (henceforth the *Village Governance study*) is a small sub-component of the larger AoA ensemble, which looks specifically at post-recovery developments in a number of peri-urban and rural *Gampong*¹ in the heavily tsunami-affected districts of Aceh Barat, Aceh Jaya and Aceh Besar. It follows upon an earlier study, the *Aceh Community Assistance Research Project* (ACARP), undertaken in 2007 when the reconstruction effort was in full swing. In addition to logistical and some financial support from EOS, the Village Governance Study is supported by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), specifically, the Disaster Response Unit at the Australian Embassy in Jakarta.

ACARP was a multi-donor supported qualitative social research project, aimed at identifying and better understanding the factors that supported or constrained recovery and redevelopment in village communities in Aceh during the peak of the recovery and reconstruction effort. Field research was undertaken by a group of 27 Acehnese social researchers, led by a team of senior researchers from Banda Aceh, Jakarta and Australia. The objectives of ACARP were to identify key organic and external factors that influenced the success of communities in rebuilding their lives; to study the factors and conditions that contributed to the re-establishment and successful engagement of local community capabilities in the wake of major upheaval from natural disaster and conflict; and to document and analyse the interaction between communities and external agencies in the reconstruction and recovery process, highlighting community perceptions of progress, constraints and the value of external assistance.

The ACARP research project was organised around matched pairs of *Gampong*, each with roughly similar socio-economic and environmental profiles, and similar levels of loss and destruction. Of these pairs, one was progressing more successfully with the recovery process, while the other appeared to be experiencing difficulties and, in some cases, discord. The ACARP study had a broad mandate and scope, looking at issues of aid program governance and management; *Gampong* government and decision-making; social capital; women's roles and gender equity; livelihood and economic

¹ *Gampong* is the Acehnese term for village. Since 2003, it has been reinstated as the official term for the lowest tier in the territorial hierarchy of regional governance in Aceh (although most *Gampong* are further subdivided into *dusun*, or neighbourhoods), and the smallest unit of adat society in Aceh. In this report, the terms *Gampong* and village are used interchangeably.

recovery and development; and housing and other village infrastructure. The findings (summarised in Appendix I of this report) were generally rather unsurprising. Leadership emerged as the primary factor differentiating the more successful *Gampong* from those still struggling to recover, along with differences in the ways that decisions were made and resources allocated. On the subject of gender, the study was unable to establish a strong link between higher levels of women's participation in meetings and decision-making processes and better recovery outcomes, partly because the 'gender mainstreaming' process promoted during the tsunami recovery had only been underway for a relatively short time, and uptake was still quite uneven. In terms of livelihood aid and economic recovery, the study found that it was still too early in the recovery process for most households and individuals to make effective use of the large amounts of aid being disbursed for livelihood programs.

The 2014 Aceh Village Governance Study: Parameters, Premises and Concepts

Aceh today is a transformed place. The towns and countryside of Aceh today bear very little resemblance to the state of affairs before the tsunami in 2004 – a province sapped by 30 years of armed conflict resulting in stunted growth and economic opportunities, crumbling infrastructure and a terrorized, discouraged populace. It is also vastly different the frenetic state at the height of the reconstruction period when the original ACARP study was undertaken.

The Aftermath of Aid study is an attempt to understand what has – and what has not – changed in the period since the end of the recovery and reconstruction period. This sub-component of the larger AoA project, the Village Governance study, looks specifically at *Gampong* – how they are governed, how decisions are made, how people's needs are being met, what people think about their *Gampong*, its leaders and its problems and prospects. As previously discussed, its aim is to explore the extent to which the patterns and trends encountered in the original Aceh Community Assistance Research (ACARP) Project in 2007 continue to inhere and evolve; particularly, whether or not incipient 'good governance' practices of participation, accountability, transparency and gender equity' continue to gain traction in local government in Aceh; and what sort of results these practices are (or are not) producing. It does this by revisiting many of the same *Gampong*, and many similar questions, as the ACARP village study seven years earlier.

Premises and Hypotheses

Following the precedent of the 2007 ACARP study, the 2014 Village Governance study also unfolded in an iterative manner, allowing findings and insights from the field to inform the contours and trajectory of ongoing field research. Many of the same questions from the 2007 study were addressed, and new ones added. During discussions with the research team mid-way through this effort, we formed a number of simple operating hypotheses to guide the remaining field research. These four premises are:

1. Donor, NGO and government investment in capacity-building undertaken during the tsunami recovery and reconstruction effort has had lasting positive effects.

During the post-tsunami reconstruction era in Aceh, major programs such as the World Bank's *Kecamatan* Development Program (KDP)² and AIPRD LOGICA sought to influence how villagers undertook development planning and implementation processes. These programs fostered the creation of village-level development committees or supported existing village-level institutions to oversee reconstruction and development projects according to strict guidelines of community involvement, accountability and transparency. This involved significant capacity-building training and mentoring of individual community members to inculcate standards of value and practice akin to the governance ideals of these programs. Many other sector-specific donor and NGO program also involved the recruitment, training and support of large numbers of village cadre.

These reconstruction-era practices had long-lasting effects upon the resident capabilities of individuals to perform particular roles in development decision-making, facilitation and leadership within their communities. This is evident in the significant numbers of NGO and donor-trained individuals who continue to fulfil important roles facilitating development outcomes in their *Gampongs* today. However, these outcomes are influenced by the opportunities and constraints of the broader governance environment in Aceh in which they are articulated.

² Subsequently replaced by PNPM, which continues to be a major funding and technical support source for village infrastructure and economic development initiatives in Aceh.

2. There has been a lack of support from both local and national government for the maximisation (or effective utilisation) of local capabilities.

An overarching programmatic intention of the large-scale capacity-building programs discussed above was the creation of an *enabling environment* in which good governance values and practices could flourish. With the phasing out of tsunami reconstruction programs and the withdrawal of most donor and NGO programs and support, the culture of government in Aceh is again transforming. The horizontal, participatory, community-led 'social capital' program orientation of the post-tsunami reconstruction era has gradually morphed into a more hierarchical and exclusive *chain-of-command* approach to development and service delivery that often fails to engage or mobilise the resident capacities fostered during the heyday of the reconstruction effort. The culture of governance coalescing in post-LoGA Aceh is manifesting in a sort of *re-elitization* process, which is at odds with the exuberant democratisation and grass-roots participation ethos of the reconstruction era. Patterns of paternalism, exclusivity and exclusion, and gate-keeping are replicated across all levels of government, manifesting and magnifying at the nodes of articulation between communities and their own *Gampong* governments, between *Gampongs* and district government, and on up through the command structure.

This unfortunate lacuna in the *enabling environment* mentioned above was evident in several of the villages included in this study. As a consequence, the significantly increased resources available to *Gampong* governments and communities from provincial and district sources since implementation of the Special Autonomy financial arrangements set out in the LoGA are not necessarily translating into better development outcomes. The small number of villages where abovementioned resident capacities are being more effectively utilised, and where government resources are being effectively accessed and mobilised to help meet community needs, are unsurprisingly characterised by dynamic *Gampong* government leaders – either *Geucik* or *Tuhapeut* or both³ – and by good working relationships between the components making up the *Gampong* administration, and between these leaders and their communities.

3. There has been a generalised retreat from the principals and practice of *gender mainstreaming* promoted during the tsunami recovery and reconstruction period.

The abovementioned underutilisation of individual capabilities (or *resident capacity*) at the *Gampong* level

is nowhere more evident than in the plunging level of women's involvement in *Gampong* development decision-making and implementation. This is in stark contrast to the efflorescence of women's participation and engagement in *Gampong* development programs during the reconstruction era fostered by the gender mainstreaming policies and practices of the international and national agencies involved in the recovery effort. The current decline in women's participation in village-level decision-making processes in Aceh is characterised by women activists in Aceh as a case of '*Two-steps-forward, one-step backward*' in terms of women's empowerment. Most female respondents in the survey villages, however, seemed rather nonplussed about these trends, suggesting that *Gampong* politics are best left to the menfolk.

4. Relocation villages continue to experience far greater difficulties than the majority of *Gampong* that did not have to resettle.

An additional stand-out finding of this research was that the survey villages that were forced to resettle after the tsunami continue to lag far behind other villages in their recovery.⁴ During the first ACARP study, this gap was largely attributed to higher levels of trauma and loss, as well as delays encountered as arrangements were made to secure new locations, causing many of these *Gampong* to miss out on a variety of donor and NGO projects and programs as the reconstruction effort gathered momentum. Whilst the residual effects of these factors are perhaps still being felt, the more fundamental problems faced by these relocation *Gampong* are a lack of access to land-based and marine resources for residents to pursue livelihoods, lack of alternative livelihood options, and ongoing uncertainty of tenure and access rights to surrounding land, forest or other resources.

Key Concepts: Governance, Social Capital and Capabilities

Since their first appearance in development literature in the late 1980s and early '90s, the terms *governance* and *good governance* have attained the status of mantra in the development business (Mkandawire 2010). While not intending to engage the protracted debates about the various meanings attributed to the terms or their implications to development practice, this report does need to establish a working definition of these and related

³ These various *Gampong* offices will be described below, in the 'Village Government in Aceh' section.

⁴ Three of fifteen *Gampong* included in this study are relocation villages, while a fourth is host to several complexes of relocated urbanites from Banda Aceh.

terms that will inform the discussion and analysis of our findings. We begin by briefly introducing a common and familiar characterisation of the term governance as it is used in development policy and analysis, drawing mainly on reports and documents produced by UNDP and The World Bank, followed by a brief introduction of the working understanding formulated by the Acehnese field research team. This will be followed by brief introductions to two other key buzzwords: *social capital* and *capabilities*.

Governance



Posyandu: Intergrated Family Planning and Health Care Unit in Lhok Leuhu

A World Bank website entitled '*What is Governance*'⁵ proffers a simple introduction to this complex subject:

Governance is the *process* by which authority is conferred on rulers, by which they make the rules, and by which those rules are enforced and modified. Thus, understanding governance requires an identification of both the rulers and the rules, as well as the various processes by which they are selected, defined, and linked together and with the society generally.

[W]ithin this concept of governance, the obvious second question is: What is good governance? ... Typically, it is defined in terms of the mechanisms thought to be needed to promote it. ... [I]n various places, good governance has been associated with democracy and civil rights, with transparency, with the rule of law, and with efficient public services.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 1997: 2) provides a definition that helps to broaden the concept beyond just the 'actions of a government':

[Governance] comprises the mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which citizens and groups

articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations, and mediate their differences.

The document proceeds to a discussion of good governance:

Good governance is, among other things, participatory, transparent and accountable. It is also effective and equitable. And it promotes the rule of law. Good governance ensures that political, social and economic priorities are based on broad consensus in society and that the voices of the poorest and the most vulnerable are heard in decision-making over the allocation of development resources (ibid: 4).

Importantly, this definition encompasses a holistic vision of governance encompassing all levels of government administration as well as non-governmental institutions, civil society, businesses and firms, and communities and individuals engaged in delivering and receiving services, allocating and utilising resources, and mediating differences.

The use of aid programs to leverage good governance has been commonplace since the term's rise to prominence in the 1990s. For example, a World Bank web page extolling the achievements of the *Kecamatan* Development Program (KDP), boasted:

KDP is part of a broader effort by the Indonesian government and civil society to bring more transparency and accountability into development decision making. The KDP's design principles point to a *new way of doing business* in Indonesia (World Bank, cited in ACARP 2007).

The local research team in Aceh participated in a two-day workshop midway through the data gathering stage to consolidate a working definition of governance as articulated in the context of Acehnese *Gampong*. Simply put, the forms of day-to-day governance experienced by *Gampong* community members is a collaboration between multiple sets of actors within the formal village government structure (and by extension the subdistrict and district officials to whom they report and from whom they attempt to secure services and resources); various customary (*adat*) functionaries and structures; particular motivated concerned individuals; and an assortment of *Gampong*-level assemblages, organisations and bodies, ranging from

⁵ http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/MENAEXT/EXTMNAREGTOPGOVERNANCE/0,,contentMDK:20513159~pagePK:34004173~piPK:34003707~theSitePK:497024,00.html#_ftn1

officially sanctioned and supported to wholly self-directed and self-sufficient.

The research, then, attempted to focus on the patterns of interaction, power, authority, hierarchy, collaboration and contestation among various key actors in *Gampong* governance:

- The Geucik,
- Other members of the *Gampong* Executive (Village Secretary, Treasurer, Section Heads [*Kaur*], Neighbourhood or Hamlet [*Dusun*] Heads),
- The *Tuhapeut* Council of Elders,
- Religious and *adat* law functionaries, including different combinations of the following:
 - *Imuem Meunasah* [Imam of the village mosque],
 - *Keujreun Blang* [rice paddy and irrigation superintendent],
 - *Panglima Laot* [fisheries captain],
 - *Pawang Glee* [forest ranger],
 - *Peutua Seuneubok* [garden superintendent],
 - *Haria Peukan* [market coordinator], etc.;
- an assortment of more modern, state-sanctioned or mandated 'civil society' positions or organisations that perform particular service functions, including:
 - *Posyandu* (family planning and health care unit),
 - *Polindes* (maternal health care providers),
 - PKK National Family Welfare Movement,⁶
 - KPMD (village development cadre),
 - *Guru Pengajian* (prayer leaders) and
 - Pre-school (*PAUD*) teachers.

An analysis of *Gampong* governance includes as well various informal formations and individuals within the community, including volunteers and activists who hold no official position in any of the structures set about above, but who sometimes assume leadership positions related to particular issues or initiatives. This often includes individuals who received training and job experience during the tsunami recovery and reconstruction period – described above as the [underutilised] *resident capacity* that the researchers encountered in most *Gampong*. Finally, the researchers sought examples and opinions of *Gampong* community members' and governments' experiences dealing with higher levels of government, particularly *Kabupaten* agencies and various post-LoGA provincial programs and policies. In short, the primary concern of our analysis of *Gampong* governance became, 'How do community members and groups access the

services and resources they need, and get their needs met?' It becomes an investigation of how things get done (or not), who supports effective collective action, and how.

Social Capital

For two decades, the term *social capital* has demonstrated remarkable resilience in the somewhat fickle world of development scholarship, and continues to feature as a major theme in policy documents and reviews and evaluations of governance initiatives. Social capital is envisioned as the embodiment of the capacity of communities to mobilise collective action and access the support they need to meet their needs. An early World Bank study undertaken in support of the then nascent *Kecamatan* Development Program describes the concept as follows:

Social capital includes the shared values and rules for social conduct expressed in personal relationships, trust, and a common sense of 'civic' responsibility, without which it would be hard to have a functioning society. At the local level, institutions or associations can be seen as one manifestation of social capital. It must be emphasized though that social capital can and does exist outside the context of local institutions (whether formal or informal). For example, two neighbors who help each other in times of trouble have social capital but may never embody their bond in an association. Vice versa, the mere presence of an association does not prove the existence of social capital (Grootaert 1999: 6).

Numerous policy studies of post-tsunami, post-conflict aid in Aceh (e.g., World Bank 2006, KDP 2007; Kenny 2007; MSR 2010) note that Acehnese villages are reputed to sustain deep and robust stores of social capital. This was presented as an important attribute that warranted special attention and support in aid delivery modalities. It was a major focus of many donor and NGO programs throughout the tsunami recovery and reconstruction effort. McCarthy (2013: 1) notes that the concept of social capital 'stabilised policy thinking, legitimised project interventions, and provided a template for project action'. Throughout the recovery and reconstruction effort, many observers and involved individuals expressed concern that the massive scale of the humanitarian response and sheer number of projects and programs was eroding Aceh's reserves of social capital, as people became accustomed to payments for community service, and the practice of cobbling together makeshift community groups to receive aid packages, only to disperse once the aid was delivered

⁶ PKK is almost always headed by the Village Head's wife; and as such becomes *de facto* a subset of the village executive.

