

Women Building their Future

Gender Breakthroughs in Post-Tsunami Aceh



UNIFEM is the women's fund at the United Nations. It provides financial and technical assistance to innovative programmes and strategies that promote women's human rights, political participation and economic security. UNIFEM works in partnership with UN organizations, governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and networks to promote gender equality. It links women's issues and concerns to national, regional and global agendas by fostering collaboration and providing technical expertise on gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment strategies.

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Women Building Their Future: Gender Breakthroughs in Post-Tsunami Aceh

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UNIFEM East and Southeast Asia Regional Office
UN Building 5th Floor
Rajdamnoen Nok Avenue
Bangkok 10200 Thailand

Written by Elaine Enarson
Edited by Sarah Fortuna
Photos by UN Habitat and UNIFEM

Foreword

In the days before the tsunami women's voices were not even heard. Now they are.

Khairani Arifin, General Secretary, RPUK (Women Volunteers for Humanity)

The collective world memory of a tragedy the scale of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami is one of the brutality of nature, the struggle to recover and human strength over adversity. *Women Building Their Future* reflects that memory and tells the story of life in the immediate aftermath of the tsunami in the devastated province of Aceh. But it also reminds us of what happened next.

As Aceh reeled and life was turned upside down, in amongst the struggle to turn things right again, there was something else happening. The tear in the fabric of society offered a moment to stop and say, "Is this the best we can do?" While buildings were being rebuilt from the ground up, women grabbed the opportunity to rebuild the social structures that limited them from reaching their full potential, limited them from engaging fully in the reconstruction of their communities.

The All-Acehnese Women's Congress held in 2005 is emblematic of the strength and determination of the women of Aceh. Women were poorly represented at the decision-making table in the early months of tsunami recovery when crucial plans for the future of Aceh were being devised. Disenchanted by the lack of access to the reconstruction process, more than 400 women from all over the province gathered together to discuss women's issues and concerns and presented a list of recommendations reflecting their priority issues that were being overlooked by the decision-makers. From unsafe conditions in IDP camps to gender discriminatory enforcement of the Syariah, the list stood for women across Aceh who said, "It's time to listen to us, it's time that recovery priorities reflect the priorities of the whole community, not just a select group of men."

Now, four years later, we can look back on the incredible gains made by women for women's

empowerment and the benefit of the whole community. Four years later, joint land titling is policy and more women than ever before are the legally recognised owners of their land. Four years later, the Deputy Mayor of Banda Aceh is a woman who shows the community every day that women have what it takes to lead the community.

The experiences of women in Aceh, however, remind us that even at the right moment in history, with great effort from women and support from the international community, making real and lasting gains for gender equality remains an enormously challenging task. Oftentimes in the pressured environment of recovery, gender mainstreaming became a box to tick rather than a meaningful way forward, and at a time of great social upheaval, many looked to traditional, patriarchal structures as a source of stability.

However, despite those challenges, for those of us who watch the progress of the world's women closely, our memory of Aceh is one of gender breakthroughs. A valuable reminder of what can be achieved if women insist on being heard, insist on a better outcome.

As we face ever increasing numbers of devastating natural disasters around the world, the gender breakthroughs chronicled in this book may be an inspiration to women working in their own communities and humanitarian organisations who provide them with aid. I hope the stories documented in this publication reminds us all of the opportunity and necessity of women's involvement in times of great turmoil, and that even when facing great resistance. Even when the journey is slow, women can break through. And when they have, we all benefit.

Dr Jean D'Cunha

Regional Programme Director

UNIFEM East and South East Asia Regional Office

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Disaster Recovery

Women Building their Future

What lessons can be learned after a disaster of the magnitude of the Indian Ocean tsunami? How can the world be better prepared and take wiser decisions when homes, livelihoods, and communities must be restored or replaced?

Women have asked more pressing questions: Why is the knowledge so painfully won by girls and women, one disaster after the next, seemingly never captured? Why were decisions taken that created avoidable suffering and reinforced pre-tsunami inequalities?

Documenting what went wrong for women and girls in the aftermath of the tsunami is essential. It is a story already told by grassroots activists, NGOs and academics. Ignorance of gender inequalities in disaster response must continually be recognized and challenged so we do better next time. But in Aceh, where mistakes were certainly made, significant gender breakthroughs were also realized.

Tsunami-affected women supported by UNIFEM and others came together in the wake of unimaginable tragedy to chart a different course, demonstrating the potential of women on the front lines of conflict and disaster to be catalysts for change.

Enormous Loss, Unconscionable Neglect

The sheer scale and scope of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami captured the public imagination, sweeping nearly a quarter of a million people to their deaths in a moment, wreaking tremendous environmental and social devastation. In Indonesia, over 800 kilometers of Aceh's coast were inundated. An estimated 169,000 residents were killed and 600,000 left homeless. Unprecedented levels of international aid helped meet immediate needs, but recovery from long-lasting effects of a disaster of this magnitude depends, for both women and men, on disaster-resilient and sustainable redevelopment.

