Village Government in Aceh, Three Years after the Tsunami

Craig Thorburn
Monash University

Introduction

The international response to the Asian tsunami of December 26, 2004 was without precedent in the history of natural disasters. A massive, media-fuelled global response resulted in commitments from government and private sources amounting to over US$ 13.5 billion (for all affected countries) within the first few weeks after the tragedy. Hundreds of organisations joined in the relief effort during the first weeks and months after the tragedy. In Indonesia, some 133 countries have contributed to the tsunami recovery effort.

In Aceh, the Indonesian government established the Executing Agency for the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Aceh and Nias (*Badan Pelaksana Rehabilitasi dan Rekonstruksi NAD dan Nias* – BRR), 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". Although it has been a lightning rod for criticism from many quarters ranging from communities angered by delays in the construction of houses, to local and national media, provincial and regional government, and many of its national and international donor and NGO partners, BRR has done a credible job of managing the Promethean task of rebuilding the shattered province. Most of the transient poverty and suffering that was created by the tsunami has been alleviated, and the transition from emergency relief to longer-term reconstruction was rapidly achieved. Families have roofs over their heads, and enough food to eat. People in towns and villages are returning to work. Local and regional government agencies, gutted by the tsunami, are developing capacities to carry the process forward.

This paper examines changes taking place in village government in three tsunami-affected districts on the west coast of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam. As such, a number of caveats are in order. First, the devastation of many village government structures and personnel was so complete that these communities have been forced to rebuild village government virtually from scratch. This is not the case, of course, in villages throughout most areas of the province not ravaged by the tsunami. Second, the massive tsunami recovery effort has created a unique 'institutional hothouse' with unusually high levels of capacity-building inputs, numerous 'imported' procedures and norms, and distinct constellations of incentives and rewards that again, largely do not pertain in villages throughout the remainder of the Acehnese hinterland. As well, the processes discussed in this essay have only been underway for a short time, and should not be inferred as representing 'trends'. The extent to which they represent opportunistic responses to the particular context of the 'aid tsunami', and how deeply they will imbed in Acehnese society, can only known with the passage of time.

The Aceh Community Assistance Research Project (ACARP)

The Aceh Community Assistance Research Project was a multi-donor supported qualitative social research project, aimed at identifying and better understanding the factors that support

and/or constrain recovery and redevelopment in communities in Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam in the wake of the December 2004 earthquake and tsunami. Field research was undertaken by a group of 27 Acehnese social researchers over a three-month period between July and September 2006 period in 18 tsunami-affected villages in the districts of Aceh Barat, Aceh Jaya and Aceh Besar, led by a team of senior researchers from Banda Aceh, Jakarta and Australia.

The objectives of the ACARP project are as follows:

1. To identify key organic and external factors that have influenced the success of communities in rebuilding their lives;

2. 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;

3. 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; and

4. To train an alumni of Acehnese researchers in sound social research methodologies, and to build momentum for continuing social research initiatives and evaluative projects in Aceh.

The 18 villages where field research was conducted were selected in matched pairs, from nine subdistricts in the three districts most severely impacted by the tsunami. In each pair, one village appears to be experiencing more successful recovery than its counterpart.[1] Each village has its own story to tell, with specific composites of assets and constraints, achievements and frustrations. The analysis focuses both on the distinctions and diversity, as well as the commonalities between communities' experiences.

A large quantity of data was gathered, including over 530 household questionnaires, 298 interview transcripts and 54 focus group discussion transcripts, and 87 case studies and family histories. Research teams prepared village profile documents for each of the 18 villages, following a standard format. As well, the project collected plans, reports, and other forms of secondary data from donors, NGOs, national and provincial government agencies, and the international and Indonesian media. After three weeks of data cleaning and preliminary analysis involving the full research team in Banda Aceh, the entire collection was shifted to Melbourne, for further analysis and report writing. A final report from the research project, entitled *The Acehnese Gampong, Three Years On: Assessing Local Capacity and Reconstruction Assistance in Post-Tsunami Aceh*, was published in Jakarta by AusAID in

---

1   The identification of pairs of more and less successfully recovering villages (called '*bangkit*', or 'awakening' and '*pra-bangkit*' or 'pre-awakening' or 'problematic' villages during the research process) was devised as an heuristic device to guide the selection process, and to provide an initial basis for comparison. As the research progressed, these categories were largely abandoned, as the distinctions between '*Bangkit*' and '*Pra-bangkit*' villages became blurred and indistinct. These designations were more useful in terms of initial site selection, than as analytical categories once data began to accrue.

March 2008, and disseminated through a series of workshops and seminars in the three districts where the research took place, the provincial capital Banda Aceh, and Jakarta. This paper focuses on aspects of the ACARP project's first two objectives, i.e., on the internal factors, capacities and constraints that have supported or constrained recovery in tsunami-affected villages.

Not surprisingly, leadership emerged as the key determining factor differentiating more successful from less successful village recovery, and this essay begins with a discussion of findings related to leaders and leadership styles. This is followed by a discussion of decision-making and problem-solving at the household and village community level, then shorter sections on issues of transparency and accountability, women's participation and gender equality, and social capital.