⁷ Erroneously, according to the analysis put forward in the 2007 ACARP report.

(McCarthy 2013). ‘Cash-for-work’ programs were often singled out as being particularly corrosive of Aceh’s innate social capital (Thorburn 2007).⁷

The concept is not without its detractors. Fine (2010: 125) disparages social capital as ‘self-help raised to the level of the collective’, which can ‘improve the status quo without challenging it’. In particular, Fine and other critics note that social capital literature and policy tend to blend together a range of time-honoured social science concepts such as networks, trust and linkages through a single homogenising prism, and that it glosses over crucial considerations of class, power and conflict. Organisations and forms such as the state, trade unions, political parties and organisations are strikingly absent from social capital literature.

This having been said, social capital does provide a simple and useful template for organising and analysing the conditions and trends that the researchers encountered in the survey villages. The remainder of this report generally eschews the use of the term, but the *idea* of social capital does nonetheless underpin the description and analysis that follows.

Capabilities



Small business in *Gampong Jurongseuh*, Aceh Barat

The 1990s saw the notion of *civil society* catapulted into the centre of current development discourse, and with it, the rather fuzzy concept of *capability*. The invocation to civil society conveyed a notion that ordinary people possess the capability to fashion their own lives. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, civil society was imagined as the site where people, organised into groups, could make and pursue democratic projects

of all kinds in freedom from bureaucratic state power (Chandhoke 2010). Later that decade, Nobel Prize laureate Amartya Sen further cemented the position of *capabilities* as a central element of human development, [re]defining development as the ‘expansion of capabilities or substantive human freedoms’, i.e., expanding people’s ‘capacity to lead the kind of life he or she has reason to value’ (Sen 1999: 87).

Capacity building and participation, both already time-worn refrains of development assistance organisations and programs across the globe, were reenergised as strategies aimed at strengthening human and social capital and thereby empowering civil society and enabling individual choice, and as such achieved pride of place at the core of millennial development objectives of good governance and democratisation.

For the purposes of this research, *capabilities* provided a handy lens through which to view the residual effects of post-tsunami aid programs. Numerous individuals in each survey village had participated in a variety of skills training or other capacity-building programs. The researchers sought to determine the extent to which these interventions continue (or not) to deliver benefits to communities. These observations gave rise to the notion of *resident capabilities* set out in Premise 1 above.

Setting the scene: Governance and Development in Post-Tsunami Post-Conflict Aceh

The patterns and practices of *Gampong* governance that form the focus of this study do not take place in a vacuum. Before introducing the teams’ findings, it is important to first introduce the political economy of regional and national state formation and socio-economic development within which these processes and interactions take place. Whilst the focus and methods of this study are decidedly local and observational, we must recognise that the ability of the individual or collective actor to achieve successful resolution of problems – in other words, their capacity – depends on these actors’ relative power vis-à-vis other actors. *Gampong* governance transpires within a dense, complex, and shifting context. Therefore, although this study does not presume to present an analysis of current trends and contours of the political economy of post-tsunami, post-conflict Aceh, it is necessary to provide a brief contextual overview of key trends and events to better understand the contours and trajectories of community-level capacity and governance in

Peace Comes to Aceh

Post-tsunami recovery and reconstruction aid was a major driver of the changes that have taken place in the survey villages over the past decade, but certainly not the only one. Equally significant is the deepening peace that has taken root after the cessation of nearly three decades of armed conflict between the Indonesian military and the Free Aceh Movement (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka*, GAM), and the political and social changes that have ensued since the signing of the Helsinki Peace Accords in August 2005.

Decades of conflict and inequitable patterns of economic development had made Aceh the fourth poorest province in Indonesia. Since 1976, the conflict had claimed between 15,000 and 25,000 lives, displaced over 400,000 people, destroyed much of the productive sector in the province, hampered the delivery of basic services, weakened institutions, eroded the social fabric, traumatised a large portion of Acehnese society and created deep political fault-lines between Aceh and Jakarta (Nobel *et al.* 2009). When the tsunami struck, Aceh had been under 18 months of martial law and civil emergency following the collapse of peace negotiations between the Indonesian and GAM.

The trauma of the tsunami was surely a factor in hastening the successful 2005 peace negotiations. The tsunami inflicted heavy casualties on both GAM and the Indonesian military, and established some common ground between the central government and GAM to spur on the latest round of behind-the-scenes negotiations that had been initiated in Helsinki a few months earlier. Both sides determined that it was more important to assist the thousands of people suffering devastation and loss from the tsunami than to continue the conflict. Also, the recovery effort saw an influx of thousands of foreign and Indonesian relief workers, opening the province to international scrutiny.

With the support of newly-elected President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Vice President Jusuf Kalla, Indonesian government negotiators were able to bring important new offers to the table, including an amnesty for GAM fighters; release of political prisoners and detainees; allowing Aceh-based political parties to contest elections; and proposals for a dramatic realignment of the economic relationship between Aceh and the central government. The Helsinki Accords were the first comprehensive peace agreement between the two parties, after a long string of failed ceasefire agreements. It then took the national parliament another 12 months to pass Law No. 11/2006 on the Governing of Aceh, which embodies many of the main tenets of the Helsinki agreement. Aceh has been mostly peaceful ever since.

Democracy Aceh Style

Establishing legitimate political leadership through non-violent means is an essential step in the rebuilding of post-conflict societies. The 2005 Helsinki Accords and 2006 Law on Governing Aceh (LoGA) allowed for the establishment and political participation of Aceh-based political parties (the only province in Indonesia to enjoy this privilege), the right of the people of Aceh to nominate candidates for all elected offices, and the conduct of free and fair local elections. The holding of democratic elections is seen as a key milestone on the road to peace.



'The bridge to nowhere', Gampong Pulo Muliya

Aceh has successfully undergone four major elections since the cessation of hostilities in 2005: the first direct executive elections in 2006/07 that saw the election of GAM-affiliated candidates to the office of governor and 10 of the 23 district head and mayor contests. The 2009 legislative election saw the election of a large block of candidates from the newly-established Partai Aceh (Aceh Party), the official electoral arm of GAM. Partai Aceh captured 47 per cent of the popular vote and won 33 of 69 seats in the provincial legislature, and 237 of 645 district and municipality-level seats across the province, including a majority of seats in seven district legislatures and a plurality in nine others. Several other local parties contested the 2009 election, but secured only a tiny percentage of the vote. Although it was probably unnecessary given the generally high level of support for GAM and Partai Aceh in the Acehnese heartland, Partai Aceh campaigners employed both subtle and overt forms of intimidation to mobilise voters, harassed other parties and disrupted rallies. Overall, although the campaign was marred by numerous violent incidents (including

brawls, bombings and assassinations), the election itself proceeded without any major incidents, and was considered an historic success and a ringing endorsement of democracy, Acehese style. The resounding victories of Partai Aceh and then-President Yudhoyono's Partai Demokrat can also be interpreted as a 'vote for peace'.⁸

Of course, getting elected to government, and governing, are two very different things. The newly-elected Partai Aceh legislators faced a number of challenges common to political parties emerging from armed struggles, most particularly a lack of essential political skills and experience in government.

Unlike many post-conflict situations elsewhere, and despite the long duration and high cost of the Aceh conflict and the additional destruction wrought by the tsunami, the Aceh government was relatively intact and functional when the peace accords were signed. As well, the generous revenue sharing stipulations of the Helsinki Accords and LoGA ensured that the Government of Aceh would have sufficient resources to deliver services and strengthen public administration. Even so, the Partai Aceh-dominated provincial parliament struggled to produce any legislation during its first years in office. It took more than six months to approve the provincial government budget, even though it was essentially a facsimile of the previous year's budget (Hillman 2012).

In the next round of executive elections in 2012, the Partai Aceh candidates for governor and vice-governor easily ousted the incumbent (former independent) candidates. Partai Aceh candidates also secured nine of 17 district head and mayor positions contested (three by run-off), with national parties and coalition candidates winning the remainder. This election was marked by a high degree of legal and political wrangling, as well as some violence. Despite the strong majority they already enjoyed, Partai Aceh campaigners continued with their practices of intimidation and bullying. After nine months of sporadic violence during the campaign (mainly between different Partai Aceh-affiliated groups), the election itself was peaceful and turnout was high.

Partai Aceh members' undemocratic behaviour has not been confined to election campaigns, but has continued while they hold office. Two aspects of the Helsinki accords and LoGA – the provisions that enable former GAM supporters to dominate Aceh politically, and the 'economic integration' measures that have significantly increased regional government budgets⁹ – create a unique situation of rent-seeking and illicit fund-raising opportunities for former rebel leaders. Aspinall (2009, 2014) describes this dynamic as a 'predatory peace'. Rent-seeking takes a variety of forms, ranging from direct grants called 'Working' or 'aspiration' funds (*dana kerja*,

dana aspirasi) distributed to members of the executive and legislative branches to support small-scale community development and infrastructure programs in the politicians' home constituencies, to a variety of other opportunities for office-holders to use their political authority to extract resources from different sectors of the economy. Initially this involved obtaining construction projects, but more recently has broadened to include mining operations, land deals, plantations, and the issuing of licenses for all manner of business activities. This sort of activity takes place at all levels of government, from the province right down to the subdistrict (*kecamatan*) and *Gampong*. The enrichment of former GAM commanders has become a popular topic of cynical conversation throughout the province.

In the most recent legislative elections in April 2014, Aceh's voters handed Partai Aceh a strong message of disapproval. The party still came out on top, but with significantly reduced proportions. In the provincial legislature, Partai Aceh's plurality dropped from 48 per cent (33 out of 69 seats) to just under 36 per cent (29 of 81 seats¹⁰). Their margins in district head and mayoral elections similarly declined, losing ground in several of their traditional strongholds, while paradoxically performing better in some of the areas where GAM did not enjoy much support during the conflict years. This drop is particularly striking given the party's control over the electoral machinery and widespread allegations of fraud in the counting process.

Village Government in Aceh

Numerous reports and studies point to the crucial role of *Gampong* government in the lives of rural Acehese (e.g., KDP 2006; MSR 2010; Thorburn 2007, 2009, 2010; Mahdi 2012). Whilst this is true of rural societies throughout Indonesia, it is particularly crucial in modern-day Aceh. Thirty years of armed conflict severely impacted rural communities in the province.

⁸ In accordance with the LoGA, Partai Aceh is not allowed to field candidates for national office. In the 2009 election Partai Aceh partnered with Partai Demokrat, which won a majority of Aceh's seats in the national parliament.

⁹ The 'economic integration' provisions of the 2006 LoGA including providing Aceh a far greater share of natural resource (especially oil and gas) revenue than that received by other oil and gas-producing provinces (although Aceh's oil and gas reserves, and therefore revenues, have been in decline since the mid-2000s and are projected to be depleted in a few more years), as well as a massive 'Special Autonomy Fund' (*Dana Otsus*) totalling approximately Rp 78.6 trillion (US\$7.9 billion) over 20 years beginning in 2008. This amount exceeds the total financial losses caused by 32 years of conflict in the province (MSR 2010).

¹⁰ The expansion of the Aceh provincial parliament from 69 to 81 seats accords with population growth; Aceh's population now exceeds 5 million.

Throughout the conflict, government effectively ceased to function in many parts of the province; *Gampong* communities were left to their own devices to resolve problems and see to members' needs (MSR 2010).

A major study on the effectiveness of post-conflict assistance in Aceh (MSR 2010) concluded that while social cohesion is strong within Acehnese *Gampong*, capacity for collective action is relatively weak. This is largely the result of the deleterious effects of 30 years of armed conflict. As well, rural *Gampong* in most parts of Aceh tend to be very small, often comprising just a few dozen households.¹¹ In the tsunami impact zone, capacity was further weakened by the loss of many key community elders and *Gampong* government leaders.¹² Damage to the social structure of tsunami-affected Acehnese communities was no less severe than the destruction to the physical infrastructure (Thorburn 2007).

As the smallest territorial and social unit in Aceh, the *Gampong* is the repository, arena and medium of the social life and robust social capital that underpins Aceh society, and the remarkable resilience that the Acehnese have demonstrated in the face of violent repression and natural disaster. The role and influence of a few key leaders is critical to understanding the operation of *Gampong* government and effectiveness of *Gampong* institutions. Village Heads in Aceh are called *Geucik*, or *Keucik*. *Geucik* have traditionally shared equal authority and responsibility with the *Teungku Imuem Meunasah* (leader of the village mosque). While that latter is responsible solely for religious affairs, their ranks were equal. Indeed, the village mosque or *Meunasah* has traditionally served as the centre for *Gampong* government.



Bridge abutment marking where *Gampong* Puree used to stand. Painted with the Partai Aceh flag during the 2014 election campaign.

Many popular media and donor descriptions present an image of the *Geucik* as the wise and trusted cornerstone of Acehnese village society. According to Acehnese scholar Syafii Ibrahim (2006), authority in Aceh derives from a variety of sources, including

- *Kesaktian*: supernatural and spiritual powers;
- *Keturunan*: heredity;
- *Ilmu*: knowledge;

and a combination of personal characteristics including

- *Adil dan jujur*: wise and just;
- *Berani dan tegas*: courageous and decisive;
- *Dermawan*: generous; and
- *Ramah tamah*: kind and hospitable.

The *Geucik* and *Teungku Imuem* have long been considered the embodiment of these attributes at the community level in Acehnese society.

Whilst popular imaginations envision a *Geucik* as protecting and upholding the interests of his community, historically, *Geucik* have acted as the agents of higher authorities (originally *Datuk* and *Uleebalang*,¹³ and more recently, district and national government). The office of *Geucik* has undergone numerous transformations over the past several decades. The most disruptive of these was under Law No. 5/1979 on Village Government, which imposed a standard structure for village government across all of Indonesia. Law No. 5 strengthened the authority of the Village Head vis-à-vis any other traditional authorities and structures, while at the same time making the Village Head entirely beholden to district (and, by extension, national) government authorities. 'Village administrations became for all practical purposes miniature replicas of the central government, enforcing decrees and policies determined from above' (Antlöv 2003: 196).

¹¹ For example, the average population of the 18 ACARP *Gampong* in 2007 was 637 people, or approximately 125 households. Remove the three largest peri-urban *Gampong* with populations of over 1,500, and the average size drops to just 400 people.

National law states that the minimum population to form a legal village (in Sumatra; there are different standards for different regions in Indonesia) is 6,000 people, or 800 households.

¹² Of the 18 *Gampong* included in the ACARP study, only five came through the tsunami with all key members of their *Gampong* government intact. Seven lost their *Geucik* and another six lost at least one other key member of the *Gampong* government.

¹³ *Datuk* is a traditional Malay title for clan leaders. *Uleebalang* is an Acehnese term for local chieftain, or commander, dating back to the time of early Sultanates, that was retained through the colonial era.

Historically, *Geucik*'s decision-making power was moderated by a permanent council of elders known as the *Tuhapeut*. The *Tuhapeut* was independent of the *Geucik*, and functioned as the primary deliberative body in the village, which would make decisions then hand them over to the *Geucik* for consideration. The *Geucik* did not have power to change the membership of the *Tuhapeut*, who served as the *Geucik*'s counterpart in conducting administration. As Husin and Alvisyahrin (2014) explain, the name *Tuhapeut* embodies the qualities of '*tuha*' (the Respected):

- *Tuha*: old and wise;
- *Tuho*: knowledgeable and well-versed in village history and custom;
- *Teupeu*: well-educated and knowledgeable; and
- *Teupat*: honest, trustworthy, reliable and sincere.