Violations of Acehese Women's Rights After the 2004 Tsunami

Lack of access to women's basic needs, such as underwear, sanitary pads, bathrooms, and medicine for reproductive health. These basics are urgently needed by women to cope with their vulnerability and multiple burdens in their daily lives.

Unavailability of clean water and sanitation. Clean water for women is a primary need for washing, food preparation for the family and of equal importance for taking care of their reproductive health.

Lack of access to health services. Women carrying the burden of reproduction did not receive adequate health care. Health services considerably determine whether women are capable of coping with various vulnerabilities due to lack of hygiene and sanitation standards in tents and barracks.

Inadequate housing facilities. Women are forced to live in unhygienic tents and barracks or in houses constructed by the government and international NGOs without proper kitchen and bathroom/toilet facilities as well as clean water for drinking, cooking, bathing, and washing.

Lack of access to education for children. Girls are forced to quit school or women are forced to work outside their houses in order to meet the expenses of putting their children in school.

Women's land rights denied. Women have lost their farm lands to the tsunami or are denied legal rights to inherit land owned by their husbands who died during the tsunami. Women consider land as the source of livelihood for the family.

Discrimination against women in accessing income generating opportunities: capital, raw materials, land, and markets. They are even denied direct aid for developing economic businesses that can become sources of income for the family.

Women's exclusion from decision making processes with women's opinions never taken into consideration even in matters related to communal living in tents or barracks.

Source: *Tsunami Aftermath: Violations of Women's Human Rights in Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam, Indonesia, 2006*, Risma Umar, et al. for Asian Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development

Pre-tsunami inequalities put surviving women at increased risk in the aftermath. Women lacking secure livelihoods before the disaster found themselves without land, housing, income, livestock, equipment, supplies, credit, markets – everything they needed to support themselves and their families. Women lacking health care and living with abuse and the fear of sexual violence before the tsunami were less healthy and less safe in the aftermath. Many struggled alone as the proportion of female-headed households increased. War widows struck hard by the tsunami faced the greatest challenges, as tsunami relief did not always reach them. Women lacking political power before the

disaster found it even more difficult to speak out – traditional women's spaces were swept away, and humanitarian relief efforts bypassed them or were accorded on their behalf to husbands and male relatives. Many women living comfortably with Islamic Sharia before the tsunami were concerned when restrictive rules threatened their freedom after the disaster.

Wrong turns and missteps

“It was clear that coordinators of emergency and reconstruction aid from overseas often imagined they were providing for women when they in fact were providing for their families: while they supplied cooking utensils and detergents, the women’s own needs, such as safety from harassment, privacy and requirements associated with menstruation or pregnancy were neglected.” John Gee, Six Months After the Tsunami, Still Picking Up the Pieces, Washington Report, August 2005.

External aid sometimes came through relief agencies well aware of the special challenges facing female survivors, but in the main the ‘tyranny of the urgent’ held sway. Humanitarian aid providers failed first and foremost to meaningfully consult with tsunami affected women. This in turn brought failure to identify or address immediate practical needs such as maternal health care and safe latrines as well as access to nontraditional livelihoods, legal rights and other structural gender interests. Women’s absence from reconstruction meetings was accepted on grounds of “culture,” and relief goods distributed through men – to the neglect of many women and children. Sex-disaggregated data were often not sought or used by government programs or aid agencies to ensure gender responsiveness.

This ostensibly “gender blind” approach manifestly failed women, for example with respect to housing. Barracks and temporary settlements designed and sited without input from affected women soon proved uncomfortable, unsanitary, unusable, unsafe, and ultimately unacceptable, and women

organized for change. “It was a learning process,” acknowledged one of the men charged with coordinating the massive relief effort through Badan Rehabilitasi dan Rekonstruksi (BRR – Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Agency). This government body, granted extraordinary authority during the relief phase to coordinate information and recovery programs in the region, soon became a vehicle for positive change. At this remarkable historical juncture, when all else was still uncertain, women collectively called for reconstruction with accountability to women and for a strong voice in the redevelopment of Acehese society.

Vulnerability, loss and marginalization are at the heart of disasters – but only half the story. Aceh’s women had faith in their capacity for self-determination after even this most catastrophic event. They worked as Muslim women whose faith informed their lives in different ways, even when women’s “sins” were blamed by some for this tsunami of historical proportion. They insisted that government and NGOs alike take their needs and interests into account. By saying no to “business as usual” they found new strengths, learned new skills and came together to start again. Their vision of the future was based on the realization of women’s fundamental human rights and the capacities of local women to shape their own future.