The main findings discussed below derive largely from questionnaire data, which was then verified, supplemented and illustrated using interview and focus group transcripts, and the observations of research team members. The questionnaire itself employed a variety of different types of questions, primarily multiple-choice or open-ended. While this allowed for a richer collection of responses, it confounds neat statistical analysis. Responses for many of the questions were first sorted by frequency, then recoded into three columns: a) respondent's first choice, b) respondent selected this as one of his/her responses, though not first, and c) respondent did not select this answer. This reclassification allowed for some simple tests for correlation with responses to other questions using chi-square distributions. The more interesting correlations, however, are at the village level. Village-level analyses were performed manually (or visually), by ranking villages by frequency of positive or negative responses to particular questions, then comparing these rankings with how the villages ranked on other subjects. This proved a simple but effective means of identifying relationships between particular parameters, which were then explored further through in-depth analysis of transcript and observation data.

Findings and Discussion

a. Leadership

Village heads in Aceh are called *Keucik*, or *Geucik*. Many popular, media and donor descriptions give the impression of the Keucik as the wise and trusted keystone of Acehnese village society.[2] According to prominent Acehnese scholar Syafii Ibrahim (2006), authority in Aceh derives from a variety of sources, including supernatural and spiritual powers (*kesaktian*), heredity (*keturunan*), knowledge (*ilmu*), and a combination of personal characteristics including wise and just (*adil dan jujur*), courageous and decisive (*berani dan tegas*), generous (*dermawan*), kind and hospitable (*ramah tamah*). While popular imaginations envision a *Keucik* as protecting and upholding the interests of his community, historically, *Keucik* have acted as the agents of higher authorities (originally *Datuk* and *Uleebalang*, and more recently, district and national government)[3]. Historically, the *Keucik*'s decision-making power was moderated by a permanent council of elders (*cerdik pandai*),

---

2   Consider, for example, the following definition from a recent publication on land law and inheritance in Aceh: The *Keucik* is 'the village head, who is selected and trusted by the community and is officially appointed by the District/Municipality Government to lead the *Gampong* administration' (Harper 2006).
3   *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, but retained through the colonial area.

known as the *Tuhapeut*. The *Tuhapeut* was independent of the *Keucik*, and functioned as the primary deliberative body in the village, that would make decisions then hand them over to the *Keucik* for consideration. The *Keucik* did not have power to change the membership of the *Tuhapeut*, and the balance of power rested with this council.

The office of *Keucik* has undergone numerous transformations over the past several decades. Beginning in the 1980s, with the implementation of the New Order government's Law on Village Government, the office of Village Head was incorporated into the national government structure. *Keucik* were directly responsible to the head of the subdistrict government (*Camat*). These reforms also saw the important office of *Imum Mukim* in Aceh reduced to a largely symbolic role, while the *Tuhapeut* was replaced by a Village Assembly (*Lembaga Musyawarah Desa* or LMD) and Village Community Resilience Council (*Lembaga Ketahanan Masyarakat Desa* or LKMD), both under the leadership of the *Keucik*. The increased executive power of the *Keucik* was accompanied by a diminished role for village elders in deciding village affairs, and an increasing separation of powers between state authority and customary and/or religious authority (McCarthy 2000).

During the conflict years, *Keucik* 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 *Keucik* killed or injured during the conflict are not available, however in one instance during the height of the conflict, 76 *Keucik* 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). Scores more sought refuge in towns and cities, including one subdistrict centre in this study. Under these conditions, it is easy to understand why individuals possessing the attributes described by Ibrahim above would choose not to hold the office of *Keucik*.

Further compounding the situation, local government in Aceh was seriously under-resourced in the years leading up to the tsunami. In many villages, 'government' consisted of the *Keucik*, and little more. In others, neighbourhood heads (*Kadus*) also served as section heads (*Kaur*) under the *Keucik*, the rationale often being that *Kaur* were entitled to a stipend while *Kadus* were not. When the tsunami struck, these enfeebled institutions were ill-equipped to cope with the needs of their shattered communities – that is, if the officeholders survived the catastrophe.

In seven of the eighteen villages surveyed in this study, the village *Keucik* was among the victims of the tsunami. Six more villages experienced the loss of one or more other key member of village government. Only five of the eighteen communities came through with their entire village government structures intact. In the months following the tsunami, two more *Keucik* were unable to serve due to health reasons, and another two married outside their community, and took up residence in the villages of their new wives.

Temporary acting *Keucik* were appointed in the villages that had lost their leader. Sometimes, these were individuals who had shown leadership qualities during the initial days and weeks of the emergency, in other cases, surviving civil servants or teachers from the community were appointed – thus becoming 'part-time *Keucik*'. More recently, direct elections have been held in many of the villages, and preparations were underway in several more.

Keucik in different villages in the study exhibited a variety of different leadership styles, and possessed varying levels of skill and ability. Some were sole leaders, others worked well with

other members of village government and the community. Some were authoritarian and tolerated no dissent, others more inclusive and open to collaborative decision-making processes. A few, particularly those who were government employees appointed as temporary *Keucik*, were technocratic in their leadership style. Some were quite cunning and covert in their dealings with donors and government (and their own constituents), while others adopted open, transparent management and accounting styles. In a few villages, rumours of misallocation, nepotism, embezzlement and profiteering were rife, while most communities in this survey gave their *Keucik* good marks for just and honest handling of aid resources.