The role of the *Tuhapeut* and their relationship with the *Geucik* was also undone by the 1979 village government law, when all villages were required to establish Village Consultative Assemblies (LMD) and Village Community Resilience Boards (LKMD). There was no separation of powers between the Village Head and the LMD/LKMD, as the Village Head was *ex officio* the chair of both these bodies and also appointed their members. Although the men appointed to positions of Village Head and LMD and LKMD were often the same individuals who would have served in the traditional offices of *Geucik* and *Tuhapeut*, their relationships – both with the state apparatus and internally within the *Gampong* government structure – were fundamentally altered. The 1979 law also saw the important offices of *Teungku Imuem Meunasah* and *Imeum Mukim* in Aceh reduced to largely symbolic roles.¹⁴

During the conflict years, *Geucik* often found themselves to be targets of suspicion and intimidation by both Indonesian military and police and GAM forces. Precise figures of the number of *Geucik* killed or injured during the conflict are not available. Many *Geucik* resigned, and many more sought refuge in towns and cities (including one sub-district centre in this study).¹⁵ Under these conditions, it is easy to understand why individuals possessing the attributes described by Ibrahim above would probably choose not to hold the office of *Geucik*.¹⁶

In the *Reformasi* period following the resignation of President Suharto in 1998, the repressive 1979 Village Government Law was repealed, replaced by paragraphs 93 to 111 of Law No. 22/1999 on Regional Government (later replaced by Law No. 32/2004). The definition of 'village' was changed from a territorial entity to a legal community; the 'rubber stamp' LMD and LKMD were replaced by an elected Village Representative Board (BPD) with far-reaching rights and autonomy, plus

other institutions that the village or district sees fit to establish; and villagers now have the right to draft their own regulations, and to reject governmental programs not accompanied by funds, personnel or infrastructure. Numerous other substantial and semantic changes further cemented the renewed autonomy of village communities. Also, villages were no longer required to be called '*Desa*', but could revert to customary local nomenclature. Across Indonesia, provincial and district governments initiated the process of attempting to restore pre-1979 forms of village government. Aceh passed its *Qanun*¹⁷ no 5 on *Gampong* Governance in 2003 (i.e., before the tsunami, Helsinki Accords or Law on Governing Aceh). It largely mirrored the language of the 1999 national law,¹⁸ and any changes initiated in *Gampong* government at that time were largely semantic. It is only during the years since the LoGA came into effect that serious attempts have gotten underway to resurrect *Gampong* government in accordance with local custom and aspirations. The most fundamental reforms have been the initiation of direct elections for the office of *Geucik*, which began in earnest in 2007 and in many areas is now completing its second round; and the reinvigoration of the *Tuhapeut* along with other customary village functionaries – supported by *Qanun* No. 10/2008 on Customary Institutions.

¹⁴ *Imeum Mukim* is a mosque-based functionary overseeing several *Gampong*, responsible for customary [*adat*] law matters including land allocation and inheritance, conflict resolution and implementation of *Syar'iyah* law.

¹⁵ In one well-known incident that took place during the height of the conflict, 76 *Geucik* from the district of Bireuen resigned *en masse*, stating that they were incapable of protecting themselves or their communities, much less carrying out the duties of governing the village (Sinar Harapan 2003).

¹⁶ Many people in Aceh would claim that community leaders possessing the qualities required of a *Geucik* (*adil dan jujur, berani dan tegas*) took up arms and joined the resistance.

¹⁷ *Qanun* is an Arabic term meaning 'canon' or 'law', used in Aceh since the (pre-LoGA) regional autonomy bill of 2001 for provincial, district and (later) village laws and regulations.

¹⁸ According to *Qanun* No. 5/2003, the duties of the *Gampong* government are to:

1. Conduct government affairs;
2. Execute development programs;
3. Develop the community; and
4. Implement *Syar'iyah* law.

Significant financial resources have been made available to *Gampong* governments and communities, through village administration block grants from district budgets (*Gampong* Allocation Funds, or ADG), competitive village community development block grants from the National Program for Community Empowerment (PNPM Mandiri), and provincial *Gampong* Prosperity Assistance Grants (BKPG). In addition, *Gampong* are allowed to establish enterprises and raise their own revenue.

As a result, *Gampong* governments – which had been starved for resources throughout the conflict period – suddenly find themselves awash in government funds. These funding amounts stand to increase significantly with the imminent implementation of Indonesia's new Village Law No. 6/2014, which prescribes much greater budget transfers to villages. There is considerable concern in Aceh about the capacity of *Gampong* governments to effectively manage and utilise these funds. As well, some local scholars express concern that the increasing monetisation of *Gampong* administration and governance is further undermining the social and spiritual foundations of this important institution (e.g., Mahmuddin et al. 2014).

In many ways, this resembles concerns that came to the fore during the heyday of the tsunami recovery, when huge amounts of government and donor funds began flowing to villages to support the recovery and reconstruction efforts. At that time, there were hundreds of national and international organisations providing technical and management support, employing thousands of professional staff. Nonetheless, the collective capacity of *Gampong* communities and governments to effectively participate in recovery and reconstruction projects represented a major concern and constraint. Throughout the recovery and reconstruction period, there was considerable emphasis placed on – and considerable resources and energy devoted to – strengthening social capital and community capacity as key ingredients for successful recovery and development programs (Thorburn 2007, 2010; MSR 2010; McCarthy 2013, 2014). The current status and efficacy of *Gampong* government and society's capacity to meet community members' needs, provide needed services, equitably and efficiently manage resources, and adapt to situations, constraints and opportunities, is a primary focus of this research project.

The Acehese *Gampong* Ten Years On: The State of Acehese Villages Post-Post-Tsunami

As stated in the introduction of this report, much of Aceh is virtually unrecognisable compared to the situation ten years ago. The busy, excellent, roads, new buildings, teeming markets and modern conveniences provide immediate visual cues to the scope of the transformation. But the transformation extends to less immediately visible aspects as well. People are free to move about and to pursue economic and social activities. Government services are available, and people are using them. Life in Aceh is taking on a *normalcy* that stands in sharp contrast to the province's turbulent and often tragic history.



Fisherman of Puree with their catch

Normalisasi

One of the stand-out findings of the ACARP II village study is a general levelling of survey results across the 15 villages surveyed. Across a variety of parameters, the original ACARP villages demonstrated considerable heterogeneity, with a spectrum of answers from excellent to poor, high to low, agree to disagree. Today, similar questions in the same villages elicit quite uniform answers (with one or two notable 'outliers'). To a considerable extent, this reflects the changed situation in Aceh between 2007 at the height of the tsunami recovery and reconstruction period, and today. When the first ACARP study was undertaken, *Gampong* government – like everything else in Aceh, was in the midst of the chaotic process of being reconstructed after decades of neglect and the destruction wrought by the conflict and tsunami. Today, this process is largely complete. Asked whether the *Geucik* and *Tuhapeut* carried out their duties and functions properly, 96 and 98 percent, respectively, of respondents in the 15 survey villages gave a positive answer. In only one village that had only recently voted out an unpopular *Geucik* who had been in office since the height of the New

Order period (only to replace him with his son!) did fewer than 80 per cent of respondents answer 'yes' to these two questions.

Similarly, respondents expressed a generally high level of satisfaction with the service they receive from *Gampong* government (mean = 96 per cent, with only two *Gampong* returning favourable ratings below 80 per cent).¹⁹ A preponderance of qualitative data from focus group discussions and key informant interviews, however, tended to confute this remarkably high approval rating; many informants expressed frustration over issues such as domination (or *elite capture*) of decision-making and resource allocation in their *Gampong*; lack of transparency and accountability; inefficiency and/or ineffectiveness; or their leaders' inability to secure resources or support from higher levels of government to realise community aspirations or plans. The mismatch between the survey data and the opinions expressed in group discussions and individual interviews appear to indicate a level of acquiescence of business as usual; i.e., 'this is the way things are and we accept it'. Whereas the more contentious opinions expressed in discussions and interviews reflect the deepening sense of freedom and security we encountered in Acehese villages as the peace lengthens and deepens, combined with the time-honoured Acehese [male] tradition of complaining and criticising, influenced as well by fading memories of the exuberant and messy participatory ethos of the post-tsunami reconstruction period.

A signal aspect of this *normalisation* process is an apparent ceding of decision-making and resource allocation responsibility to core *Gampong* government leaders. This differs significantly from the situation in the same villages seven years prior, when these processes appeared much more inclusive and participatory. Perceived frequency of village meetings has declined, from more than once per month in 2007 to roughly bimonthly in 2014. Less than half of respondents – 43 per cent – answered that they participate actively in *Gampong* development planning. Granted, there was more at stake for individual households during the tsunami reconstruction period; community members would often attend meetings with the expectation of receiving some new aid package. As well, participation was an important hallmark of the social capital aid delivery modalities that dominated the recovery effort (McCarthy 2013).

Today, the structures and rhythms of *Gampong* governance have assumed a much more staid and stately aura. Aceh is becoming accustomed to a new regime of 'business as usual' that is actually highly *unusual* in the region's turbulent history.

Not all communities or local leaders are wholly pleased with this transformation. Many expressed a longing for a return to the heady days of the post-tsunami recovery and reconstruction aid era.



Cattle from a livelihood aid program in the relocation *gampong* of Cot Meukuta.

¹⁹ Significantly, these approval ratings were significantly higher than the responses to similar questions about villagers' perceptions of Kecamatan (subdistrict) or Kabupaten (district) governments: 85 and 47 per cent, respectively.



Donor nostalgia in Darussalam²⁰

Darussalam, a rather large (population 2,120) village located on the outskirts of Banda Aceh, became one of the most lauded case studies of tsunami recovery during the heyday of the reconstruction period. Prior to the tsunami, Darussalam was known as a somewhat dissolute and slightly dangerous neighbourhood, with high rates of crime and gambling, and a conduit for GAM fighters slipping in and out of the city.

This all changed in the months and years following the tsunami, largely due to the creativity and dedication of a cadre of young student activists who first helped organise food and shelter for surviving community members who gathered on the nearby university campus, and then led the clean-up of their village, before aid workers or programs started turning up. They became LOGICA cadre, and after a time accepted the community's invitation to form a new *Gampong* government. Darussalam became a hub of creativity, sound planning, active community engagement, and exemplary management. It featured as a regular stop on the 'recovery tours' of visiting dignitaries, academics and officials.

Today, sources in Darussalam express a great nostalgia for the heyday of the recovery and reconstruction period. They revelled in the fast-based, merit-based world of donor and NGO program planning and management. By comparison, they find district government agencies remote, rigid, and obstructionist, and that Special Autonomy funding allocation is dominated by 'politics'. Former cadre are frequently paid to participate in training programs in other parts of the province, but complain that a lack of support for their continuing plans and projects in Darussalam has led to a loss of momentum and enthusiasm.

The only [positive] change we've seen since the implementation of the LoGA is that now the *Teungku Imeum Meunasah* receives a salary from the government.²¹

The young *Geucik* who became the figurehead of Darussalam's transformation chose not to stand again after his first term. After an unsuccessful attempt to run in the 2012 *Bupati* election, he has moved to another district in the interior. The new *Geucik*, elected in 2013, lacks the dynamism and charisma of his predecessor.

Darussalam remains a very successful village, and an example of good *Gampong* governance. Their many achievements continue to bear fruit: the Darussalam women's cooperative now manages a savings a loan fund

²⁰ All *Gampong* names in this report are pseudonyms, the same names used in the original ACARP report.

²¹ Women's FGD participant, Darussalam

in excess of Rp 200 million; the *Gampong* cattle cooperative has amassed a herd of over 100 head; a variety of village-owned enterprises including wedding and party supply rentals, a purified drinking water depot that provide both services to residents as well as revenue for the *Gampong* government; the well-designed *Gampong* educational precinct hosts a variety of routine and occasional activities; and *Gampong* institutions perform their functions openly and efficiently. When relating this, however, most sources qualified their remarks with the observation that ‘we weren’t finished yet’, and a nostalgic longing for ‘the good old days’ when donors and NGOs, rather than bureaucrats, were their partners in development.

Darussalam is not alone in this sentiment. The *Geucik* of a successfully recovering *Gampong* in Aceh Jaya welcomed our team with the following testimonial:

I tell people this is an international *Gampong*. It has, after all, been built with the assistance of our friends from overseas. You see the highway over there, it was built by the Americans. Our houses were built with money and help from Canada. The Australians helped us stock our fish ponds and teach us how to use them. Korea gave us tractors for our rice fields, and Japan dug us wells for water. You see, this is a village built by international assistance. But what has the country of Indonesia built for us? Do you think the *Kabupaten* responds to our requests for assistance, requests that come from our village development plan, using their methods? We might be better off asking more help from our international friends. We are, after all, an international *Gampong*!²²

There is no doubt that most people in Aceh are experiencing a period of peace, stability and sufficiency scarcely imaginable a few short years ago. In our survey villages, however, there was an oft-expressed sentiment that ‘we could be doing it better’...

Capacity Building and Resident Capabilities

An important subtext of the ‘Build Back Better’ catchphrase that became the guiding principal and enduring promise of tsunami recovery and reconstruction assistance in Aceh was an emphasis on engendering, enabling, mobilising and engaging community-based collective action to address critical livelihood needs. The rhetoric of community-led recovery and development accords with DRR orthodoxy that long-term recovery depends on developing and supporting the capacity and skills for collective action within the affected communities. Donors, NGOs and government agencies initiated a variety of skills and capacity training programs for village cadre, educators and formal and non-formal leaders, across an array of sectors and topics ranging from project

planning and management, village administration, financial accounting, disaster mitigation, public speaking and group facilitation, primary health care, pre- and post-natal health, water and sanitation, environmental conservation and development, gender equity and empowerment, human rights, and property and inheritance law, to name some of the more common skills training initiatives.

While these training and skills development programs were intended to enable communities to collectively identify needs and problems and plot appropriate courses of action, the ultimate locus of these inputs were individual villagers. Due to the magnitude of the disaster and recovery effort, many of these training programs were delivered hastily, with a minimum of preparatory groundwork or follow-up support. Obviously, those skills training inputs that were linked to other forms of support offered greater incentives to recipients, and stood the greatest chance of delivering outcomes – both in terms of improved service delivery of associated programs and projects, and the incubation of capabilities within the community that will continue to provide benefits into the future.

A longer-term strategy is the recruitment, skilling-up and continued or periodic support for village cadre. A variety of specialist skills were imparted to village cadre by different agencies. These were often, but not always, young people with fewer family burdens. Identifying and enabling a core of village cadre who could liaise with other donors and programs was an integral component of the LOGICA approach in hundreds of villages within its catchment area. Many of these individuals continue to play important roles in their communities ten years on. Some former village cadre – especially those with skills in development planning and project management – now hold key supportive roles in *Gampong* government. Others are content to act as informal civic leaders, ready to lead or support community initiatives when the need or opportunity arises. The following case studies provide examples of skills and cadre training experiences that have paid off, by continuing to deliver services and mobilise community initiatives.

²² Interview, Pak RN, *Geucik* of Pasi Keudo



Kader *Gampong* in Pasi Keudo Getting it right

The central coastline of Aceh Jaya sustained some of the heaviest damage and highest casualty rates in the tsunami. The villages of Pasi Keudo and neighbouring Puree were totally destroyed, losing much of their productive delta land to the sea. It was months before vehicle access was restored, along a muddy temporary road bypassing the newly formed lagoon that used to be their villages.