Building Blocks of Change: Strong Foundations

“When the truck arrived to bring supplies for tsunami victims, the conflict victims were there too. But they could only stand around and stare while the tsunami victims got the food and medical supplies.” Khairani Arifin, General Secretary, RPUK (Women Volunteers for Humanity)

Disasters unfold differently in different cultures – much as gender does. Aceh’s path to development had undermined the legacy of strong anti-colonialist heroines and ancient queens, just as it destroyed the traditional balai inong or women’s houses once present in every village. But Acehese women did indeed draw strength from their culture, including coping

skills well-honed over three decades of conflict in their war-torn province. As widows and heads of households, displaced from their homes and living with poverty, ill health, violence, disenfranchisement, and insecurity, they managed risk and crisis on a daily basis. Many lost land, income and family to the tsunami and suffered once again.

Women speak out at the Second All Acehnese Women's Congress

Women were poorly represented in the negotiations that brought about the post-tsunami peace agreement realized through the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and the Law on Governing Aceh (LOGA). But they were not silent, and neither had they been before tsunami.

Peace negotiations that excluded women and their particular needs as ex-combatants, war widows, survivors of violence and heads of households gave urgency to the strong efforts of the First All Acehnese Women's Congress (Duek Pakat Inong Aceh) to meaningfully include women and women's concerns in any peace-making processes in the future. Held in February 2000 in Banda Aceh, the First Women's Congress brought over 500 women and women's organisations together to promote a democratic movement for change and peace that, by definition, would include women. On this strong foundation, women raised their voices again for women's fundamental rights following the tsunami.

But what could be done strategically to create a larger space for women and advance gender equality holistically in the post-tsunami reconstruction era? What entry points existed for different organisational actors to intervene in ways that would avert neglect, oversight and exclusionary practices threatening

women's rights, safety and health in the aftermath? These were questions UNIFEM answered by supporting the Second All Acehnese Women's Congress (Duek Pakat Inong Aceh II) in June 2005 and preparatory meetings before the meeting to help local women articulate their concerns. For two days, over 400 women spoke out about problems they had experienced or observed. Chief among these were lack of consultation leading to lack of input when key decisions were taken about relocation and land ownership, lack of gender-targeted relief reaching women equitably, and inadequate protections for displaced girls and women in temporary accommodations. It was time for change.



The Second Women's Congress charted a path leading to striking gender breakthroughs in disaster reconstruction. Strong technical and financial support from UNIFEM enabled a multi-faceted gender response that helped women envision and realize their own futures and also meet some of their most compelling immediate needs. Women's efforts in Aceh, in the immediate aftermath of the world's most catastrophic tsunami in recorded history, demonstrated women's leadership in envisioning and achieving a just and sustainable recovery.

Local women came together again at the July 2005 Aceh Consultation facilitated by women's rights activists in the region. Among the most pressing issues just seven months after the tsunami was simply the lack of information – who knew how women were faring? Who cared? The documentation project, Survey of Women's Human Rights Violations in the Tsunami Aftermath and Guidelines for Gender Sensitive Disaster Management and Relief by APWLD, was one result and provided baseline information on

Priorities Identified at the Second All-Acehnese Women's Congress:

- Women and Syariah
- Women and Peace
- Women in Politics
- Women and the Economy and Labour Force
- Women in Education and Health
- Women and Children in IDP Camps

the status of women post-tsunami in Aceh and across the region.

Women identified neglected issues such as increased risk of gender-based violence and articulated the imperative for unity, including equitable assistance to women living parallel lives with urgent needs, whether due to conflict, disaster or both.

The Distance Traveled

Strong, multifaceted and sustained support from UNIFEM as the leading international advocate for women pushed this agenda forward in a positive manner and helped ensure buy-in from community and government leaders. With strong local connections and expert staff, UNIFEM worked to ensure that the Aceh Recovery Framework was envisioned and implemented with sensitivity to women and gender concerns. Joining provincial women's organisations, NGOs, local universities, and other UN agencies in the Gender Working Group, UNIFEM provided leadership and technical support, including establishing agency gender focal points across the region and appointing a Gender Advisor to aid BRR for gender mainstreaming.

Realizing gender equality as a cornerstone of effective development led to the recognition of gender in the Aceh Recovery Framework (ARF), the province's roadmap to sustainable development. Gender was highlighted as a cross-cutting issue and gender equality affirmed as a guiding principle of reconstruction and development. Aceh would rebuild in ways that promoted women's full and equal participation and their full human rights, beginning now with gender-responsive recovery programming.

It is difficult to overstate the potential impact of gender mainstreaming in the ARF. The groundwork for change was laid when gender was identified as one of the "overarching priorities of government" with these goals: "To widen access for women in public, political and economic life through regulatory and governance reforms in line with CEDAW, and to curb domestic violence by targeting discriminatory



practices in social, economic and cultural domains, including through pro-gender trainings to formal and religious courts and local *adat* structures for raising and settling grievances.” Six areas for action were highlighted, including the peace process and reintegration; good governance and the rule of law; basic services; asset management and capacity building; economic development; and infrastructure and housing.