A majority of questionnaire respondents listed the *Keucik* as the person most trusted in their community. Fifty-two percent of respondents selected the *Keucik* as their first response to the question 'who is most trusted in your community?' The figure was as high as 97 percent in one village, and zero in another. Respondents were allowed to list as many as five individuals in response to this question. Sixty six percent included *Keucik* as one of their responses. Again, figures per village ranged from 97 to zero percent.

Table 1: *Keucik* most trusted

	1st Response	Any Response
Total Overall	52%	66%
High Village Score[4]	97%	97%
Low Village Score	0%	0%
Median Village Score	45%	74%
Mean Village Score	51%	65%

Other figures who ranked highly in responses to the question of who is most trusted were the *Teungku Imum*[5], *Teuhapeut* (see above), Village Secretary, and NGO or donor Village Facilitator. The *Teungku Imum* was more trusted than the *Keucik* in three of the eighteen survey villages, while the Village Secretary ranked highest in another.

Figure 1: Most trusted leaders
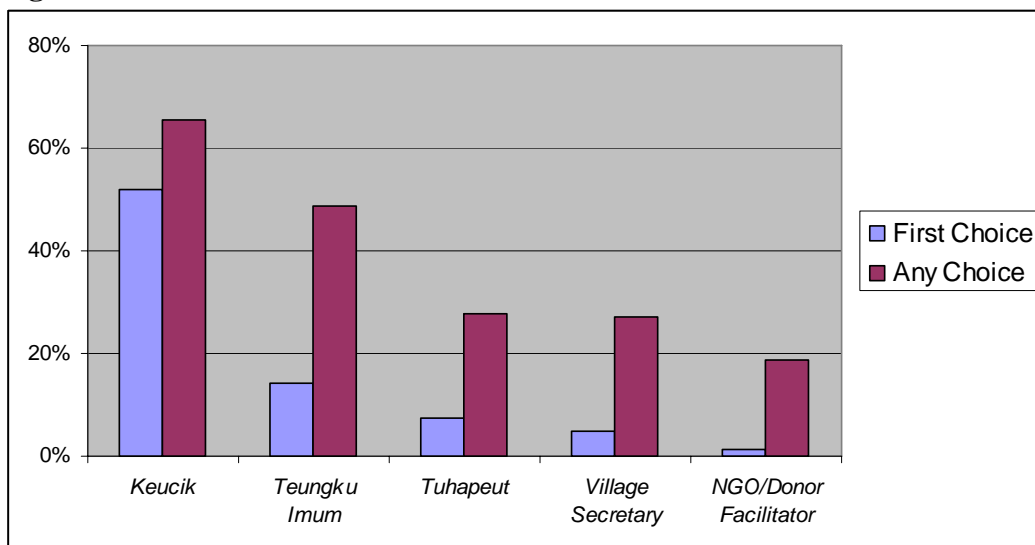
The *Keucik* scored slightly lower in response to a related question about who provides the most useful service in the community, though still rated highest overall. Other figures listed were similar to the question of who is most trusted, although the Village Facilitator moved up in rank ahead of the Village Secretary. *Keucik* also rank highest on the list of trusted and reliable sources of information in the survey villages, with over 70 percent of respondents listing the *Keucik* as their primary source of information. This was true before the tsunami as well.

The results of simple chi-square tests suggest a strong correlation between villagers' trust in the *Keucik* and certain other parameters, including a high frequency of village meetings (once per month or more), village meetings and consensus as a primary means of solving problems (in response to a question about how problems are addressed in the village), and generally high levels of trust within the community. Significantly, there is no such positive relationship between trust in the *Keucik* and 'the *Keucik* solves problems' as a response to the problem-solving question.

Table 2: *Keucik* solves problems

	1st Response	Any Response
Total Overall	5%	23%
High Village Score	17%	84%
Low Village Score	0%	3%
Median Village Score	3%	20%
Mean Village Score	5%	23%

Ranking villages by frequency of the response 'the Keucik solves problems', while not a direct reversal of the previous ranking of '*Keucik* most trusted', produces a significant shift. When split into thirds (high, medium, low), three of the top six ranking villages for '*Keucik* most trusted' fall into the bottom third on the list of villages where the '*Keucik* solves problems', while only two remain in the top six. These latter two cases can be explained. In the first case, most villagers view the recent election of a new *Keucik* as the solution to their problems, while in the second, the *Keucik* is widely regarded to be a 'hero' who is responsible for turning that village's fortunes around since the tsunami. Conversely, two of the bottom six ranked villages for '*Keucik* most trusted' are in the top third on the list for '*Keucik* solves problems'. In both these villages, the *Keucik* is a district government employee, appointed as temporary *Keucik*. One village with score of zero percent for '*Keucik* most trusted', falls into the top half of the list of villages where the *Keucik* solves problems.

Taken together with the previous results, this demonstrates a clear preference for *Keucik* who facilitate, rather than take control of, problem-solving processes in the village. *Keucik* who have adopted inclusive, consultative management styles gain much greater trust from the community.