It took over a year to determine a new settlement site for Pasi Keudo, and by the time residents were settled into temporary housing, the *Gampong* had missed out on several infrastructure projects, as donors and NGOs chased project deadlines and delivery schedules. This included a village office or *meunasah* from LOGICA; by the time housing and basic infrastructure construction could begin at Pasi Keudo's new permanent location, the budget for this key component of the LOGICA 'package' had already been allocated. They were promised similar facilities by BRR, but this did not eventuate before that agency handed over its assets and responsibilities to local governments in Aceh.

Other LOGICA programs, including a village facilitator, village government administration training, village development cadre training, community mapping, spatial and village development planning, and a small-scale infrastructure grant, proceeded apace, though Pasi Keudo struggled for the first years of the recovery and reconstruction. Pasi Keudo had four different Geucik during the first three years after the tsunami.

Today, Pasi Keudo presents quite a different picture. It is one of the more orderly and well-presented *Gampong* on that section of the coast. PNPM and BKPG block grant funds have been used for a variety of small-scale public works projects, and there is a sense of civic pride in the well-tended lanes and houses. Attempting to identify what it is that sets this *Gampong* apart from its neighbours, it appears that the best explanation is a matter of 'the right people in the right job'. Two former LOGICA village cadre hold key positions within the *Gampong* government, and play important roles in guiding and supporting their community's continuing recovery. One, who has served as Village Secretary since the early post-tsunami period, lends stability, continuity and coherence to *Gampong* development plans and activities in his village.

I was fortunate to be nominated by my village for the role of *Sekertaris*. I was young, having just finished high school, and had no previous experience in government. Most adults in our *Gampong* were too stressed, and preoccupied with earning a living and looking after their family. I was single at the time, and able to dedicate my time and energy to helping my community. The training that I received from LOGICA helped me understand the basics of *Gampong* government, and the role of *Sekertaris*. The original *Gampong* development plan we prepared with LOGICA's help and guidance; this is the model we still use to prepare and revise our RPJM Mid-Term *Gampong* Development Plans.²³

²³ Interview, Pak II, *Sekdes* Pasi Keudo

RPJM documents are the template for local and regional government support for village development. Pasi Keudo has been quite successful in securing support for a variety of infrastructure and economic development projects, based on the quality and detail of the RPJM documents – along with successful lobbying by *Gampong* leaders with district government.

The second former LOGICA cadre still serving in Pasi Keudo's government is the Section Head for *Gampong* Development (*Kaur Pembangunan*). He plays a very active role in coordinating and overseeing the implementation of development projects, including PNPM and BKPG block grant-funded infrastructure – all in accordance with the RPJM plans. As *Kaur Pembangunan*, he works closely with a group of local construction workers who also gained on-the-job experience during the reconstruction era. They routinely participate in *gotong-royong* housing repairs and rehabilitation in the *Gampong*, bringing some of the hastily-constructed contractor-built housing up to a uniformly higher standard.

The skills and resources to undertake this sort of initiative are available in most post-tsunami *Gampong*. It requires good leadership to realise it, however.

Not all former cadre end up in positions within formal *Gampong* government structures. This is particularly true of female cadre (see gender section below). Many of them do, however, still make use of the skills and capabilities they gained during their association with recovery and reconstruction programs, and perform vital services in their communities. This includes a number of institutionalised roles – some remunerated, others not – in the village, such

as *Posyandu* or *Polindes* family planning and maternal health care providers, KPMD Village Development Cadre, and PAUD pre-school teachers and volunteers. Others might forego an ongoing role, but can be mobilised when the need arises, to lend technical, managerial or leadership skills to particular *Gampong* development initiatives, such as PNPM or BKPG infrastructure projects, community self-help activities, or different events of the religious calendar.



Women Cadre of Puree

The *Gampong* of Puree shares many characteristics with neighbouring Pasi Keudo. This village also lost much of its land area in the tsunami, and was forced to shift to a new location on the shore of the lagoon overlooking the watery grave of their former *Gampong*. A bridge abutment jutting out of the surf 100 metres offshore provides an eerie reminder of the terrible power of the tsunami. Like Pasi Keudo, they also lost precious time before a suitable

new site could be arranged, missing out on some of the early infrastructure components of LOGICA and other donor programs. Puree was among the final villages in Aceh Jaya to receive permanent housing. Most recovery-era livelihood and economic development assistance was expended on consumer items; nobody had secure workplaces or facilities that would allow them to pursue productive activities.

LOGICA and other programs recruited and trained a number village cadre, who worked with a dynamic LOGICA village facilitator to prepare detailed *Gampong* development plans, components of which have subsequently been realised with assistance from various sources.

Puree has now settled into the comfortable rhythms of post-recovery life. There is not as much rice land as they once controlled; many households are now planting oil palm in the adjacent hills. Others have become full-time fishermen, plying the lagoon where their village used to stand. Another difference between Puree now and before the tsunami, is the number of young women who play active roles in *Gampong* life. Four young former LOGICA cadre all provide valuable services, using technical and leadership skills they gained as cadre when the entire village still lived in temporary barracks.

Currently, two these young women serve in the role of bookkeeper for PNPM and BKPG projects in Puree, also the water supply committee. Puree's *Polindes* and *Posyandu* units are exemplary. More impressive still is the lively PAUD preschool one of these former cadre established in a disused building. The building, a Youth Centre provided by an NGO during the reconstruction years, had fallen into disrepair. In 2010, they put their case to the *Gampong* government that a portion of that year's PNPM block grant funds should be allocated to refurbishing the building, which now serves as a popular and lively early education venue.

This was not a priority of the government, but it was for us. The building had been 'dropped' during the tsunami recon – and nobody used it. What a pity. Now we use it every day. The children can learn, and their parents can work. It is good for the community.²⁴

One former cadre manages the pre-school, including training young volunteers who serve as teachers and play supervisors.

Many village cadre were young and single when first recruited, but not all. Sometimes, already established community leaders were singled out for skills upgrading. This included the village government administration skills training packages provided by LOGICA and a few

other international organisations, also workshops and short courses in basic accounting, project planning and management, proposal writing, monitoring, evaluation and reporting, and contract management.

²⁴ Interview, Nyak D, former LOGICA cadre and PAUD coordinator, Puree.



Bridging *adat* with development: A modern-day *Tuhapeut*

Lhok Leuhu lost nearly half its population in the tsunami, including a number of key community and *Gampong* government leaders. One leader who did survive, however, was Pak Bahrudin,²⁵ who was swept several kilometres inland but was miraculously unhurt. Not long before the tsunami struck, Bahrudin had been appointed as the youngest member of the Lhok Leuhu *Tuhapeut*. The elderly *Geucik* also survived, but took a new wife and moved to her village. As the survivors regrouped and set about the task of re-establishing their village, Pak Bahrudin was thrust into a leadership role.

The initial recovery in Lhok Leuhu was quite slow. Located about midway between Banda Aceh and Meulaboh, this section of the Aceh Jaya coast was among the most difficult areas to access by motor vehicle for the first years of the recovery period. It was more than a year before residents were able to move from tents into temporary housing.

One of Lhok Leuhu's three *dusun* was rendered uninhabitable and had to be relocated. Residents of this *dusun* had migrated to the west coast three or four decades prior, fleeing the conflict that was becoming heated in Aceh's northern districts. In this small, tight-knit community, these people were still viewed as 'outsiders', complicating the search for new land for them to relocate their settlement. As senior surviving member of *Lhok Leuhu's Tuhapeut*, Pak Bahrudin found himself at the centre of these complex negotiations, and, when housing and infrastructure projects finally began to get underway, liaising between the community and the provider organisations – who he found were not particularly interested in Lhok Leuhu's history or internal politics. They just wanted to know where to build things.

Pak Bahrudin was one of six Lhok Leuhu villagers recruited and trained as LOGICA village cadre. He excelled in this role, and became the first point of contact between the community and external supporting agencies, a role he still maintains to the current day. The village government administration and project management skills that he received from LOGICA and other donor programs have served Pak Bahrudin and his community well. He continues to deploy the project planning and management skills honed while coordinating the LOGICA Community Infrastructure Grants Scheme (CIGS) project in 2007, to assist his community to make effective use of PNPM, KKPG and other government funds. Looking back, however, Pak Bahrudin believes it is the basic facilitation, public speaking, conflict resolution and leadership skills he gained that stand out as the most important legacy of his affiliation with LOGICA.

My role as a community leader happened by itself. I was fortunate to survive the tsunami, along with my wife. Our community was in disarray, there was much conflict and confusion, and nobody to lead. I have never sought any political position, like becoming *Geucik*, but I can use *adat* to help solve problems, and to seek solutions. I have had the chance to work with many different projects and people. We are better at making plans and decisions now.

²⁵ Not his real name.

In over half the villages surveyed, former LOGICA cadre now hold formal positions in their respective *Gampong* government – most often as Section Head (*Kaur*) of *Gampong* Development, *Gampong* Youth Coordinator (*Ketua Pemuda*) or as Dusun Heads, also Village Secretary (*Sekdes*). Many more former cadre serve in informal leadership positions within the community. In the three best-performing of the survey villages (Darussalam, Pasi Keudo and Suak Manyam) the Village Secretary is a former LOGICA cadre. In two of these *Gampong*, a former LOGICA cadre has previously served, or is currently serving, as *Geucik*.

Governance and Enabling Environment

More than just rebuilding what the tsunami destroyed, the *Build Back Better* credo of the tsunami recovery and reconstruction effort promised that the vast amounts of technical and financial aid flowing to the affected areas would be used to leave communities better, fairer, stronger and more peaceful than they had been before the disaster struck (Fan 2013). Translated into action, *Build Back Better* includes a concerted effort to establish, enable and engage local institutions and capacities for collective action.

As discussed in the preceding section, a preponderance of capacity-building inputs and activities were directed at individuals, as part of a broader mission of establishing a new institutional framework of governance. Other programs, such as AIPRD LOGICA's *Gampong* administration skills training and subdistrict (*Kecamatan*) service delivery strengthening programs, USAID's Aceh Government Transformation (AGTP) program or the EU/GTZ Aceh Local Governance Programmes (ALGP I&II), were all aimed at institutional capacity building for improving governance and service delivery. Together with the community-level capacity building inputs discussed above, institutional strengthening and capacity building programs undertaken at different tiers of local and regional government were intended to create a new 'enabling environment' that would empower tsunami and conflict-affected communities across Aceh to work together toward achieving the sort of society that they desire and deserve.

Implicit in this vision of 'Active Communities and Responsive Governments'²⁶ is the notion that communities in Aceh had been prevented in the past – through misguided government policies, violent conflict, oppression, limited education, poor access to markets, etc. – from fulfilling their aspirations and achieving

satisfactory social, political and productive lives. The term, and the philosophy and approach it describes, encapsulates a patchwork of popular development themes, ranging from 'democratic decentralisation' to 'civil society', 'social capital', 'good governance' and 'social development'. Li (2003: 2) notes how World Bank strategists viewed the tsunami recovery and reconstruction process as an opportunity to 'take advantage of vacuums in state capacity' to 'instil new practices' and 'redefine social and institutional relationships'.

By the time the tsunami struck, the World Bank's Kecamatan Development Program (KDP, later replaced by the PNPM Mandiri National Program for Self Reliant Community Empowerment), had already grown to be the major vehicle for the delivery of financial and technical aid to communities across Indonesia. Once the initial clean-up and emergency temporary shelter phases of the tsunami recovery effort had been completed and the recovery process shifted into the rebuilding phase, because the Bank program represented a successful model, and already had institutions and trained personnel in place, KDP/PNPM became a primary modality for aid delivery not just by the Bank, but by most bilateral aid programs as well. This model carries with it a particular governmental strategy described by Li as 'government through community' – embodying a vision of 'self-managing communities' as 'the backbone of an invigorated civil society that would exemplify good governance in autonomous local institutions and practices'.

²⁶ 'Active Communities and Responsive Governments' became the slogan of the AIPRD LOGICA project, and later LOGICA2.



Intended to foster new habits of entrepreneurship and responsibility, choice and negotiation, the KDP/PNPM block grant approach combines a neoliberal emphasis on competition with concepts of participation and empowerment promoted by NGOs. Trained facilitators and technical advisers worked with newly minted village cadre and committees to prepare plans and proposals that would then be pitted against similar efforts from other communities to determine which projects would be supported.

This approach produced some excellent results in communities fortunate enough to have young and energetic talent who could adapt to this new way of doing the business of government. The 2007 ACARP research identified numerous examples where the successful completion of a PNPM or LOGICA Community Infrastructure Grants Scheme (CIGS) small-scale village project was held up by communities as their proudest

achievement post-tsunami, and a beacon of hope of a brighter, more capable and prosperous future.

PNPM and the similarly structured provincial *Gampong* Prosperity Assistance Grants (BKPG) program continue to function as major conduits for material and technical assistance to communities in Aceh. In some of the villages covered in this study, the structures, systems and capabilities developed during the reconstruction era are clearly in evidence, as communities make effective use of these resources to overcome problems and build a brighter future.



Suak Manyam: The long road home

The coastal highway through the Arongan Lambalek subdistrict in Aceh Barat, and most of the settlements along it, were lost in the tsunami. Some communities were able to shift inland within the bounds of their original *Gampong*, while others, like Suak Manyam, were forced to relocate entirely.

After nearly two years living in temporary barracks, the surviving villagers of Suak Manyam (slightly less than half of the pre-tsunami population of 606) were resettled to a 14-hectare site on government land several kilometres upriver from their original location. New houses were constructed in 2008-09 (four years after the tsunami) by the BRR. As with many other relocation villages, little else was provided.

People in Suak Manyam told us that one thing that the tsunami did not take away, was their cohesion and solidarity. They foundered at first under a tired and dispirited *Geucik* – who requested to be replaced after the tsunami but nobody stepped forward. Finally in 2007, nearly three years after the tsunami (and while residents were still living in temporary barracks in a neighbouring village), the youthful Section Head for Development (*Kaur Pembangunan*) was nominated and elected to be the new *Geucik*. Having participated in a number of LOGICA

village administration and development planning and management training courses, the new *Geucik* set about reformulating and re-energising *Gampong* government. He was accompanied in this role by the LOGICA Village Facilitator, who had accepted the position of Village Secretary (*SekDes*, a role he still serves today). The new *Gampong* government included two former GAM combatants as well.

Similar to other relocation villages, Suak Manyam residents faced difficulties once they were finally resettled in their new location and could finally turn their attention and energy to resuming productive activities. They were too far from the sea for fishing, and the deep peat land on which their new settlement was constructed was ill-suited for agriculture (also, it was only 14 hectares, divided between over 100 households). What they needed, they decided, was a road providing access to their former village land and rubber groves. Travelling via the government-build access road to the coastal highway was too far, and passed through other communities' land. A more direct route would cut hours off a return trip, with the added advantage of opening access to unutilised land within the boundaries of their former *Gampong*, which could be planted in rubber or oil palm. In 2010, a plan was devised and approved, and the entire *Gampong* set to work. Combining all funds received from PNPM and BKPG for three years, the community worked tirelessly to complete the new road. Today, the 15 kilometre journey has been shortened to less than six kilometres, and villagers are at work rehabilitating salvageable rice paddies (more than half the rice paddy land of their former village is now submerged under the sea) and planning construction of a boat and fish-landing facility, which they hope to fund with future block grant support.

Some communities found it difficult to adapt to these novel processes, and results were often less than satisfactory. Nonetheless, the experiences of some communities show that the capabilities and structures established for collective community action during the

recovery and reconstruction period did not simply fade away once the official recovery period concluded, but that they continue to endure and evolve until the communities themselves reached a stage in their recovery wherein they are now (or again, rather) capable of collective action.



Communal rice paddy rehabilitation in Jabeuet Third time the charm?