Building New Legal Frameworks for Women's Rights

With support from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), UNIFEM took the lead in efforts to increase women's awareness of their rights in the context of Sharia, believing that lasting and structural change for women could be achieved in this way. Indeed, substantive legal reforms of great immediate and potential benefit to women and their families were a positive outcome of the tsunami five years later.

The unexpected peace and democratization dividend of the tsunami tragedy immediately opened new avenues for women's empowerment – and women were there to prop open the post-disaster window of opportunity for change.

Democratic representation

National Law No. 10/2008 on General Elections provides for a 30 percent quota for women in elected office, though few districts achieve this and potential female candidates face many constraints.

The Second Women's Congress helped jumpstart the process of gender-responsive legal reform, beginning the process of advocacy into the qanun-making process. Realizing the same goals for quotas in local legislation would help implement the national law locally where gender equality perspectives were especially needed in the post-conflict and post-tsunami era.

The Qanun on Local Political Parties (Law No.3/2008) mandates that local parties field women as 30% of their candidates. Furthermore,

after extensive advocacy by the Women's Policy Network and technical and financial support from UNIFEM, the Qanun on the Execution of Elections in Aceh (Law No.7/2007) was passed with provisions for a 30 percent quota of women in election oversight committees. Previously unforced, renewed efforts to encourage and support women candidates are now underway with some notable successes. The gender quota is further evidence of increased awareness of gender inequalities in the wake of the tsunami and a new climate of openness for women's empowerment

The first woman to be elected as Vice-Mayor of the City of Banda Aceh in the wake of the tsunami, Illiza Sa'aduddin attributes her election to the tsunami and resulting mobilization of women. Her office reflects this relationship, as exemplified by the new gender advisor, the Gender Working Group formed by the City, a Women's Development Center, a parallel women's city planning process, gender focal points and a five-year planning process for women's empowerment in Aceh. In these and other ways, the new Vice-Mayor strives to make Aceh a "women-friendly city."

The Agency for Women's Empowerment and Child Protection

In a strong symbol of support from the Aceh Government, the Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Agency was transformed from a bureau to an independent agency reporting directly to the Governor. Following the tsunami, the agency had advocated for specific and concrete steps on behalf of women and their

families, including one-stop crisis centers for survivors of violence, land rights and joint titling, rebuilding of traditional women's houses, and development and strengthening of the capacity of local women leaders. Growing stronger each year, the agency now has a solid strategic plan, trains government officers on gender equality and women's empowerment, and is leading the revitalization of gender-focal points in provincial and district departments.

The Charter on Women's Rights

"If women's rights are ignored, whatever interventions are made, they will not solve problems in the community as a whole."

Khairani Arifin, General Secretary, RPuk,
(Women Volunteers for Humanity)

Aceh is the only province in Indonesia with the right to implement Islamic Sharia in full. Within that context, a progressive Charter on Women's Rights for Aceh was developed by Acehnese women with the support of GTZ and endorsed by the Governor in 2008. Despite opposition, and with the support of many religious authorities, passage of the Charter is a striking symbol of women's empowerment after decades of conflict and the losses of the 2004 tsunami.

"We, the signatories of the Aceh Charter on Women's Rights, believe that fair treatment of women is in line with the principles of Islam – justice, consensus, equality, tolerance, piety and peace – so that violation of these values constitutes a violation of the values of Islam, which brought peace and blessings into the world."

With this preamble, women activists joined with religious and civil authorities in adopting the charter, which includes rights to land, education, guardianship of children and protection from violence. The 18 articles stipulate equality before the law, recognizing everyday differences and inequalities between women and men and acknowledging the need for policies that treat the sexes differently or identically as needed in order to advance women's empowerment. Developed over the course of a year with input from a wide range of stakeholders, the Charter is a moral statement applying to all women in the province.

Further strengthening the rights of women in the law, the Qanun on Women's Empowerment and Protection of Women's Rights makes egalitarian principles explicit and gives specific guidance on how to achieve those aims, including stipulating that at least ten percent of provincial and regional budgets in Aceh support women. City and district governments and the provincial government are called upon to evaluate the teaching curriculum for instance, in order to "accommodate the egalitarian principle" such as demonstrating women's strong and active roles in the history of the province. Cultural practices that may discriminate against women are also to be evaluated according to the new Qanun.

Joint Land Titling

“It is a matter of courage to implement something new or introduce changes. This is something that people or certain organisations lack – risk taking. For example when we were trying to introduce joint ownership of land titles, it was a problem in Aceh since Sharia law is stronger here than the rest of Indonesia. People said it was impossible to do but we saw the opportunity.” Edi Purwanto, Deputy Chief of Operations, BRR

Tsunami waters reshaped the physical landscape, washing away houses, livestock, tools, equipment, and the natural resources upon which so many depended for their livelihoods. The practice of informal possession and the destruction of what ownership documents might have existed complicated decisions about rebuilding.