> Since we elected our young leaders, the village has been developing rapidly.
> They have been very successful acquiring the assistance we need. We are
> proud of them. Although still quite young, they are very responsible. Also,
> they value the ideas and opinions of the elders in the village. If there's a new
> initiative or aid program, they always consult with the old people, and with the

community. Everybody knows what's going on. (Khadidja, Focus Group DS-01, Darussalam[6])

Two other factors that differentiate recovery outcomes are first, the depth and breadth of leadership within the community, and second, whether or not there are competing factions within the village leadership. While the former was often severely depleted by tsunami losses, in ten of eighteen survey villages, multiple leaders survived, or new leaders emerged as the community began rebuilding. Those villages where a core group of leaders work together well, have clearly fared better than those with sole leaders. Co-leaders that have played important roles in survey villages include the Village Secretary, Village Youth Leader (*Katua Pemuda*), *Teungku Imum* and other respected religious figures, NGO or donor-supported Village Facilitators, and a few village development cadre recruited and trained by NGOs or donors. In two of the villages, reintegrated GAM commanders and combatants have taken key leadership roles in the reconstituted village government. In three survey villages, customary (*adat*) functionaries and institutions – i.e., *Panglima Laot*[7] and *Keujreun Blang*.[8] – have played active roles in reassembling communities and accessing and distributing aid. In both these latter cases, communities exhibit greater cohesiveness, and less conflict or complaints over management and distribution of aid resources.

Most of the new *Tuhapeut* councils established since the promulgation of new provincial and district *Qanun*[9] on village government are still nascent, and few have moved beyond the stage of forming committees to oversee direct *Keucik* elections. There is some concern that this traditional institution that once performed as a deliberative council of village elders – '*cerdik pandai*' – is to be transformed into a modern-day village legislature, and might sacrifice some of its authority and legitimacy as a result. Many people draw parallels between the *Tuhapeut* and the LKMD Village Community Resilience Council, a much maligned relic of the New Order period.

In some villages, factionalism has plagued the recovery and reconstruction process. In three of the eighteen survey villages, particular neighbourhoods (*dusun*) feel discriminated or left behind in the recovery process, and there is persistent discussion of splitting off and forming new village governments of their own. In each of these cases, these sentiments existed before the tsunami, though in two of these, divisions have been exacerbated by events since the tsunami. In the third, the recent direct *Keucik* election has led to some reconciliation between the factions, and greater inclusion of the previously disaffected *dusun* in village government and in aid allocation decisions. In other villages, the split is more personal, with different leaders vying for supremacy – and resources. The 'aid tsunami' of the past three years has provided fertile ground for these sorts of rivalries to flourish. This situation is more common in villages with authoritarian, non-inclusive *Keucik*, where a figure such as the Village Secretary or a particular Section or *Dusun* Head provides an alternative, often more sympathetic channel for villagers' hopes and grievances.

> The Village Secretary resigned about a month ago. He could no longer see eye-to-eye with *Pak Keucik*. The *Keucik* no longer thinks about the people's

---

6   All village names have been changed in this essay, and in the research report.
7   *Adat* leader in the fishing community in charge of custom and traditional practices in marine fishing, including managing fishing areas and settlement of disputes.
8   *Adat* functionary responsible for assisting the *Keucik* in the management of irrigation for agriculture.
9   *Qanun* is Arabic for canon, and is used as the title of provincial and district regulations in post-MoU Aceh.

needs, he's just looking after his own interests. The Secretary wrote so many proposals to donors, but they all just ended up on the *Keucik*'s desk, because they were for the community. (M. Nasir, Interview BL-06, Bladeh)

Recent direct elections for *Keucik* have allowed several communities to transcend these schisms, and create a more united leadership structure. Direct *Keucik* elections have already been held in ten of the eighteen survey villages, with preparations underway at the time of the research in five more. Of the ten elections, two were hotly contested and somewhat divisive, two were easily won by authoritarian (and disrespected) *Keucik* known for their intolerance of any challenge to their leadership (in both these cases, the elections were tainted by rumours of 'money politics'), while in the remainder of villages, the elections were congenial and harmonious, with a popular candidate winning by a large majority. In each of these latter cases, the election has served as an effective community- and consensus-building experience, and has led to a general strengthening of village government institutions, and an acceleration of recovery and development in the villages.

b. Decision-making and Problem Solving

Questions about decision-making and problem solving at the household and village level offer some interesting insights. Again, Aceh's specific historical context – particularly the last three decades of conflict and privation – inform how things are done in villages. On the one hand, communities were forced to be highly self-reliant, while on the other hand, the incomplete village government reforms of the New Order period, in combination with heavy surveillance and intimidation by security forces, led to the undermining of many customary community institutions, without providing effective alternative structures to replace them. The TNI-GAM conflict also made it risky and difficult to conduct public meetings in Acehnese villages.

At the household level, the majority of respondents revealed that husbands and wives are both engaged in household decision-making and management, with nearly 50 percent of respondents stating that husband and wife consult on financial decisions, compared to less than 30 percent who stated that the husband alone makes the decisions. The proportion of respondents who said that husbands and wives consult dropped a few percentage points after the tsunami, from 51 to 44 percent, but this is largely offset by the increase in the number of single parent households since the tsunami. When it comes to handling and managing household money, the wife plays a much larger role, with 'wife' and 'husband and wife' each accounting for roughly equal proportions of nearly 75 percent of responses to the question. These figures were the same for before and after the tsunami.