The *Gampong* of Jabeuet nearly ceased to exist after the tsunami. Nearly two thirds of the pre-tsunami population of 440 perished in the tsunami, and large portions of the low-lying island on which the village sat were scoured away by the receding waves. Jabeuet was the original settlement in a fertile delta located on the central coast of Aceh Jaya, and the original seat of subdistrict government there. In more recent years, it had been eclipsed in both size and prosperity by neighbouring *Gampong*, all of which had been formed by families moving out of Jabeuet to settle on adjacent delta land. During the 1990s, the subdistrict seat was shifted to a neighbouring village. Many of these newer *Gampong* benefited from easier access to the coastal trunk road (which was entirely washed away in the tsunami).

After the tsunami, surviving residents of Jabeuet sought refuge neighbouring Lhok Leuhu (a former *dusun* of Jabeuet), and most people thought that the old original *Gampong* would simply disappear. A former *Geucik*, however, felt strongly that the historical homeland of the region should be revived, and rowed out to the sodden island and began single-handedly to clear some residential land that remained above the waterline. Over time he was joined by other survivors, until eventually the population reached 175.

For the first few years, Jabeuet villagers lived mostly on subsidised food allocations, cash-for-work and day wages from construction projects – and by selling off the various tools, equipment and supplies that flowed into the *Gampong* from the cornucopia of livelihood programs of the recovery and reconstruction era.

'Given seed, we ate the seeds. Give us wire; we'd 'eat' the wire. Corrugated iron roofing? We even 'ate' the iron'.²⁷

This behaviour persisted into the post-reconstruction period; each time a government program would deliver some sort of economic development assistance, the materials were sold and the proceeds split among *Gampong* households. Despairing that the situation in Jabeuet might never improve, a few families began moving away. The same former *Geucik*, now a *Tuhapeut* member, proposed that the *Gampong* rehabilitate some of the *Gampong*'s former rice paddy land. Of the 30 hectares of former paddy land remaining after the tsunami, he determined that 24 hectares could sustain a crop in the early dry season, once annual flooding receded. The *Tuhapeut* appointed him as *Keujreun Blang*,²⁸ and he set about re-establishing a traditional communal system of land allocation and labour-sharing. The *Geucik* managed to secure assistance from the Kabupaten agricultural office (Dinas) to provide earth-moving equipment to clear rubble and cut rudimentary drainage channels, also to provide grants of seed and fertilizer.

This time, they did not eat the seed. Twenty households from Jabeuet, and a similar number from neighbouring villages who were invited to join the program, were each granted half-hectare plots. They planted their first crop in late 2013, and had their first harvest in 2014. The land is to be retained as communal *Gampong* land; users can continue to cultivate their half-acre plots so long as they successfully maintain and utilise them. A portion of each plot-holder's harvest is to be allocated to the *Gampong* to generate revenue and support communal activities. These rules have not yet been written as the program is still in its formative stage. Everyone was allowed to keep their entire first harvest; most people used it to fulfil their annual *zakat* obligation and still had rice left over for their own consumption.

Numerous analyses (e.g., McCarthy 2013, 2014; Cordaid and Eye on Aceh n.d.; Brusset et al 2009) have commented on the requirement of many aid projects that community members form groups to become eligible to receive aid. Usually, these groups lacked any durable basis in the community, and usually 'did not survive much beyond the photograph [of smiling villagers standing in front of the project facility or information board] taken by the agency before it withdrew' (McCarthy 2014: 151). Enduring collaboration and collective action in rural Aceh draw more upon durable kinship and neighbourhood networks that provide security, and on customary local sources and forms of authority.

Other, somewhat rare, examples demonstrate the benefits of longer-term commitments of support from external actors. Local NGOs and CBOs in Aceh generally tend

to focus on political challenges such as human rights, anti-corruption and accountability, and gender equity, and many of these are urban based; not many development-focused NGOs and CBOs emerged out of the tsunami recovery era. When international NGOs departed as the recovery and reconstruction effort drew to a conclusion, this left a bit of a vacuum that is not entirely filled by the PNPM facilitators nor the notoriously lackadaisical service delivery capacity of *kabupaten* and provincial technical agencies (*dinas*).

²⁷ Interview, Pak TRI, former *Geucik* of Jabeuet.

²⁸ Rice paddy and irrigation superintendent, see Governance section above.

McCarthy (2013: 14), writing specifically about livelihood assistance, discussed the importance of timing:

Villagers explained that the majority of surviving villagers were deeply depressed: “It is not that the aid wasn’t of benefit ... but people here only began to think about their economy after they married ... after they had children” “It was only last year” [2012, eight years after the tsunami], that “we began to think about the future”.

This logic applies not only to productive activities and livelihood assistance, but to collective action for public goods as well. This condition of shock and mourning probably plays a more significant role than the commonly held notion that ‘cash-for-work’ assistance early in the tsunami recovery phase undermined social capital and the vaunted tradition of *gotong-royong* in communities recovering from the tsunami disaster (Thorburn 2007, see ‘Social Capital’ discussion above).



Cot Kaleut: Long-term NGO Commitment to Institutional Capacity Building

The *Gampong* of Cot Kaleut spreads for over two kilometres along the coastal highway in a formerly remote area of Aceh Jaya. The three *dusun* comprising Cot Kaleut operate fairly independently, which facilitates some forms of collective action, however can complicate resource allocation, infrastructure development and service delivery at the *Gampong* level. Prior to the tsunami, a government-built drinking water supply system serving the entire village seldom functioned before falling into complete disrepair. Usually, the source of problems occurred ‘upstream’ (i.e., in a different *dusun*) from those affected; everyone felt it was therefore the district government’s job to maintain and repair the system. This service was seldom forthcoming.

After the tsunami, responsibility for water supply for the *Gampong* of Cot Kaleut fell to the Canadian Red Cross (CRC). They initially installed shallow ring wells behind each house. Villagers complained that the water was befouled and could only be used for bathing, and requested that a spring-fed piped water system be installed. During subsequent consultations, CRC field operatives learned of the community’s prior experiences, but determined to work with village groups to devise a system that would be more sustainable. Their engineers determined that two separate systems were needed to serve the three *dusun*. More important than the technical design, however, was the establishment of systems and institutions that would assure that the communities could maintain and repair the system as leaks, breakages or blockages occurred, and that funds would be available to do this.

Before withdrawing from Aceh in 2009, CRC handed over responsibility for this project to its Indonesian affiliate, *Palang Merah Indonesia* (PMI). PMI committed to a long-term engagement to assure that the investment in Cot Kaleut’s water system would achieve sustainable outcomes. A PMI village facilitator worked closely with community members to form user groups and a management committee, train technicians to repair and maintain the system, and design and implement a simple payment system that charged households a flat fee, provided compensation for managers and technicians, and provided sufficient funds for maintenance and repair. *Gampong*

managers and technicians attended numerous training courses at PMI's regional office in the district capital Calang. The current head of the Cot Kaleut Water Users Association recalls:

There was a period when I felt like we were constantly being called to Calang for training. At times I felt bored of all the trainings as the PMI trainers would not let us continue onto the next course until we demonstrated that we understood the current lesson. But now I know how important it was for our understanding of the how to manage the water system. It took many years but now we have an excellent system that we manage ourselves. We don't have to rely on the *kabupaten* or anyone else anymore.²⁹

PMI also used this opportunity to educate community members on health and sanitation. The PMI village facilitator maintained a close working relationship with the community for three years, before officially handing over control of the system to the Cot Kaleut *Gampong* government.

The entire process, from the initial consultations between CRC and Cot Kaleut community members until PMI finally felt confident to cease routine supervision, took nearly seven years. The payoff, according to Cot Kaleut villagers, was well worth the effort.

In some other villages in this study, the ethos of governance for the collective good has perhaps not taken root, and the abundant resources that flowed during the reconstruction period – and that continue to be available in the form of BKPG, 'Dana Aspirasi' Funds and other forms of Special Autonomy government support – have not led to better development outcomes for communities. Ingrained patterns and practices of elite domination of decision-making and resource allocation continue to inhere, and the benefits of post-tsunami

funding increases flow primarily to small groups of individuals who dominate *Gampong* political structures. Many small-scale infrastructure projects appeared to be more about expending funds and paying contractors, than about any notion of collective good. In a few more egregious examples, projects have actually contravened communities' wishes, ignoring or subverting the government by community ideals propagated during the *Build Back Better* era.



Rerouting Progress in Ujong

The village of Ujong is located in a small inlet in a mountainous region of Aceh Besar. Prior to the tsunami, Ujong was very isolated, at the end of a steep and winding path. The tsunami recovery helped end Ujong's isolation; the new highway passes quite close to the village.

²⁹ Interview with Pak M, Head of the Cot Kaleut Water Users Association.

Partly due to this isolation, few people in Ujong had more than a few years of formal education, and the village initially struggled to adapt to donor and NGO ways of doing business. Nonetheless, it now appears that some of the village development and spatial planning activities promoted by LOGICA during the early years of the recovery effort left an impact.

Led by members of the *Tuhapeut*, Ujong's Medium-term *Gampong* Development Plan (RPMJ) called for the construction of an access road and bridge along a route that would facilitate access to community members' rice fields and groves. They also planned to build a new produce collection, storage and transfer facility in a strategic location convenient to community members' durian and rubber groves and easily monitored from the village. The plan was to lease this facility to local producers and traders, with the dual benefits of providing revenue for the *Gampong*, while also affording community members greater control over the terms and conditions of sale. Currently, traders deal with individual producers, often purchasing crops before they ripen and arranging harvest and transport themselves.

Recently, however, villagers were shocked to learn that their *Geucik*, without consulting the *Tuhapeut*, had negotiated with the district Public Works Department for a Rp 190 million contract to construct a road along an entirely different route – that does not pass near the proposed storage and transfer facility site. It does, however, pass through land owned by two key members of the *Gampong* executive: the Village Secretary (who is also an employee at the Subdistrict office), and the Section Head (*Kaur*) for *Gampong* Development.

Many members of the community – including the *Tuhapeut* – have been outspoken in their opposition to this new plan. When these discussions became heated, the *Geucik* summoned police to warn some of his opponents not to 'obstruct development'. As a result, a deep schism has formed between the two branches of *Gampong* government, with the *Tuhapeut* leadership more-or-less giving up on any attempt at renegotiating the plan.

'*Tuhapeut* formulates policy in the *Gampong*, and the *Geucik* is supposed to implement it. Development shouldn't change this'.³⁰

This sort of connivance is nothing new in Aceh, in other parts of Indonesia, or anywhere else that new infrastructure is being planned and built. For the people of Ujong, however, it comes as a rude reminder of how things have changed since the tsunami recovery ended their isolation and brought their village into the development mainstream.

As discussed in the 'Village Government in Aceh' section above, customary *Gampong* governance structures embody an inherent balance of power between multiple elements, particularly the *Geucik*, *Teungku Imeum Meunasah* and *Tuhapeut*. It further noted that changes to village government during the New Order era – particularly as a result of the imposition of a standard village government structures under the 1979 Village Government Law – tended to upset this balance by strengthening the authority of the Village Head vis-à-vis other authorities and structures in the village, while at the same time making this individual beholden to authorities higher up the government hierarchy. Post-Suharto national reforms of village government policy and law have simultaneously pursued a number of disparate agendas, including restoring village autonomy, revitalisation of customary structures and practices, inculcating democratic norms

and practices, and supporting social and economic development at the most fundamental level of Indonesian society.

In post-LoGA Aceh, two somewhat countervailing trends colour the provincial government's attempts to revitalise *Gampong* governance. One is a concerted effort to resuscitate a near-mythical 'lost age' of Acehnese *Adat* – with a reinstated unifying *Wali Nanggroe* perched Sultan-like at its pinnacle. The 2008 *Qanun* no 10 on *Adat* Institutions in Aceh spells out in meticulous detail the roles, responsibilities, format and function of no fewer than thirteen different *adat* functionaries or institutions. It also brings them within the ambit of the Government of Aceh,

³⁰ Interview with Pak S, Acting Head of Ujong *Tuhapeut*.

with stipulations about which tier of regional government in Aceh is responsible for appointing them, and grounds for their dismissal.

A second countervailing trend is an emphasis on democratisation, as manifested in direct *Geucik* elections set out in the 2009 *Qanun* no 4 on the Mechanism for the Election and Termination of *Geucik* in Aceh. Much of the language of this provincial law mimics national legislation on Village Head elections. Aceh is presently completing its second round of *Geucik* elections as the six-year terms of *Geucik* elected in 2007-08 expire.

Policy documents and relevant *Qanun* texts are replete with the language of deliberation and consensus (*musyawarah* and *mufakat*) – something that has changed little throughout Indonesia's post-colonial history, from the nation-building days of Sukarno through the developmentalist regime of General Suharto, into

the present day.³¹ Tensions between efforts to revive customary *adat* forms and functions, and the more liberal democratic norms and processes promoted in Indonesia's post-1998 democratic reform era are often resolved in the doldrums of *musyawarah* and *mufakat*. In effect, deliberative processes practiced in *Gampong* in Aceh generally manifest as collective acquiescence to the will and decrees of those more socially (or hereditarily) competent to make decisions on behalf of the community. This re-crystallization, taking place after a brief hiatus during the 'NGO era' in Aceh, is evocatively described by a prominent Acehnese feminist academic as the *re-elitisation* of Acehnese politics and everyday life.³² Discussions of the attributes and qualifications of *Geucik* and *Tuhapeut* in the preceding section on 'Village Government in Aceh' contextualise and reify this sense of a 'natural social order'; responses and remarks from a range of respondents indicate generalised acceptance of rigid social hierarchy as being intrinsically and integrally Acehnese.

A dynasty continues

The *Gampong* of Suak Jampok, located a few kilometres outside of the district capital of Aceh Barat Meulaboh, was one of the more disharmonious villages of the original ACARP study. An extended linear village, Suak Jampok is effectively two different communities, each with their own mosque adhering to different *aliran* (ideologies, sects). Relations between the two sects – in Suak Jampok and in Aceh more broadly – have not always been cordial.

Compounding the disharmony, Suak Jampok has been headed by an unpopular, authoritarian *Geucik* for more than 20 years. Despite numerous attempts to unseat him – from the community, also the subdistrict government – he always managed to retain or return to power. Numerous respondents suggested that he must possess 'mysterious powers' (*ilmu ghaib*); another common refrain being that he wielded his power 'alá Suharto'. People in Suak Jampok feared their *Geucik*. He was frequently in conflict with members of the community, in one notorious case threatening to blow up a PNPM-constructed bridge just to spite a neighbour who built a fence around his coconut grove to keep his (the *Geucik*'s) cattle out.

Reconstruction-era practices of transparency and accountability did not take root in Suak Jampok; there have never been public notices of project funding or expenditures, and interviews and discussions during both the first ACARP study in 2007 and the 2014 return visit were rife with allegations of the misuse or diversion of donor and

³¹ In a famous 1958 speech setting out the premises of 'Guided Democracy', former President Sukarno explained, 'Indonesia's democracy is not liberal democracy, Indonesian democracy is not the democracy of the world of Montaigne or Voltaire, Indonesian democracy is not à la America, Indonesia's democracy is not the Soviet – No! Indonesia's democracy is the democracy which is implanted in the breasts of the Indonesian peoples. Democracy is only a means. It is not an end. The end is a just and prosperous society!' [<http://www.indonesia-digest.net/3101gestapu.htm>].

Sukarno's 'Guided Democracy' was later replaced by the 'Pancasila Democracy' of the Suharto era. Number four of the five pillars comprising the national credo translates as 'govern-ment guided by the wisdom of representative deliberation'.