But women faced additional challenges when they sought to rebuild their homes and livelihoods. Customary practice rarely supported joint ownership of housing, land or other assets before the tsunami, whether this was due to personal choice or religious norms restricting women’s right to inheritance. Widows often lost land and homes to male members of the extended family or were at risk of losing their homes to subsequent wives in the event of multiple marriages.

“If you have good leadership and a legal framework as well as a partnership with informal leaders from the women’s and religious communities, this can make or break the success of joint land titling.” Eddie Darajat, Chief Information Officer, BRR

A key turning point came when the BRR’s joint land titling policy was introduced. The policy creates an administrative mechanism for the National Land Office to ensure land title to widows and joint titling for married couples as well as co-resident siblings or other family members. Now informed by gender analysis, BRR assists land title officials in raising women’s awareness of this new right and identifying specific cases needing attention. With backing and technical assistance from UNIFEM, joint land titling emerged as the strongest recommendation for reconstruction officials. Accordingly, BRR agency director Kuntoro Mangkusubroto spoke out:

“Although there is no statement in Sharia or adat law or Indonesian law that prevents women from owning land or being a signatory to a joint title, specific interventions are required to support full implementation and understanding of these rights...The question of access to productive assets, including land for widows and the application of joint land titling for spouses, is a serious matter... We hope that it [will be] a reality, not only for the immediate victims of disaster who have lost so much, but also for generations to come.”

These specific interventions were realized through UNIFEM’s technical support for land registration authorities following BRR’s commitment to mandatory joint land titling in resettlement areas.

“There was a meeting and the community was informed that the land titles would be in the names of both the man and the woman. But only

men were invited to the meeting so the women were not aware of this. The general practice in Aceh is that the house certificate is issued only in the name of the husband. But the certificate should have both names because then if something should happen to the man, the wife would still be able to access the land and call it her own. Bad cases have already happened – when the husband was away, the wife and children have been forced from the land. It would be better to have the certificate with both names.” Internally displaced man, Aceh, December 2009

Married women in Indonesia have equal title to property, but abstract rights are often trampled in the absence of awareness and implementation mechanisms. Those who held title or joint title were unable to provide documentation due to loss of their homes, or had not thought it necessary to formally register property in both names.

“Ensuring land rights for women in Aceh was particularly crucial in a male-dominated society to enhance their agricultural productivity and security, increase access to productive resources

and promote family welfare”, says Dr Jean D’Cunha, Regional Programme Director of UNIFEM’s East and Southeast Asia Regional Office.

There is both material and symbolic power in jointly held title for persons resettled after the disaster. National Land Board regulations are now implemented with a high degree of gender awareness, particularly about the benefits to women. Community workshops organized by UNIFEM staff increased women’s awareness of their existing right to marital property. The workshops focused on the advantages over time of registering jointly held land in both names, especially where title is contested by male relatives or village leaders, such as frequently occurred after the tsunami. Displaced women who married men not affected by the disaster can now apply successfully for sole ownership, and many also take an active role in redrawing of land boundaries, the essential and lengthy process that precedes certification of title. Women in large numbers then went on to help design and construct the new homes that sit upon newly claimed lands.



“It’s important that the database holds data from day one and includes sex disaggregated data. When we talk about family in Indonesia, the name used is that of the head of the family, which is the man. That is something that should also be considered – putting the names of both the man and the woman. It would be good to have both names, because then you know who the woman in that family is.” Eddie Darajat, Chief Information Officer, BRR

Without sex-disaggregated data in the land titling program and careful monitoring, the impact of the joint land titling policy is difficult to assess. Women’s acceptance of men’s customary rights to represent the household and pressure from men to protect the land rights of male heirs are factors that help account for the relatively small numbers of jointly held land titles issued – by some estimates just 5 percent

four years later. But for approximately 14,000 women, including women heads of households, UNIFEM-supported initiatives have made joint land titling a reality. Women owning title to land have increased opportunity for agricultural production and income, collateral for loans, and the sense of personal security that secure housing can bring. Understanding their legal rights and knowing how to assert them is an accomplishment equal in value.

The joint land titling policy provided new economic security and greatly increased gender awareness for tens of thousands of women in Aceh – and can, in time, become the national policy applying to all households. When jointly held and registered property is the law of the land and not simply an option, all Indonesian women will benefit.

Women's Space: Rebuilding Balai Inong

A place and space for women emerges after most disasters as a vital recovery resource and Aceh was no exception. The traditional balai inong (women's houses) used by women in most villages for Qur'an reciting and other gatherings were swept away by the tsunami and sorely missed. When women from around Aceh gathered in the Second All Acehese Women's Congress to exchange ideas about promoting more gender-responsive reconstruction, one of their primary demands was to recreate these essential spaces.

Once a familiar and safe space for women across the province, many of the balai inong had fallen into disrepair. Especially in villages where living

space is crowded and women's mobility very limited, these are essential spaces where women gather on a daily basis for mutual support and organizing. As the balai inong returned, women become catalyst for change.