In terms of how families acquire resources to deal with emergencies or pressing needs, the highest number of respondents replied that they depend primarily on family and relatives (43 percent before the tsunami, 24 percent after), followed by selling jewellery or other family assets (36 percent before the tsunami, 33 percent after). Far fewer (9 percent, both before and after the tsunami) seek loans from banks or other sources. The number of people who responded that they seek additional work to cover needs has increased since the tsunami (9 percent before the tsunami, 13 percent after). The reduction in the number of households depending on relatives can be explained by the fact that many tsunami victims' relatives are in the same dire situation that they are, in combination with the availability of donor aid, particularly during the initial emergency and rehabilitation periods. Similarly, the increase in the number of people who seek additional work to meet pressing needs can be explained by the abundantly available jobs on construction and other tsunami relief projects, combined

with the decreased ability of relatives to assist. That families who lost nearly everything in the tsunami continue to sell family assets to meet emergency needs seems curious, until one considers the practice of selling goods and equipment received from donors, government and NGOs – particularly livelihood assistance programs.

At the village community level, there have been a few significant shifts in decision-making and problem solving practice. The most immediately apparent difference is the frequency of village meetings. Whereas 58 percent of respondents answered 'less than six times per year' to a question about the frequency of village meetings before the tsunami, 51 percent of respondents say that since the tsunami, they now meet more than once per month, with most of the remaining 49 percent answering either 'monthly' or 'six to ten times per year'. Responses vary among villages.

'Village meetings' was the most common response to a multiple choice, multi-response question regarding how problems are solved in the village. Interestingly, only one community reported any feelings of 'meeting fatigue', which emerged during discussions of community members' frustration over unresolved housing issues.

The following chart shows the overall ranking of villagers' responses to the problem-solving question:

Figure 2: Problem solving in the village
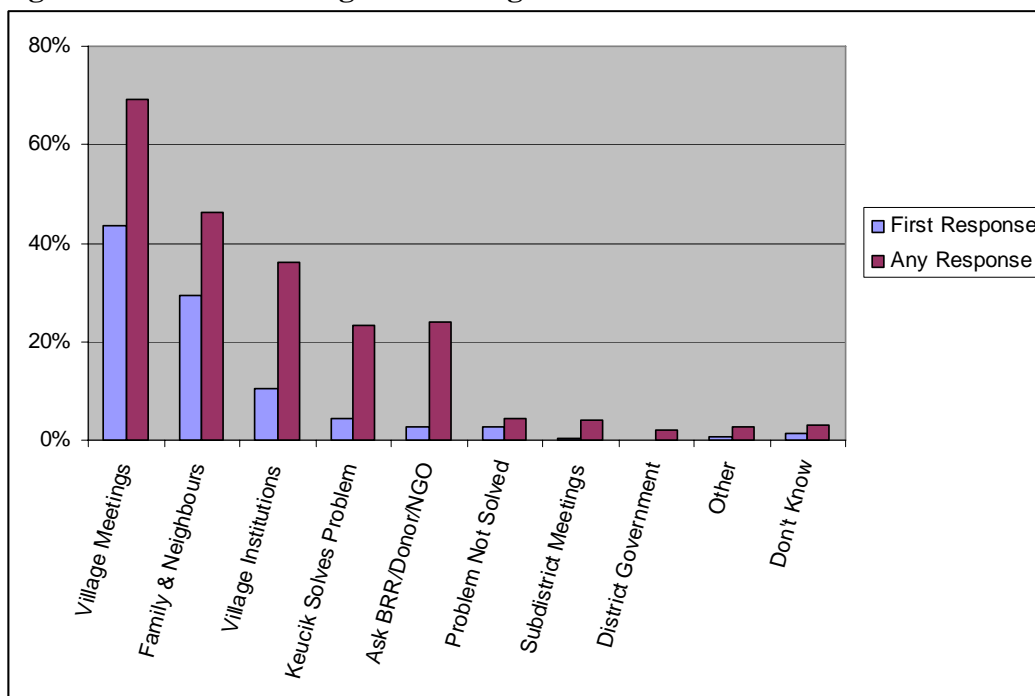
While respondents were not specifically instructed to prioritise their answers, the order in which they listed their responses is indicative. For instance, nearly all respondents who answered 'request assistance from BRR[10]/donor/NGO', offered this as their third response,

---

10 BRR is the acronym for The Executing Agency for the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Aceh and Nias, the agency established by the Government of Indonesia to facilitate and coordinate the implementation of rehabilitation and reconstruction programs by the central and local government and foreign donor agencies and NGOs.

implying that they would exhaust other avenues first. Cross-checking questionnaire results against individual interviews revealed that respondents' first answer was their preferred choice.

Table 3: Village Meetings to Solve Problems

	1st Response	Any Response
Total Overall	44%	69%
High Village Score	71%	97%
Low Village Score	7%	43%
Median Village Score	43%	73%
Mean Village Score	44%	70%

Although 'village meetings' was the most frequent reply overall, it was not the leading response in every village. In two of the eighteen survey villages, 'family and neighbours gather to solve problems' outranked village meetings as the leading response to this question, while 'village institutions' was a more popular response in two other villages, and '*Keucik* solves problems' was higher in one village.