³² Srimulyadi, pers com., Banda Aceh, September 2014.

government funds. Aid project resources – such as funds for the establishment of a Village Community Economic Institution (LEM) or different grants of cattle or other livelihood assets – were distributed among the *Geucik*'s family, friends and allies.

Most other components of *Gampong* government in Suak Jampok have existed in name only; the *Geucik* did not delegate or share responsibility. Only Dusun Heads actively performed their duties.

In early 2014, the district government finally intervened and insisted that Suak Jampok hold direct elections for a new *Geucik*. According to regulations, *Geucik* are allowed to serve two six-year terms. At first, only one candidate registered: the *Geucik*'s son. Many people suggested that in the interest of balance and fairness, it would be best to alternate *Geuciks* from the two *Dusun* making up the *Gampong*. Eventually, the *Geucik*'s son convinced a woman to run against him in the election. He won, by only two votes.

In interviews and discussions, informants were cautiously optimistic that things might begin to improve in Suak Jampok with the new *Geucik*. He is attempting to resurrect the various functionaries of the *Gampong* executive, and also pledges to delegate considerable authority to *Dusun* Heads. Two Section Heads (*Kaur*), one of two *Dusun* Heads, and the newly-appointed *Gampong* Youth Coordinator are all former LOGICA Village Cadre. Efforts are underway to form and activate a new *Tuhapeut* council. He is leading an effort to secure district government assistance to convert residents' rubber groves to oil palm; Suak Jampok's economy is presently almost entirely dependent on rubber, and the price of latex has fallen sharply during the past few years. Based on this initiative, several informants expressed approval of the new *Geucik*'s creativity and initiative.

Suak Jampok has a lot of catching up to do. None of the livelihood or economic development programs of the reconstruction era have left any enduring remainder – beyond a few cattle owned by the former *Geucik* and his cronies. PNPM and BKPG block grant funds have not been effectively utilised, and rice paddy land cleared by BRR was neglected and is now overgrown. Several villagers complained about the annual inundation of agricultural land surrounding the village, which they claim could be easily resolved with a bit of engineering and a backhoe. This sort of initiative, however, has seemed too difficult and complicated for the hapless *Gampong* to execute, despite the availability of funds from programs like PNPM or BKPG or other special autonomy funding sources.

Residents of Suak Jampok are hoping that the recent succession might also signal the beginning of a deeper transformation in their village.

Wending through this complex dynamic of *Adat* revival and democratisation is the development imperative. *Gampong* governments find themselves at the cutting edge of Aceh's ongoing revitalisation. The first post-LoGA provincial government in Aceh placed great emphasis on (re-)building Aceh from the *Gampong* (Sujito and Rahman 2007; Kompas 2012). The village facilitators and cadre and other (often young) individuals who received various types of skills training and support during the recovery and reconstruction era are at the heart of the ongoing transformative process taking place in (some, but by no means all) *Gampong* communities.

Some of the most successful examples from the villages covered in this research project, including those depicted in the previous section on 'Capacity Building and Resident

Capacities', are cases where village formal and informal leaders received government administration and project planning and management training from donor and NGO programs, or where village facilitators and cadre recruited and trained during the recovery and reconstruction period have subsequently assumed positions within the *Gampong* government structure. As mentioned in the concluding paragraph of the previous section, former LOGICA cadre hold formal positions in the government of over half the *Gampong* surveyed, including the key positions of *Geucik* and Village Secretary in the most successful examples. In one village (Pulo Muliya), eleven former LOGICA cadre are currently active in formal and informal leadership roles, including Village Secretary, Treasurer, Section Head (*Kaur*) for Government and Development, two Dusun Heads, head and two members

of the *Tuhapeut*, and heads of the two main women's programs in the *Gampong*.

As the experiences of communities in Pulo Muliya³³ or Darussalam³⁴ show, however, having a well-structured, well-run *Gampong* government does not in and of itself guarantee positive outcomes. *Gampong* governance takes place within the broader political economy of post-conflict, post-Helsinki, post-LoGA Aceh, as new constellations of power and privilege coalesce at all levels of society and government. The concentration (and exploitation) of politico-administrative power seen in some of the less successful *Gampong* in this survey (e.g., Ujong³⁵, Suak Jampok³⁶) is repeated and magnified at each node of decision-making and resource allocation up through the tiers of regional government. As previously mentioned, responses to questions about the level of trust and satisfaction with government were most positive for *Gampong* government, becoming incrementally lower at each step up the administrative hierarchy.³⁷

Gampong government in Aceh does not take place in a vacuum. *Gampong* are the bottom tier in a dense web of government, which, as discussed in the 'Setting the Scene' section above, in Aceh is the site of aggressive politics of patronage, coercion and corruption. Such 'predatory networks of patronage' are a fairly ubiquitous feature of Indonesia's post-1999 decentralisation (Hadiz 2004), but as Aspinal (2014) points out, these patterns and practices are particularly exaggerated in Aceh, as a result of a unique combination of factors ensuing from

the Helsinki peace accords and subsequent national legislation on Aceh's autonomous government. The implications of Aspinal's 'predatory peace' are frequently encountered in Acehnese *Gampong* today. These may be fairly benign, such as lucrative and often not particularly beneficial prestige projects supported by local politicians' '*Dana Aspirasi*' funds, but more often, they involve the diversion or misuse of government resources intended to benefit rural communities.

Of the villages covered in this survey, concerns and criticisms of an increasing concentration of control over resources, and of a deliberate strategy of utilising government resources to foster and support networks of patronage and obligation, were most strongly expressed in the six survey villages in Aceh Jaya. (It was evident elsewhere, though perhaps not as *blatant*.)

33 See Box: 'Trying to get back home' in the 'Relocation Villages' section below.

34 See Box: 'Donor nostalgia' in the 'Normalisasi' section above.

35 See Box: 'Rerouting progress' above

36 See Box: 'A dynasty continues' above.

37 This distrust of government is not confined to post-tsunami villages exposed to donor and NGO ethos and operations. The 2010 Multi-stakeholder Review of Post-conflict Aid in Aceh encountered similar patterns in village communities across the province (MSR 2010: 96, 115-18).



Talking politics, a favourite pastime



Geucik appointments in Aceh Jaya: A retreat from democracy

Researchers returning from villages in Aceh Jaya reported growing consternation over the appointment of new *Geucik* in their survey villages. Most *Gampong* in the district had held their first direct elections in 2007 or '08, and the terms of their elected *Geucik* were expired or expiring.

In each survey village, *Tuhapeut* and other *Gampong* leaders reported receiving instructions from the Subdistrict (*Kecamatan*) to provide names of two candidates for submission to the *Bupati*. These did not have to be democratically elected; instructions were issued to simply come up with two names 'in accordance with custom'. Often they were also instructed to prioritise these names. If an election was held, it was merely to determine which of the two was the people's first choice.

To the confusion of nearly everybody, the *Bupati* then began issuing orders (SK) appointing one of the two nominees for a three-year half-term. In some cases, a second SK was simultaneously issued appointing the second nominee for the following three years (2017-20), whereas other appointees were told that their term might be extended to a full six years contingent on their satisfactory carrying out of their duties.³⁸

'At the swearing-in ceremony, Pak *Bupati* asked the assembled *Geucik* whether anyone felt that they had been forced into signing [a letter agreeing to the three-year rotation scheme], to which we all answered a resounding 'NOOOO!' Surely anybody answering otherwise would find himself out of a job.'³⁹

In one village, a popular *Geucik* was re-elected for a second term by a nearly unanimous vote some months before, but at the time the researchers visited the *Gampong*, had not received his SK from the *Bupati*, and was temporarily standing down. He explained that the *Bupati*'s instruction to provide two names disregards the will of the people, and should not be supported.

Researchers approached the *Kabupaten* office to seek clarification, but were sent away with vague answers about this being the *Bupati*'s preference (lit: '*kebijakan*', which translates as either 'policy' or 'wisdom'), and not appropriate or necessary to discuss with outsiders.

The *Kabupaten* of Aceh Jaya was only established a short time before the tsunami in 2004, and sustained some of the heaviest damage of any district. Until today, Aceh Jaya remains politically and socially retrograde compared to its more affluent and progressive neighbours to the east and west. Aceh Jaya is also a site of rampant illegal

³⁸ *Qanun* no 4/2009 on the Mechanism for the Election and Termination of *Geucik* in Aceh unambiguously states that the term of office for a *Geucik* is six years, with the possibility of re-election for a second term.

³⁹ Interview with Pak TD, *Geucik* of Kuwala Sagee.

mining, logging and forest conversion. Conservationists are alarmed by a sharp increase in the number of elephants being killed by poachers or farmers. The place has a bit of Wild West feel about it. The current *Bupati*, elected in 2012, is a staunch Partai Aceh loyalist. His unpopular decision to do away with direct *Geucik* elections appears to be a heavy-handed ploy to institute patrimonial relations of dependency and patronage, which will likely be cemented with preferential access to government resources and funds. An early indication of this behaviour came to the fore during the 2012 election, when voters in one survey village were promised that their electricity would be free of charge if they voted for the Partai Aceh candidate. Partai Aceh cadre manned a table at the polling station where voters leaving the booths could sign up.

This does not auger well for the realisation of Aceh Jaya communities' aspirations and ideals. Invoking parallels to the New Order regime of former Indonesian President Suharto, numerous pundits remarked that under *Partai* Aceh leadership, Aceh Jaya is becoming 'more Indonesian than Indonesia'!

Some scholars and civil society leaders in Aceh have expressed concern over what they perceive as an increasing monetisation of social relations in Aceh as a result of current development policies and priorities and ongoing political processes (e.g., Husin and Alvisyahrin 2014; Mahmuddin et al 2014; Sujito and Rahman 2007). Certainly, control over benefit streams accruing from the post-Helsinki 'peace dividend' form a central focus of Aspinal's (2009, 2014) analyses of Aceh's evolving political landscape.

A frequent theme in focus group discussions was the matter of managing social jealousy as a key feature of good Gampong government. This concurs with research undertaken for the 2010 Multi-stakeholder Review, which identified 'received government aid' as the most divisive issue in communities across Aceh.⁴⁰ Interestingly, questions of the fair and equitable distribution of government aid featured more prominently in interviews and group discussions in 2014, than during the original ACARP field research in 2007, when far greater amounts of aid were at stake.

⁴⁰ 44 per cent of respondents in the MSR household survey, and 66 per cent of *Geucik*, named 'received government aid' as the major source of division in their communities (MSR 2010: 105).



Women's saving and loan funds in Cot Meukuta: Neither saving nor loaning

A stipulation of the provincial BKPG *Gampong* Prosperity block grant program is that 30 per cent of the funds must be allocated to Women's Savings and Loan (SPP) groups, and that access to future BKPG funding is contingent on the demonstrated successful operation of this scheme.

Cot Meukuta is one of the most troubled and 'left behind' villages of the ACARP survey. Most of its original delta island location was rendered uninhabitable by scouring and subsidence, however, the old *Geucik* insisted that they not relocate. He claimed that foreign investors wanted to turn the island into a resort. Precious time was lost before the residents and BRR finally settled on a relocation site. By the time construction their new *Gampong* was underway, numerous donor and NGO programs had already expired.

Few people in Cot Meukuta have more than a few years of formal education – many, including the *Geucik*, are illiterate and hardly speak Indonesian. As such, they have been unable (sometimes too embarrassed) to avail themselves of various programs and services. As a relocation village, Cot Meukuta faces numerous unresolved problems, particularly around access to land and sea resources; most households in the village still have no dependable sources of income.

In 2009, with guidance from an Assistant *Kecamatan* Facilitator, 20 women in Cot Meukuta managed to form a group (a requirement for eligibility to receive BKPBP SPP funds) and prepare and submit a proposal. A grant of Rp 55 million was allocated to Cot Meukuta, 30 per cent (Rp 16.5 million) of which was earmarked for the SPP group. When the funds arrived, however, the *Geucik*, with the support of the *Tuhapeut*, determined that rather than give these funds to just 20 people (out of a population of 286), it would be fairer and more equitable if the entire amount was simply divided among the 115 households in the *Gampong* – despite the stipulation that access to future BKPG funds is contingent on the successful management of SPP schemes. 'It is a donation (*hibah*) from the government', was the refrain, 'that we can do with as we see fit'.

A similar, but smaller, scheme using national PNPM block grant funds is [barely] functioning in Cot Meukuta, due to the efforts of the local assistant PNPM facilitator who single-handedly keeps the books, disperses and collects repayments from group members, and travels 45 minutes each way to deposit and withdraw funds from the nearest bank, often using her own money to cover temporary shortfalls.

The foregoing narrative depicts a complex and continually evolving social and political landscape in Aceh, as it plays out in a small number of villages examined in this study. The analyses of Li (2006) and Aspinal (2009, 2014) proffer two different cultures of government, i.e., the neo-liberal 'government by community' envisioned by the architects of Indonesia's PNPM and Aceh's BKPG social development programs, and the patronage politics and 'predatory peace' that characterises Aceh's post-Helsinki political machinations and leadership. These two different systems are combining in unpredictable ways in the fertile soil of Aceh after 30 years of conflict, a devastating and costly natural disaster, and a radical realignment of Aceh's political and financial relationship with the national government.

Various themes did emerge across the 15 survey villages. These include declining levels of active engagement by the majority of ordinary *Gampong* members in development planning and resource allocation processes, accompanied by a ceding of authority and control to elected, appointed and customary (*adat*) officials in their *Gampong*. The latter wield their authority with different degrees of finesse and talent; in most villages, a large proportion of survey

respondents provided answers that, in combination, indicate a relatively high level of satisfaction with their *Gampong* governments, and a sense that things are pretty much as they should be. Many of our researchers commented on the overarching sense of a 'return to normalcy' that coloured their encounters with individuals and groups in nearly all of the *Gampong* surveyed.⁴¹

Gender Sidelineing

Gender mainstreaming was a clarion call of the tsunami recovery and reconstruction effort; nearly all major actors developed detailed gender policies, protocols, practices, and parameters. Gender awareness and inclusiveness workshops and training courses were so ubiquitous that the term '*gender*' found its way into day-to-day Acehnese discourse.⁴² The original ACARP report (pp. 131) quotes an elderly *Geucik* who effuses,

⁴¹ Other studies undertaken as part of the broader Aftermath of Aid research project (forthcoming) found a similar tendency to return to normal (i.e., pre-tsunami conditions) in owner modifications to post-tsunami housing, also in terms of livelihoods.

⁴² Other recovery-era English terms that became incorporated into the Acehnese language include 'livelihood', 'twincab' and 'cashforwork'.

Don't you know, since the tsunami all the women in this *Gampong* have been *gendered*! Aceh today is just like Medan, or Jakarta. Now women are doing men's work, like selling durian. Before, only men sold durian. But now, women can sell durian too...

The report (ibid) rather optimistically concluded that,

There is no doubt that the level of women's participation in planning, managing and implementing village development programs in Aceh has increased, as a direct result of government, donor and NGO policies and guidance. The language of gender awareness and gender equity suffuses much of the transcript data collected during this research. Women in those villages that have adopted some of these principles show great enthusiasm for their new roles and responsibilities.

Seven years later, it appears that Aceh's gender juggernaut has run its course, and that the norms and practice of women's social roles and place have receded to an imagined culturally appropriate pre-recovery original condition. Numerous respondents in each survey village in Aceh Jaya told of a *fatwa* issued by a prominent *ulama* forbidding women to hold positions in *Gampong* government.⁴³ This was usually followed by platitudes about 'Acehnese custom' and 'Islamic beliefs', and an acquiescence that 'this is how things have always been done in Aceh'.