Enabled through technical assistance from UNIFEM, the Governor and the head of BRR moved the reconstruction of women's spaces up on the agenda and balai inong began to be rebuilt.

While some post-tsunami balai inong conveyed a negative message through their small size, poor location, hasty construction, and lack of resources or support, the brilliant blues and



reds, soaring ceilings and ample meeting space in the UNIFEM-sponsored houses built by the Balai Inong Consortium in Banda Aceh sent a different message. Sponsored by UNIFEM, Jones Day, Sisters of Mercy, UNDP and OCHA, local women designed the spaces and planned ways for using them to help women rebuild their lives. UNIFEM's continuing support does not build dependency but is a strong vote of confidence and a resource base for future collaboration. Local women tapped into UNIFEM skills building projects such as management and photography workshops, and the new spaces are now a place where women once again come together to collaborate on projects of mutual interest. Leading the entire process, from designing the buildings, to buying to paint for the walls, the women involved honed their skills which are sure to benefit the balai inongs into the future.

"It was not the husbands of these women that stopped them from working in construction, but rather men in the community – especially village leaders. But now they see that women can do this type of work. At the beginning, UNIFEM said that women can do this type of work even if it takes longer. So we said to the men, 'We don't care, we will still do it'." Kayanisah, Deputy Head, Balai Inong Consortium

Building Institutional Accountability and Mainstreaming Gender

In addition to specific programmes such as joint land titling, Acehese women have worked with UNIFEM guidance for institutional gender mainstreaming in BRR. Criticized by women for lack of gender responsiveness in the early stages of relief and reconstruction, BRR was encouraged by the Second Women's Congress to listen and respond to the concerns of displaced women.

"We have to have a critical mass of people who believe in the policy. You can have a good leader but if you don't have a certain number of people in the organisation believing it, it will not be successful. This does not need to be women. In Indonesia, most of the time, the successful programs in gender mainstreaming have not only been led by women. Gender mainstreaming should not just be given lip service. It should be implemented...Checklists can be helpful. But do I use the checklist effectively? If you go inside and change the paradigm of the people, you don't need the checklist anymore." Edi Purwanto, Deputy Chief of Operations, BRR

Gender mainstreaming in tsunami reconstruction

The message was heard. Now widely regarded as a strong champion of women's rights, the head of BRR supported UNIFEM's mainstreaming efforts through public statements and concrete action. One result was the creation of the Gender and Women's Empowerment Unit of the BRR and organisational leadership in implementing the new Gender Policy.

Gender responsive programming cannot move forward without this level of policy integration – and the determination and resources needed to implement it. This support was gained in 2000 when a Presidential instruction on gender mainstreaming was issued along with implementation guidelines that provided the legal framework for mainstreaming as an obligation, not a choice.

Promoting Mainstreaming Gender in NAD-Nias Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Process is the core policy document created to guide every aspect of tsunami recovery. In a major step toward sustainable redevelopment, it also seeks gender equality in post-tsunami national development strategies. Introduced in the second year of the BRR, the gender policy provided for staff trainings that increased awareness and built gender analysis skills. Practical checklists and other tools were developed for operational use in the areas of health, housing, education, livelihood and institutional change. Soon, sex-disaggregated data became a baseline requirement in project proposals that came through the BRR from external sources. Consultations with community members conducted by BRR were attended by women who, in increasing numbers, felt that their concerns were heard.

Culturally sensitive gender programming was a priority, so the BRR gender team also offered trainings to key community leaders, including religious leaders who were offered training in positive overlap between Islam and women's

rights. Local women ulama (religious leaders) received training at the Islamic Institute in Jakarta to ensure that they too were part of the recovery effort. This was an important step forward that helped prepare the groundwork for substantive change.

While some see the half-empty glass due to subtle resistance to change, other women and men point to the gender policy as a turning point in a new workplace culture that is much more supportive of gender-responsive reconstruction. Organisational change was also promoted by UNIFEM's technical and personal support for the BRR gender advisor. This was a solid and effective partnership due to interagency networks and UNIFEM's strong connections with local women's organisations.

The exit strategy for institutionalizing gender mainstreaming

"People are always talking about gender and have lists of target beneficiaries and gender disaggregated data. Of course this is important but it's not enough – you have to have participation. When women participated in the process we found that all our outputs, whatever

we designed, were better considered." Eddie Darajat, Chief Information Officer, BRR

The Gender Policy spelled out an ambitious transition plan for maintaining the focus on gender equality under the new leadership of local and provincial authorities. The "exit strategy" is not about endings but beginnings, pointing the way toward gender mainstreaming in all future provincial and national development plans. Specific indicators for gender equality in all sectors of development were developed to assist national decision makers as tsunami-recovery programmes end and control over post-tsunami development is transferred to the Aceh Government. To keep the focus on gender, the exit strategy also calls for government to create permanent gender units and place these in key development planning offices with the administrative and financial support needed for effective action. Follow up is certainly needed, but this breakthrough provides a way to capture the hard-won lessons of the tsunami and carry these into the nation's future.