As previously mentioned, there is a significant correlation between positive individual responses to this question, and respondents' trust in their *Keucik*. The same is true when aggregated at the village level. When the respective lists are divided into thirds, three of the top six ranked villages for 'village meetings to solve problems' are also in the top third of '*Keucik* most trusted', while three of the lowest ranked villages on each list are in the same block for the other. The correlation becomes even more striking when the list is split in half: seven of the first nine villages ranked by 'village meetings solve problems' fall into the top nine villages for '*Keucik* most trusted', and vice versa.

The opposite is true when 'village meetings to solve problems' is contrasted with '*Keucik* solves problems': Three of the top six responding villages to the first question fall into the lowest third on the second, while three of the lowest third for the former are in the top third for the latter. When split into halves, the rankings practically mirror one another, again with seven of the top nine responding villages for 'village meetings solve problems' falling in the lower half on the list ranking villages by '*Keucik* solves problems'.
It is interesting to compare these responses with the response to the same question that 'problems are not solved'.

Table 4: Problems not solved

	1st Response	Any Response
Total Overall	3%	4%
High Village Score	37%	37%
Low Village Score	0%	0%
Median Village Score	0%	0%
Mean Village Score	3%	4%

Of the six villages where respondents selected this answer, all but one fall into the bottom third of the list of villages ranked by 'village meetings solve problems'; all but two fall into the lower third of villages ranked by '*Keucik* most trusted' (and *all* into the bottom half); while three are among the top one third of villages ranked by '*Keucik* solves problems'. This further underscores community members' preference for participatory, deliberative decision-making processes.

We should discuss it first, get a consensus. Tell the people, 'There's some funding, let's have a meeting to decide what the money should be used for.' That's clear. *Pak Keucik* never says [this]. At most, he says, there was some aid funding and it was used for such-and-such. After the money's already been spent, then he tells the people. It's not that there aren't any other smart people in this village. But there's no way to challenge *Pak Keucik*. He's powerful, and clever. Everybody who matters, he's already got them in his pocket. Most of the clever people here, they've already moved to the city, or to another village. (Tgk. Muchlis, Interview SJ-03, Suak Jampok)

The second most common response to the question of how problems are solved was 'family and neighbours gather to solve problems'.

Table 5: Family and neighbours solve problems

	1st Response	Any Response
Total Overall	29%	46%
High Village Score	48%	68%
Low Village Score	0%	0%
Median Village Score	35%	45%
Mean Village Score	29%	46%

At the individual level, this response shows no strong correlation with any other variables, save 'level of trust'. Ranking by village, as well, exhibits no strong patterns or positive relationships with other variables. A pronounced negative correspondence between this response and levels of women's participation in village meetings and decision-making will be discussed in a following section.

'Village institutions solve problems' was the third most common response.

Table 6: Village institutions solve problems

	1st Response	Any Response
Total Overall	10%	36%
High Village Score	50%	77%
Low Village Score	0%	0%
Median Village Score	7%	36%
Mean Village Score	10%	36%

Aggregated at the village level, this response most closely correlates with the response '*Keucik* solves problems'. No other clear patterns or correlations emerge. The accuracy of this particular response is considered unreliable; attempting to corroborate these answers by examining interview and focus group discussion transcripts indicates considerable variance in respondents' interpretation of the term 'village institutions'. The other answers to this multiple-choice question appear to have been less confounding, and cross-checking questionnaire results with interview, focus group and observation data affirms the veracity of all other responses to this question.

c. Transparency and Accountability

Although difficult to quantify – hence not explicitly addressed in the questionnaire – interview and observation data indicate a significant variation between different villages in the degree of transparency and accountability in the management of village government and aid programs. Some programs and activities, such as the World Bank-Government of Indonesia *Kecamatan* Development Program (KDP) infrastructure projects, the AusAID Local Governance and Infrastructure for Communities in Aceh (LOGICA) Community Infrastructure Grants Scheme (CIGS) involve the establishment of dedicated management structures, and require transparent financial accounting and the use of public information display boards as an integral part of their implementation, and provide appropriate management skills training as part of the program. Donor statements about the good governance objective of these programs are unambiguous, as in the following examples from World Bank and LOGICA documents:

> 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.[11]

> CIGS has funded small essential community facilities (where these are not already covered in other donor reconstruction plans), and has strengthened the skills of [Village Development Committees] to design and manage construction projects underpinned by transparency principles.[12]

Many donors and NGOs are also supporting Community Economic Enterprises or Institutions (*Lembaga Ekonomi Masyarakat*, LEM, or *Lembaga Ekonomi Gampong*, LEGA), with a similar emphasis on transparency and accountability.

The degree to which these principles have taken root in different communities varies considerably among the eighteen villages surveyed. A few village communities have enthusiastically embraced the principles of transparency and accountability, as exemplified by the following quotes from interviews and focus group discussions:

> With the block grant project, we were all included from planning right through implementation. Then when it was completed, we were shown how much money had been spent, and how much still remained. The remainder went into the village government treasury, where it could be used for another project. It was a very open process. (Nasrul, Focus Group SM-02, Suak Manyam)
> What the people in this village like about LOGICA is its transparency – everybody knows how much money has been expended because it's posted at the village hall, even in the *dusun*. The village government is starting to do this too. If there's a new program, it is announced to the whole community, and then we discuss how to proceed. (Anwar, Interview JS-12, Jurongseuh)
> All donors and programs that come to our village, we have a meeting to discuss it and then appoint someone to be in charge. (Cak Ina, Focus Group CT-01, Cot Teumbon)

---

11 http://worldbank.org/faces/index.htm
12 LOGICA 4th Six-monthly Work Plan and 6th Quarterly Report, September 2007. Pp. 18.