The most obvious remnant of gender mainstreaming policy that still pertains in Aceh today is a stipulation in the 2003 *Qanun* no 5 of 2003 (which ironically predates the gender mainstreaming undertakings of the tsunami recovery and reconstruction era) that the *Tuhapeut* must include 'community leaders including youth and women'.⁴⁴ Not all of the survey villages have implemented this regulation; two of fifteen *Gampong* have no female *Tuhapeut* member, while in two other *Gampong* nearly half of survey respondents did not know if their village had a female *Tuhapeut* member or not (both did). Only one of the fifteen *Gampong*, in Aceh Barat, has ever had a woman as *Geucik* – and this was in the 1970s!

An important economic empowerment program being promoted in Aceh is the Women's Savings and Loan (SPP) program. Thirty per cent of BKPG *Gampong* Prosperity Assistance Block Grants must be allocated for women's enterprise development programs. Ongoing receipt of annual BKPG funding is contingent on documented proof of the successful administration of these funds.⁴⁵ Even so, only 10 of 15 survey villages have functioning SPP programs, and of these, three are experiencing difficulties and may be terminated. A small number are quite successful. The Darussalam women's cooperative, initiated before the SPP program came into existence (but which has subsequently received additional cash infusions from BPKG block grants), is one of the most successful of its type in all of Aceh.

Tale of two SPP It takes more than money

The diverging experiences of women's groups in two survey villages in a mountainous western subdistrict of Aceh Besar illustrate the importance of support from *Gampong* government. The SPP program in Blang Mata has received several awards from the district government for successful management of SPP funds. The groups have developed simple 'buddy system' safeguards to assure that loans are repaid on time. The seven member groups meet regularly to hear reports and discuss any problems or issues. Members use their small loans for a variety of small businesses, including a successful ten-member sewing cooperative (started with assistance from a reconstruction-era livelihood project), several women who collect, dry and bag leaf litter and guano from nearby forests and caves for sale as fertiliser to oil palm plantations, and a few small shops and tea stalls, also to purchase seeds and other agricultural inputs for garden plots. From an original cash infusion of Rp 30 million, Blang Mata's SPP fund has now grown to over Rp 100 million. The program enjoys support from the dynamic and proactive women's representative on the Blang Mata *Tuhapeut*, who vigorously champions women's issues in council meetings, and is closely supervised by two key members of the *Gampong* government. The Village Secretary and Section Head (*Kaur*) for *Gampong* Development in Blang Mata are both former LOGICA cadre. During their association with LOGICA, these two men were exposed to gender awareness and empowerment principals, and also learned proposal and report writing as well as project management skills.

⁴³ Further investigation failed to produce any evidence of such a *fatwa* actually existing.

⁴⁴ Article 31 (1) b.

⁴⁵ Similar stipulations apply to national PNPM Mandiri block grants, which in Aceh are often administered in parallel to BKPG funds, by the same subdistrict and village facilitators.

Ujong, on the other hand, has no SPP groups. They have never submitted a proposal, even though this means sacrificing their eligibility for future BKPG funding. Three assistant PNPM facilitators – all female – have resigned in the past three years due to their frustration at the total lack of support from the *Gampong* government. Ujong also has a female *Tuhapeut* member, but this woman explained to researchers that women do not need to have their own businesses, that ‘their place was in the home’.⁴⁶

Aceh’s waning gender agenda is evident not only in the form of lacklustre support for classic ‘women in development’ programs such as SPP. Women are increasingly excluded from gendered public roles in *Gampong* affairs. Women’s participation in *Gampong* meetings at the time of the first ACARP study in 2007 was lower than their male counterparts, however, a number of the survey villages purported to be making concerted efforts to include women in public decision-making, and overall it appeared to be trending upward (Thorburn 2010: 142-44). The ACARP report (pp 129) included a quote from a lively women’s focus group discussion in Darussalam:

In our village, men now listen to and consider women’s opinions. When there is a meeting, for instance to discuss aid programs, all the women attend. Often there are more women than men at the meetings. The women in this village really enjoy meetings. So long as there’s an invitation, we’ll be there!

The upward trend in women’s participation optimistically reported in the 2007 ACARP report appears to have plateaued. The survey returned quite high rates of positive answers to questions about support for women’s participation in *Gampong* development, and about the existence of programs and activities to support women’s empowerment and development:

	Men	Women
Do you support women actively participating in <i>Gampong</i> development?	99%	94%
There are now more programs to support women’s empowerment and development than before the tsunami	94%	88%

However, additional questions about individual respondents’ actual participation in particular activities yielded a somewhat different picture:

	Men	Women
Participate in <i>Gampong</i> decision making	49%	24%
Participate in <i>Gampong</i> development planning	67%	22%
Participate in <i>Gampong</i> development implementation	59%	26%

As discussed in the previous section, professed levels of engagement in *Gampong* decision-making are lower in 2014 than during the original ACARP research in 2007. Then, as now, men more actively engaged in these processes than women. The proportion of male respondents who claim to participate in *Gampong* decision-making is twice that of female respondents; the proportion drops to 1:3 for engagement in development planning.

Notably, in response to questions about women’s participation in village affairs, far more men than women felt that women were prevented or faced obstacles:

	Men	Women
Women still face obstacles to participating in <i>Gampong</i> decision-making	64%	30%
Women still face obstacles to participating in development	53%	39%
There are now organisations and forums to promote women’s aspirations	31%	78%

⁴⁶ Interview, Nyak D, Ujong.



Women of Pulo Muliya Working outside the system

Pulo Muliya is a small, tight-knit community. Respondents unanimously expressed that their village government apparatus is complete and intact, and functioning as it should. This despite the fact that Pulo Muliya has no female *Tuhapeut* member (in contravention of the 2003 Provincial Qanun no 5 on *Gampong* Government mandating that women must be represented on the *Tuhapeut*).

Both men and women – in interviews and in gender segregated focus group discussions – stated that such a role had never existed in their pre-tsunami *Gampong* government structures, and is not required now. The majority of women expressed no objection to this state of affairs. In the women's focus group discussion, this perspective was roundly supported:

We are busy enough managing our community activities without having to hold a seat in the *aparat* (government structure). We participate in *Gampong* meetings and help make decisions, and are actively involved in community development activities. Women are able to influence what community needs should be addressed whilst also spending time looking after our families.

Another woman, however, expressed a slightly different opinion, which was equally supported by most women present:

If a woman were formally included in the *Gampong* leadership structure, then if there is a 'women's problem', it would be easier to address than if only by the men.

Several women in Pulo Muliya have been exposed to a variety of donor and NGO training programs aimed at increasing women's participation in village governance and development decision-making processes. Three female former LOGICA village cadre are presently active as leaders of the village PKK chapter (a role usually reserved for the *Geucik*'s wife); the *Posyandu* Integrated Family Planning and Health Care Unit; and the village 'Activity Implementation Team' (TPK) which includes among other duties, the *Polindes* Maternal Health Care Service. These (usually unremunerated) women's roles are in many *Gampong* among the most active and effective aspects of village governance and service delivery.

One local woman, Ibu Yasin,⁴⁷ proudly displayed certificates from 15 different capacity-building training courses from various NGOs and donors, including attending a two-month leadership training course in Java. Ibu Yasin

⁴⁷ Not her real name.

would like to see women involved in formal positions in the *Gampong* leadership structure, but recognises that this is a step yet to come in the empowerment of her community. She pointed to several factors inhibiting this evolution, such as the persistence of what she called 'old adat', poor advice from a local NGO reaffirming the importance of adat beliefs and practice, the generally low education levels of both men and women in the *Gampong*, and strict residency laws in the community (see Relocation section, below) that have constrained marriage outside of the community and thus limited the introduction of new ideas. Ibu Yasin suggests that women's roles and responsibilities in Pulo Muliya will gradually increase over time, as a result of – and contributing to – a broader process of community empowerment.

The generalised exclusion of women from formal roles in *Gampong* government structures, and their relegation to domestic roles and the gendered public spaces and service positions (*Posyandu*, *Polindes*, PAUD pre-schools, *Wirid Yasin* Qur'anic recitations and *Seni Rabana* chanting and drumming, etc.) did not present as a matter of discontent among female respondents – many even suggested that things 'are better this way'. Two of the survey villages are seats of subdistrict government. In both these *Gampong*, there are a number of educated women who work as salaried employees in the *Kecamatan* offices. In their own *Gampong*, however, none of these women hold any government position; attitudes toward women's roles in these communities do not differ substantially from other *Gampong* in the survey. When this matter came up in a women's focus group discussion in Lhok Leuhu, one participant explained:

Ah, let the men have their politics! Who wants that anyway? It is easier to get things done if we do not have to be involved in their meetings and their plans and letters and tug-of-war. We women can do things like in a family...

Relocation Villages

The situation in *Gampong* forced to relocate after the tsunami remains much more difficult than communities that were able to re-establish in their original locations. This was true during the initial ACARP research in 2007. Obviously, casualties were quite high and trauma particularly acute in communities that had been so badly damaged that they could not be rebuilt, but in 2007, the primary effects of relocation manifested as long delays before reconstruction could be initiated, rendering these

communities unable to avail themselves of a variety of types of support that other communities received during the early phases of the reconstruction. Some donors had expended all of their infrastructure funds before resettlement communities had sites to construct their mosques, village halls, schools, clinics or other communal facilities. The problem was especially acute for livelihood and economic development programs; families living in tents or barracks or other temporary quarters were unable to begin investing in productive enterprises. There was a sense at that time that many of these communities were *falling behind* in the recovery.

This has continued to be the case in most relocation villages – and the reasons are more complex and intractable than simply missing out on donor programs and projects.



Gotong-royong construction works in *Gampong Pasi Keudo*



Glee Guree: Relocation suburbs

The case of Glee Guree, located on the outskirts of Banda Aceh, is atypical of the (mostly small, rural) relocation *Gampong* in most of Aceh, but nonetheless sheds some light on the complex social issues faced by relocation communities.

Glee Guree is a large peri-urban village in a somewhat arid hilly region several kilometres east of Banda Aceh. The portion of the *Gampong* closest to the coast sustained heavy damage, but much of the spread-out settlement was spared, or only slightly damaged. Only 30 people, out of a pre-tsunami population of almost 2,200, perished in the tsunami.

Because of its relatively minor destruction and proximity to Banda Aceh city, Glee Guree became a site of numerous logistical and warehousing operations set up by donors and NGOs. The government also constructed 26 barracks to temporarily house thousands of displaced families during the recovery and early reconstruction periods. Sadly, these installations provided few benefits to the people of Glee Guree; most skilled jobs were held by people from outside Aceh, and very little of the aid being administered and delivered from complexes in the *Gampong* flowed to Glee Guree residents. Most of the houses in Glee Guree that were damaged in the tsunami were deemed reparable; any assistance available for repairing houses was paltry compared to what was being expended on reconstruction elsewhere. Only 30 Glee Guree families received new tsunami housing.

Despite its proximity to the big city, Glee Guree is a predominantly rural community. Socially, Glee Guree is quite insular and conservative; only a small number of the native residents have more than a primary education. Prior to the tsunami, many households grazed livestock on the arid hilly land that makes up much of the *Gampong*. Those who participated in the urban economy of Banda Aceh were mostly labourers, *becak* drivers, and petty traders.

Meanwhile, the government needed to identify land for the relocation of thousands of Banda Aceh urbanites who did not own their own land or homes or businesses. Many of these people were not native Acehnese, including a large number of Sino-Indonesians. Glee Guree, particularly the hills in the landward edge of the *Gampong*, was identified as a potential site to house thousands of landless tsunami victims from Banda Aceh.

Different agencies constructed four large new housing complexes in Glee Guree, a total of 1,900 units. Glee Guree's population has nearly quadrupled, from just short of 2,200 at the time of the tsunami to over 8,000 today. Most of the new residents commute to Banda Aceh for work; and most are more educated and prosperous

than the *Gampong*'s original inhabitants. Access roads to the new complexes pass through the original village, however, interactions between the two groups remains limited and strained. The original *Gampong* inhabitants feel besieged, and are concerned about what they consider the excessively permissive social mores of their new neighbours. They have not allowed the new residents to nominate new members to the *Tuhapeut*; each complex only has a 'representative' who reports to the *Geucik*. On the other hand, the government and community of Glee Guree will not consider a proposition to split the *Gampong* to allow the new residents to form their own governments.

There are growing environmental problems as well. Deep wells constructed to provide drinking water to the new residential complexes are depleting the aquifer; many residents of the old village report that their wells are drying up or that the water becomes saline and foul smelling during the dry season. Another problem is unregulated sand and gravel quarrying on village land, further reducing the grazing land available for villagers' cattle, damaging village roads, and raising dust and the danger of landslides, erosion and floods. Although not related to the new residential complexes, in the minds of most of Glee Guree's original inhabitants, this is yet another facet of the same process of modernisation – and victimisation.

A lack of secure land tenure in settlement sites, limited access to public facilities and services (many of the relocation sites are inland, often some distance away from the main coastal highway), and, most problematic of all, access to agricultural land and other livelihood resources and assets, are problems faced by the rural relocation villages included in this survey.

Securing viable sites for relocation villages was a major challenge for BRR and local governments in Aceh. Obviously, the most fertile and accessible sites were already settled. If land was excised from existing *Gampong* to create new relocation villages, the host

community would only agree to the release of land they did not need for themselves. State land made available for relocation sites was invariably distant and inaccessible from services, markets and main transport routes. The tight-knit and insular nature of most rural communities in Aceh rendered the dissolution or amalgamation of *Gampong* unviable. Even *Gampong* with shared histories (i.e., where groups from one *Gampong* had cleared and settled nearby land to form a new *dusun*, eventually growing to achieve *Gampong* status), propositions to reunite after the tsunami into a single larger *Gampong* were almost always rebuffed (as in the case of Jabeuet and Lhok Leuhu above).



The relocation *Gampong* of Cot Meukuta



The auto-relocation village of Pulo Muliya Trying to get back home

Located on a riverine island on the fringe of Banda Aceh's peri-urban zone, Pulo Muliya was a prosperous and well-organised *Gampong*, whose residents made a decent living from fishing, rice farming and trade. The tsunami changed all of that. Pulo Muliya lost over half its population and nearly all buildings; a quarter of the island where the settlement had been located disappeared altogether; and nearby small islands where residents grew much of their rice transformed into a sodden landscape of swamp and slough. Their link to the mainland, as well as the smaller bridges and jetties providing access to surrounding islands, were entirely washed away.

Faced with this dire situation, Pulo Muliya's 140 surviving members made a bold decision to pool their resources (mostly NGO livelihood program grant funds) to purchase a few hectares of disused elevated land in a neighbouring village on the mainland. They set about establishing a new *Gampong*, with a variety of strictures to assure the ongoing integrity of their community. Leaving their ancestral island caused some fear that their tight-knit community would dissipate into the encroaching urban sprawl, and it was important to the survivors that the *Gampong* of Pulo Muliya continue to exist.

At the time of the first ACARP study in 2007, things appeared quite bright for this unique 'auto-relocation' community. They had secured donor-built housing, numerous men and women had received cadre training from various NGOs and donor programs, and a sense of hope and pride suffused the interactions between Pulo Muliya villagers and the ACARP researchers. Pulo Muliya was held up as an example of the power and efficacy of community self-help in post-disaster conditions.

When we returned in 2014, the sheen had most definitely worn off. The new location does not include any agricultural land; it has only enough room for the small community's houses and a mosque. They no longer have convenient access to the seashore, and nowhere to berth boats or equipment that would allow them to resume their former fishing trade. The complex does not even have room for a cemetery; they are unsure where they are going to bury their dead. The host *Gampong* from which they purchased their land does not want to sell any additional land to the people of Pulo Muliya; as Banda Aceh expands, residents there anticipate that real estate values are going to escalate. The beleaguered residents of tiny Pulo Muliya are dispirited, and long to return to what remains of their former island home.