Building a Knowledge Base for Positive Change

Asking the right questions is the linchpin of gender-responsive programming in crises and begins with sensitivity to the everyday realities of women, men, boys and girls. In the wake of the tsunami, knowing where to look and why was essential and challenging.

Sex-disaggregated data for gender analysis

“People said maybe gender mainstreaming could work well in livelihoods, health and education or religion but no one mentioned infrastructure. I said I wanted to prove that it would work in infrastructure. So I said we would include it in the plan and then we could monitor it. From the start we had to segregate the data so that we had the knowledge needed. I thought I would be lucky to have seven percent women’s participation in that project. To my surprise, at the end of the project the figure was 21 percent. It was successful because we opened doors and did not dictate – we just gave space.”

Edi Purwanto, Deputy Chief of Operations, BRR.

There is no substitute for gender analysis in assessing whether or how disaster efforts reach girls and women and how well relief and recovery projects address practical needs and strategic interests. In this spirit, gender based analysis was highlighted as a critical strategy for gender mainstreaming by both the Gender Working Group and the Gender and Women’s Empowerment Unit. The first and fundamental step was to accept only sex-disaggregated data from relief partners working through the BRR, a position firmly stipulated in the BRR Gender Policy. This allowed careful review of gender

patterns in outreach to affected women and, used effectively, the gender monitoring of how meaningfully women and men, respectively, were engaged in their own recovery. Gender sensitivity was also used as evaluation criteria by BRR staff in charge of assessing and coordinating proposed tsunami relief projects.

In 2008, responding to the lack of sex-disaggregated data in Aceh, UNIFEM with support from CIDA, collaborated with UNORC, BRR and Insan Hitawasana Sejahtera to carry out the largest collection ever of sex-disaggregated data in Aceh. The collaboration produced publications on Aceh province and Banda Aceh which include 204 indicators on health, economy, land, politics, education, decision making and demography. The accompanying gender profiles reflect on the data, providing a valuable baseline from which to move forward. The data collection will be ongoing and integrated into existing data collection mechanisms in Aceh, making Aceh one of the leading provinces on sex-disaggregated data collection in Indonesia.

Gender-sensitive impact assessments

Realizing that critical knowledge was lacking about the effects of the tsunami on women and girls – immediate and developing effects, direct and indirect – the BRR Gender Unit undertook to collect and analyze sex-disaggregated data on living conditions one year after the disaster. The review documented key dimensions of displaced women’s living conditions, including maternal health and education, violence, land rights, impacts on livelihood, and opportunities for women as decision makers in community



consultations and in BRR and local government. The report provided an overview of women's political status in Aceh before and after the disaster and identified the many barriers to full participation facing local women. Lack of meaningful participation was the bottom line.

The Aceh Consultation conducted by the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD), with support from two local NGOs, spurred a region-wide documentation project on women's rights in the wake of the tsunami, resulting in country-specific reports and a summary set of gender mainstreaming guidelines. Important information about Acehese women's experiences and feelings, especially around privacy issues, land rights, sexual assault, domestic abuse and trafficking, was gained through these fact-finding missions.

"Reconstructing life." UNIFEM's gender analysis of the 2004 tsunami

UNIFEM undertook a path-breaking post-disaster needs assessment involving more than 6,000 women in 17 districts in August 2005,

some eight months after the tsunami. Unlike the great majority of such assessments, this study examined achievements and challenges "through women's eyes." Canvassing women through questionnaires, with follow up focus group discussions led by a trusted women's organisation, the study captured women's perceptions as users of the services and spaces provided, from water and latrines to maternal health care, shelter and transport. It also revealed pervasive psychosocial effects of displacement and loss, including depression and the mental health consequences of domestic violence.

Local women trained in the fundamentals of participatory action research worked with gender experts from UNIFEM and other local organisations. Findings from the study clearly document the vital role of women as caregivers and income producers in the aftermath, and the ways they sought to cope with extremity. High levels of land ownership were documented (67 percent of those surveyed) but women held clear land title themselves in much smaller

proportions (14 percent). They also reported that general community planning meetings did not meet their needs, that new women's networks in the barracks had quickly emerged, and that very few women had a sense of what the future might hold or how to realize their own aspirations.

Breakthroughs in analysis were possible by examining the event through the eyes of women. One result was documentation of differences among women as they struggled to cope. Some women put livelihood relief funds to work by building a mushroom cooperative, for example, thereby expanding on their traditional farming and baking skills and expanding markets and income. In the village of Cot Cut in Aceh Besar, after living in tents for over a year and lacking land and homes to which they could return, community solidarity was strong. Here, one strong woman leader chose to put her relief monies to use for the common good. By starting up a coffee house, she earned her own income but also provided an outlet for other local women to sell their own coffee and baked goods. The coffee house also provided much-needed social space for local men to gather for mutual support as they overcame the psychosocial effects of the tsunami. This, too, protected and enhanced women's well-being and safety.