These statements contrast markedly with the following excerpts from interviews and focus groups in villages where the 'new way of doing business' has not successfully taken root.

> If there are meetings to discuss assistance, we aren't invited. They need 20 people before they can distribute aid, but only five people turn up. It's not at all transparent. Everybody is very suspicious. (Ansari, Interview JB-17, Jabeuet)
>
> *Pak Keucik* is not transparent when it comes to aid. If you ask him where the aid has gone, he always answers, "I have distributed all of it to the community." (Muchtaruddin, Interview UK-02, Uleue Karang)

> Do the members know how much money has been collected? As head of the LEM, he has to be transparent with the members. How much money have we received from OXFAM, from Islamic Relief, from BRR? Have you been to the LEM office? Did you see any information about any grants? No, you didn't, because there isn't any. (Heti Kamala, Interview SJ-02, Suak Jampok)
>
> There is a treasurer, but in name only. All the money is handled by the *Keucik*. You ask if there is a village account. Yes, there is. But nobody knows where the money is or what it's been used for. (Tgk. Norman, Interview BL-06, Bladeh)

Not all of the examples are as stark as those provided above. Based on data on villagers' satisfaction levels with aid programs, frequency or prevalence of discord, evidence of public disclosure of financial information in the villages, and the leadership and decision-making parameters discussed above, there emerged a sort of 'openness and accountability continuum' among the survey villages, wherein approximately one third (six) of the villages can be characterised as 'open, inclusive and accountable', and four as 'dominated by an individual or clique, with little or no accountability', with the remaining eight falling somewhere between these two extremes.

All of the villages surveyed have received more-or-less the same package of community engagement and village government skills training and support from the AusAID LOGICA program, and all but one have implemented LOGICA CIGS Community Infrastructure Grants. Many have been recipients of legal rights and representative government training workshops from IDLO, as well as a number of other cadre training programs. They are all subject to the same array of financial accounting and reporting requirements from district government, BRR and donors. Yet the outcomes have been very different.

It is a truism – and a tautology – that leadership and decision-making styles are key determinants in establishing the level of transparency and accountability in village government. As well, fair and transparent village elections have clearly contributed to improved governance in a number of the villages. Of the six villages identified as transparent and accountable, one of these is a recent convert, this being the direct result of a village election process that ousted an unpopular, domineering and unaccountable *Keucik*. The transformation of that community since the election has been quite remarkable. Several villages in the intermediate, transitional group appear to be shifting in the direction of greater transparency and accountability. Again, direct *Keucik* elections or the preparatory process for elections is providing a strong impetus for this shift. In fact, people in one village in Aceh Jaya are so enthused about the outcome of their recent *Keucik* election that questionnaire

results from there rank among the highest for responses such as '*Keucik* most trusted', '*Keucik* solves problems' and 'level of trust' – despite the fact that this village has had four *Keucik* since the tsunami, and still lags far behind its neighbours in terms of physical and economic recovery. The election had been held only a few days before the ACARP researchers began their survey of the village, hardly giving the new *Keucik* time to prove himself. Nonetheless, the people there expounded a profound belief in the capability and integrity of their new government.

Elections alone, however, do not guarantee positive outcomes. As previously mentioned, at the time of this research, ten of eighteen survey villages had held direct *Keucik* elections. This includes five of six villages where leadership is categorised as transparent, inclusive and accountable, but also two of four villages with uncommunicative, domineering and unaccountable leaders.

d. Women's Participation

There was significant variability in the level of women's involvement in decision-making processes and assistance programs among the survey villages. The survey questionnaire included a question about who participates in village meetings. Respondents were given a choice of several answers, including Husband/Father/Male Head of Household, Wife/Mother/Female Head of Household, Husband/Father *and* Wife/Mother, Child/Children, Adult Child/Children, and Entire Family. Combining responses for the second, third and sixth choices covers nearly all instances where females attend the meetings (the gender of children and adult children was not specified).

Table 7: Women's participation in village meetings[13]

	Before tsunami	After tsunami
Total Overall	18%	29%
High Village Score	44%	64%
Low Village Score	0%	7%
Median Village Score	19%	23%
Mean Village Score	18%	28%

In many villages, respondents explained that women had difficulty attending village meetings because these were often held at night. As well, according to their culture, the concerns of wives and mothers are said to be represented in public fora by their menfolk. These same respondents explained that when women do participate in formal meetings and gatherings, they generally have a space outside the main meeting venue, or are there to provide catering. In those communities where they are formally included in village meetings and consultations, their enthusiasm is highly evident.

> 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!
> (Nuralia, Focus Group DS-04, Darussalam)

---

13 These figures denote the proportion of questionnaire respondents who answered that women attend village meetings. They do not represent the percentage of women from that village who attend the meetings, nor the proportion of meeting participants who are women.