The infrastructure needs to effectuate this dream are well beyond the means of this tiny community – particularly as they have no dependable income sources without access to their agricultural land and former fishing grounds. They have petitioned the district and provincial government to build new bridges and roads to restore access to the island – which they claim has potential as a coastal eco-tourism venue – but have been told that their small population renders them ineligible for government assistance on such a scale.

Two years ago, without consulting anyone from Pulo Muliya, a contractor turned up and began construction of a bridge from the mainland to the nearest delta island. A particularly egregious example of the sort of 'goat barrel' project that typifies the 'combatants to contractors' dynamic that pervaded the early years of Aceh's special autonomy (Aspinal 2009), this narrow footbridge has turned out to be entirely useless. The mainland end is too high and too close to the existing road so as to prevent the construction of a vehicle access ramp, and on the island end, it terminates abruptly in a large swamp. The only use of what villagers have dubbed the 'bridge to nowhere' is a few hobbyists who climb out in the evening to drop fishing lines into the muddy river below.

This failed project makes the dream of a return to Pulo Muliya island even more remote. Like the bridge, the people of Pulo Muliya are feeling as if they have nowhere to go.

Ten years after the tsunami and many residents of the rural relocation *Gampong* included in this survey still have no clear or reliable source of income. Many households in the resettlement villages of Cot Meukeuta and Pulo Muliya still rely on 'poverty ration' rice (*beras raskin*) to feed their families, which they supplement with occasional wages as casual labourers. Where relocation villages have been carved out of existing *Gampong*, relations with 'host' communities are often less than amicable. Host villagers feel as if they have sacrificed land for outsiders; the relocated villagers begrudge their lack of access to nearby agricultural land and forests, worry that their hosts may one day change their mind and kick them out, and resent working as agricultural labourers for neighbours who once were their equals. Many relocated villagers see a return to their ancestral homes as the only way out of their current dire straits.

Conclusion

The foregoing provides a small window into the experiences of a few *Gampong* communities, a decade after the catastrophic tsunami of 26 December 2004, followed by history's largest relief and reconstruction effort in a developing country. An overarching theme throughout the experiences of these communities was a sense of a 'return to normal'. Nobody has forgotten the traumatic events of December 2004, nor the tumultuous years that followed. But the people of 15 villages on Aceh's western and northern coastlines have moved on.

Narratives of the past were prevalent in discussions and interviews, just as they were during the original ACARP research in 2007. At that time, however, this mainly took the form of people recounting their tsunami stories. In 2014, this had changed. A common topic in public discourse in Aceh is talk of a return to an historical epoch of Acehnese greatness, promoted by provincial

and *kabupaten* governments, local news media, and by politicians during election campaigns (of which there have been four since the LoGA was passed in 2006). At a more personal or intimate level, was a palpable sense of yearning to return to a familiar – perhaps somewhat romanticised – pre-disaster condition. The strong desire for a 'return to normal' commonly features in writing about disaster psychology and disaster recovery (e.g., Dove 2008; Lindell 2013; Natural Hazards Center 2006). This propensity is often regarded as a hindrance to effective disaster recovery, leading to a tendency to reproduce the communities' existing disaster vulnerability. This was evident in the tsunami reconstruction in Aceh, where communities lobbied hard to rebuild in their original locations, often contravening an early policy to establish a strict shoreline 'no-build zone' of 300 to 1,000 meters (Government of Indonesia 2005; Wegelin 2006; Telford and Cosgrave 2006).

In the context of this study, the most telling indications of this tendency are in patterns and practice of governance, including declining levels of active participation in *Gampong* development planning and decision-making combined with a ceding of authority and control to *Gampong* government leaders when compared to the dynamic encountered during the 2007 ACARP study. It also manifests in reduced women's participation in the 'public sphere' in their *Gampong*. Other studies undertaken as part of the broader Aftermath of Aid research project (forthcoming) have found a similar trend of reproducing pre-tsunami conditions in owner modifications to post-tsunami housing and in terms of livelihoods.⁴⁸

Normal perhaps, but also improved: Although many have not recovered lost livelihoods or assets, most informants gladly acknowledged that conditions today are better than they were before the tsunami struck in December 2004. Beyond the obvious material improvements such as better roads and electricity – and the security and relief of

⁴⁸ I.e., most people have resumed their pre-tsunami occupations; aid-initiated business ventures that still endure are almost entirely by people who owned or managed such businesses before the tsunami.

peacetime after decades of conflict – people commented that they do feel more *empowered* – due to both skills and capabilities they gained through their involvement in recovery and reconstruction programs, and also perceived improvements in *Gampong* leaders' capacity to address

issues and problems as they arise, and [in some cases], secure services and resources from government. Put simply, Aceh villagers are experiencing a *new normal* that the turbulent region has perhaps never known.



Fishing boats at sunset, *Gampong* Lhok Leuhu

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Appendix: Summary of ACARP (2007) Findings

The ACARP I research project was undertaken at a time when the initial post-disaster relief effort was winding down and the reconstruction phase was reaching maximum intensity. Recovery and reconstruction was the primary concern and main activity of most Acehnese people living in the tsunami impact zone. Most villagers were still living in barracks or temporary housing and were still largely dependent on food aid. Many received daily wages for labour performed on reconstruction projects.

As the ACARP I report (pp. 132) noted, 'Many ... studies point out that the devastation wrought by the tsunami on the Acehnese community's social fabric and social institutions matches, if not exceeds, the physical destruction, and that the recovery effort is as much about re-establishing society as it is about reconstructing infrastructure and facilities and resuming production'.

The findings presented below are arranged into three topics, the first and largest being *Gampong* Government and Governance, followed by shorter sections on Livelihoods and Economic Development, and Housing and Infrastructure.

1. *Gampong* Government and Governance

a. Leadership

- i. Local leadership presented as the key determining factor differentiating more successful from less successful village recovery.
- ii. The role and character of *Geucik* (Village Head) is particularly important in Acehnese communities, with communities expressing a clear preference for *Geucik* who facilitate, rather than control, government affairs and recovery program implementation.
- iii. Depth and breadth of *Gampong* leadership was another key determinant, with *Gampong* where leadership teams had coalesced performing better than those led by a single figure.
- iv. Factionalism and rivalries within communities and their leadership structures could seriously impede recovery efforts, and result in uneven and inequitable allocation of aid benefits.
- v. Communities where ex-GAM combatants or leaders had been incorporated into the *Gampong* government apparatus benefited from increased unity, motivation and overall effectiveness of recovery efforts.
- vi. Village development cadre often served a useful role in mobilising and supporting recovery programs, provided they were well selected, trained and supported.
- vii. Village Facilitators provided invaluable support to both strengthening *Gampong* government institutions through skills training and mentoring, also improved overall planning and coordination of *Gampong* community recovery programs. Unhealthy dependencies could develop if the Facilitators did not undertake a methodical process of transferring skills and responsibilities to the appropriate village institutions and personnel.

b. Decision-making and Problem Solving

- i. There was a strong correlation between frequent *Gampong* meetings, and successful recovery program implementation (plus a host of other positive social capital indicators).
- ii. Conducive facilities for conducting meetings represented an important early priority in communities recovering from disaster.
- iii. Skills training programs, including general communication, facilitation and decision-making techniques as well as more specialised training programs (e.g., land rights, inheritance and advocacy, gender awareness, conflict mediation) provided much-needed capacity building support for *Gampong* community members and leaders.
- iv. The establishment of dedicated project management committees for community-based projects and programs (e.g., small-scale infrastructure), accompanied by clear guidelines and procedures for inclusive planning and decision-making, participatory management and monitoring, and financial disclosure and accountability, provided valuable examples and learning opportunities for communities, while acculturating these values and promoting their uptake by *Gampong* government.

c. Transparency and accountability

- i. Overall, there appeared to be a shift toward greater transparency and accountability of *Gampong* government in Aceh, although there were also communities where this was not taking place.
- ii. The ongoing process of direct *Geucik* elections was supporting this shift – although again, there were examples where this process had been subverted.
- iii. *Gampong* with fully constituted *Gampong* government structures demonstrated greater transparency and accountability than those still led by single figures or small cliques. The engagement and empowerment of customary and/or informal institutions in *Gampong* recovery efforts also supported a more even balance of power and enhanced accountability.
- iv. The approaches taken by donors and other aid delivery agencies significantly impacted the adoption of the values and institutions of transparent and accountable governance.

d. Women's Participation

- i. The tsunami recovery effort was accompanied by a perceptible increase in the level of women's formal participation in *Gampong* community decision-making and recovery and development program management and implementation – although there were many *Gampong* where this was still clearly not the case.
- ii. In *Gampong* that had formally adopted gender mainstreaming principles, these changes were [at the time] enthusiastically embraced by many women and generally supported by the men of the community.
- iii. In communities where women were not formally incorporated into decision-making and governance structures and procedures, they were often actively involved in these affairs at the neighbourhood and household levels.
- iv. Increased women's participation had not yet generated measurable impact on most other social capital

or aid effectiveness indicators. This was thought to be due to the relatively small number of *Gampong* that had fully embraced gender mainstreaming principles at the time of the research, together with the fact that the process had been underway for a relatively short time. The report speculated that these links might become more pronounced with the passage of time (if indeed these changes persisted beyond the donor-driven 'affirmative action' phase that characterised the tsunami recovery and reconstruction period).

e. Social Capital

- i. Social capital was considered to be generally quite strong in Acehnese society, and although seriously impacted by tsunami losses and trauma and aspects of the recovery process, still formed an important asset supporting community recovery in tsunami-affected *Gampong*.
- ii. There was a strong correlation between levels of mutual trust in communities, and both the character and quality of local leadership, and the frequency and tenor, or conduct, of community meetings.
- iii. Communities that were able to physically and spatially reunite during the early phases of the recovery process were showing stronger and more rapid recovery than those where community members were dispersed across several different emergency accommodations.
- iv. The early revival of religious and customary cultural practices, rituals and associations provided a vital foundation for rebuilding social capital in traumatised communities.
- v. Despite protestations to the contrary, the tradition and institutions of *gotong-royong* mutual assistance and voluntary service remained quite prevalent in many Acehnese communities. Quality and legitimacy of *Gampong* leadership, rather than the frequency or duration of cash-for-work programs, appeared to be the primary factor differentiating communities in this regard.
- vi. Successful implementation of community self-help projects (e.g., small-scale infrastructure or public facilities) considerably enhanced community members' confidence and outlook, while building mutual trust and trust in leaders.

2. Livelihoods and Livelihood Support

- i. The average number of income earners per household is slightly lower than before the tsunami. Average household incomes, which dropped to zero in most cases in the wake of the tsunami, are now returning to (or in some cases exceeding) pre-tsunami levels, although there is considerable variability within and between villages. In all villages surveyed, basic household needs are being fulfilled.
- ii. This recovery derives from a combination of factors, many of them temporary in nature (e.g., food aid and subsidies, casual work as labourers on construction projects, and the use or conversion of livelihood assistance for consumption purposes). Productive and 'normal' commercial activities are resuming, though still quite limited in scope and scale.
- iii. Factors such as location, relative level of tsunami destruction, and the existence of productive activities that can be easily rehabilitated or restored, have influenced the speed and trajectory of economic recovery in villages.
- iv. Single-parent and orphan-headed households generally own and earn less than other households in their communities.

- v. In the primary production sphere, activities that have shown good recovery are small-scale fisheries, rubber tapping and brick and other building material production.
- vi. Other agricultural production is hardly resuming in most areas, due to a combination of factors including tsunami sediment and debris that still covers fields, lack of irrigation and drainage, an increase in pest (rat and wild boar) populations, and the fact that nobody else is doing it. Many people choose not to resume farming while less strenuous and (in the short-run at least) less risky income-earning opportunities exist, that provide immediate returns to labour. A few small scale (e.g., household garden) programs have seen some success in some villages.
- vii. It can therefore be surmised that most agricultural aid provided in the form of seeds, equipment, supplies and credit, has been premature (while most larger-scale inputs, such as field clearing and irrigation and drainage works, are taking too long).
- viii. Assistance to small-scale productive and commercial enterprise development, in the form of skills training, equipment and supplies, cash grants or loans, mentoring and technical support and marketing assistance, has shown uneven results. The following patterns are emerging:
 - The majority of successful enterprise development grants and loans are those that have allowed individuals to re-establish enterprises they owned or managed prior to the tsunami (although there have been smaller numbers of successful start-up businesses as well).
 - Micro-enterprise and micro-credit programs targeting women produce higher success rates (in terms of the survival rate of businesses or funds) than their male counterparts.
 - Income derived from women's economic activities is more often used to support household and education expenses.
- ix. Large amounts of livelihood and economic development aid have been expended on household consumption, including the purchase of luxury goods.
- x. The most common criticisms and complaints regarding livelihood and economic development aid focus on the quality or appropriateness of materials, equipment or stock provided, the lack of follow-up extension and support, and issues of targeting and equity.
- xi. Livelihood and economic development assistance has been characterised by homogeneity and a general lack of imagination. The supply-side approach taken would benefit from more demand assessment and market research.
- xii. Investment in 'enabling facilities' and support infrastructure – both physical and institutional – represents a more cost-effective means of supporting local economic revival than providing grants or loans to individual producers, although a mixture of these two types of assistance is necessary to achieve optimal outcomes.

3. Housing and Infrastructure

- i. Housing reconstruction programs have been plagued by a variety of problems, manifesting in the villages as frustrating delays, confusion over the bewildering variety of styles and types of housings, lack of clear minimum standards, and inability of residents to evaluate the quality of services. These problems are exacerbated by poor coordination and poor communication between the housing providers and intended recipients.

- ii. Land acquisition and land ownership represent extremely complex issues that are complicating and frequently impeding housing reconstruction. In the ACARP survey villages, examples include:
 - The difficulty of some poorer residents in some villages to acquire new land on which to build houses (and concomitant ineligibility for housing assistance);
 - Delays in the construction of housing, facilities and infrastructure in certain relocation villages;
 - A case of the village *Keucik* selling family ID cards to 'outsiders', which affords them eligibility to receive housing assistance, at the expense of (or in preference to) the original inhabitants of that community;
 - Cases of single individuals receiving multiple houses; and
 - The prospect of jealousy and friction arising over perceived inequities, particularly in cases where large numbers of new residents are settled in a village, or in villages where people whose houses were damaged have not received rehabilitation assistance, while those whose houses were destroyed have received new buildings.
- iii. Communities that received early temporary housing assistance that allowed them to return to their village or move into their relocation site have generally shown swifter progress in all facets of their recovery. This is obviously more likely when also accompanied by provision of basic amenities and services.
- iv. The small number of temporary or permanent housing construction programs that engaged local community members in planning and construction proceeded more quickly and experienced fewer complications than projects taking a 'turn-key' approach.
- v. The Timber for Aceh Initiative which discourages the use of locally harvested wood was not met with effective strategies to provide alternative building materials to Acehnese communities and families, further concentrating control of housing provision in the hands of NGOs and contractors.
- vi. Village Spatial Plans proven to be extremely beneficial in the small number of villages where these plans have been followed.
- vii. Small grants to communities to support infrastructure or public facilities, when accompanied by clear guidelines on participatory planning, transparent management and public disclosure of financial information, have proven to be an extremely cost effective means of delivering quality small-scale infrastructure not met by other donor or government projects, while significantly strengthening communities' capacity to plan and implement future self-help projects.

The Acehnese Gampong Ten Years On

A post-post tsunami assessment



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