This profile of women's status provided very important qualitative data on the cultural contexts for gender relations as a factor in recovery. The resulting statistical profile produced through the baselines study also yielded sex-specific data not previously available which can now be used to guide social policy as Aceh revises its own future.

Learning about men in disasters

Does gender mean women? While the answer is no, a gender lens is rarely applied in studies of men in disasters. This, too, is an essential breakthrough in Aceh. In a later phase of UNIFEM's study, data were collected by UNIFEM on gender norms as a factor in men's recovery, pointing to connections between post-tsunami stress and increased family conflict, including domestic violence. Yet very little gender-aware psychosocial assistance was made available to men or to women, a critical gap affecting the safety and wellbeing of both women and men. In an area and era marked by decades of conflict and repression, men fell silent when asked to speak about their life and work, further complicating their emotional recovery. In some areas, where men seemed more reluctant than women to take on paid work or begin repairs, researchers found higher levels of male depression.

Surveyors noted the absence of therapeutic services for men in the region despite the concerns men themselves expressed about their strong emotions, including quickness to anger and deep sadness. Similarly, in a study collecting gender and age data from Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar, men over 60 reported feeling inadequate to the traditional responsibility they felt as family patriarchs in Aceh, fearing they had become a burden to their children. These researchers, too, noted the lack of psychosocial outreach to men, though clearly the health and wellbeing of women and men are intimately related.

"Gender mainstreaming is not something you have to do because someone tells you to do it. This is something that comes from within your organisation and within yourself to convince you that this is a must." Edi Purwanto, Deputy Chief of Operations, BRR



Charting the Course: New Challenges, Next Steps

Women who lost so much had many competing claims on their time – livelihoods and working spaces to rebuild, houses to turn into homes, new marriages and new children to nurture. The gender breakthroughs reported here are all the more remarkable because none were possible without the time and energy of women survivors.

The best-laid plans for post-disaster relief and recovery fail if superimposed on a population seen as dependent and passive, with disregard (or disdain) for culture and place and the gender relations they embody. Gender norms reflect and reinforce cultural values and practices, perhaps more strongly in the aftermath than before disasters. Though gender relations are challenged by crisis, traditional gender rules subordinating women are often in evidence – and often contested. Post-tsunami, more restrictive clothing norms were more actively asserted and some women harassed for organising on their own behalf. Tensions arose between sensitivity to traditional cultural norms – for example men’s control over land and inheritance as protectors of women and the family – and the values and aims of gender equality, which some dismissed as “western” and inappropriate for Aceh.

The challenges of tradition, conflict and vested interests

In Aceh, there were many complicating factors on the ground as women and women’s organisations mobilized. Strong patriarchal traditions and many years of conflict made it difficult for tsunami-affected women to assert their rights and raise their voices. Men continued to be consulted more than women, and were accepted as representatives of the family. When women did attend public meetings, few spoke up. Raising awareness of women’s needs in the recovery was a challenge when local women and men alike accepted male leadership and women’s secondary status.

“After the tsunami the government has been giving many more opportunities to women. This includes widening access and including them in policy-level decision making and increasing access to education. In the days before the tsunami women’s voices were not even heard. Now they are. There was a time when the ulama ignored women’s groups. When groups tried to include them, they would refuse. But now they were involved in the drafting of the women’s charter. This is a big change and was due to much greater pressure from women following the tsunami.” Khairani Arifin, General Secretary, RPuK (Women Volunteers for Humanity)

Gender breakthroughs in Aceh were realised despite many challenges. Building on the hard-won lessons of women around the world caught up in disasters, the women of Aceh took advantage of a moment in time when everything changed, and the moment lasted long enough to see a different future ahead and move decisively toward it.

Strategic Recommendations from Aceh for Gender-Responsive Disaster Recovery

- Provide opportunities for women's collective mobilization before, during and after the disasters for solidarity, information exchange and advocacy
- Develop and strengthen local women's networks and organizations as partners in reconstruction
- Ensure that disaster affected women have safe, accessible and culturally positive spaces to meet, organize and conduct activities
- Advance disaster recovery in the political realm to the extent feasible focusing on the need for participatory and democratic process
- Identify the promotion and realization of women's rights as a key platform for long-term recovery, including women's land and housing rights
- Collect and utilize age-sensitive sex and gender specific data as a matter of policy for use in program evaluation and monitoring
- Promote a holistic, integrated and multi-sectoral model of gender mainstreaming with roles and obligations for men as well as women
- Develop a comprehensive plan for long-term recovery including a gender sensitive exit strategy that can institutionalize mainstreaming in the transition from relief and recovery to disaster resilient development
- Include local leaders in women-focused recovery initiatives, with outreach to faith-based organizations and leaders
- Seek cultural change in relief and reconstruction agencies as well as procedural change, for example through culturally sensitive gender trainings

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