At the level of individual respondents, positive responses regarding women's participation in public meetings correlate with a fairly disparate assortment of other parameters, including '*Teungku Imeum* or other religious leader most trusted', 'Village Secretary most trusted', 'Village Facilitator most trusted', and 'frequency of village meetings'. They do *not* correlate with general high levels of trust in the community, nor with *any* of the responses to questions about problem solving.[14] Aggregated at the village level, higher levels of women's participation show relatively weak correlation with only a few of the variables discussed previously. When arrayed into thirds (high, medium, low), women's participation in village meetings shows a distinct negative correspondence with the response that 'family and neighbours gather to solve problems', i.e., three of six villages with the highest level of women's participation in village meetings fall into the bottom third of villages ranked by 'family and neighbours solve problems', while three of the lowest third in terms of women's participation in meetings are among the six villages where this practice is most common. This can be interpreted to mean that in those villages where women's participation in village affairs is not formally accommodated, they are more actively engaged in solving problems through more informal channels.

A stronger correlation exists between levels of women's participation in meetings, and the original classification of survey villages into pairs of more and less successfully recovering villages.[15] The perceived level of women's participation in meetings in successfully recovering villages is 35 percent, compared to 21 percent in the less successful group. Seven of nine successful villages fall into the top 50 percent of villages ranked by level of women's participation (and vice versa), while among the matched pairs of villages, women's participation ranks higher in the purportedly successful village in six of nine pairs. It was higher in the successful villages before the tsunami, and has also increased in those same villages by a greater margin.

Women's participation in other types of activities similarly varies between villages. The activities with the highest level of participation by women include religious and ceremonial activities (75 percent of respondents agree that women participate), '*arisan*' revolving savings and credit associations (94 percent, though the total number of *arisan* has declined since the tsunami), and training courses (60 percent). The latter figure represents a slight (seven percent) increase when compared to women's participation in training courses before the tsunami.

Many government, donor and NGO tsunami recovery programs have specifically targeted women, or stipulated a minimum level of women's participation or receipt of benefits. More than half of the village development cadre recruited and trained by the AusAID LOGICA program in 203 villages in Aceh are female. In two of the survey villages, all ten village

---

14 Exploring correlations between the questionnaire response that women participate in village meetings and other parameters does not actually tell us very much. These results should not be interpreted, for instance, to mean that women trust *Teungku Imeum* or Village Facilitators more, nor that women in villages where these figures are more influential participate in more meetings. The most significant insight to derive from this analysis is that the research did not find any strong correlation between women's participation in village meetings, and other leadership, decision-making, or social capital parameters.

15 As previously mentioned, the division of survey villages into '*bangkit*' ('awakening') and '*pra-bangkit*' ('pre-awakening' or 'problematic') villages was largely abandoned once data analysis got underway, as the distinctions between '*bangkit*' and '*pra-bangkit*' villages became blurred and indistinct. These designations were more useful in terms of initial site selection, than as analytical categories once data began to accrue.

cadre are women (in one of these, a respondent explained that this was because men would rather seek paid work). With the LOGICA Community Infrastructure Grants, there are very specific guidelines about inclusion of women, including at least one woman member on the Village Development Committee formed to manage the project. (In almost every case, the female member was appointed Treasurer.) KDP, as well, has clear guidelines about including and targeting women in supported activities.

There is no doubt that the level of women's participation in planning, managing and implementing village development programs in post-tsunami 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. This having been said, the data also show a persistent bias about the limitations of women's public roles in Acehnese society. A simple text search of all the transcript data seeking the terms 'women' and 'activity' or 'women' and 'gathering' in proximity, yields quite a large number of quotes. The majority of these quotes refer to *wirid yasin* (Koran reading) groups, while most of the remainder talk about the PKK Family Welfare program. A similar search for 'women' and 'meeting' or 'women' and 'planning' in proximity generates more material about women's participation in recovery activities, but almost all of this in response to direct questions from the researchers.

> 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…

> As for meetings, to discuss housing, for instance, it's enough that just the men attend. After all, the decisions would be the same, and we [the women] are represented, right? And we women have meetings too. We hold them at the PKK centre, and no men are invited. That's fair, isn't it? (*Keucik* and Hasinah, Focus Group CK-01, Cot Kaleut)

e. Social Capital

Other studies have noted that social capital is relatively strong in Aceh.[16] Many of these same 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.

Previous sections have already examined important aspects of social capital in the discussions of household and community-level problem solving, village meetings, trust in leaders and women's participation. These analyses indicated that levels of cohesion, inclusion and/or exclusion vary among the survey villages, and that village leadership has played a strong role in shaping that dynamic. Data indicate as well that donor approaches, and donors' relationships with communities and their leaders, can influence cohesion and trust. The terms 'social justice' and 'inequality' most frequently appeared in interview transcripts in reference to aid programs that had engendered envy and jealousy within and between communities.

---

16 See, for example KDP (2007); BRR and International Partners (2005); DSF (2006), or Kenny (2007).

Trust is a key ingredient of social capital. Respondents were asked for their assessment of the level of trust in their community, and given a choice of four answers: Feelings of mutual trust are high; some people can be trusted while others cannot; feelings of mutual trust are low; suspicion and jealousy are high. Overall, the majority of respondents (55 percent) selected 'some people can be trusted while others cannot'. The array of remaining answers produces the following result:

Table 8: Level of Trust

	High level of trust	Low trust; high suspicion and jealousy
Total Overall	25%	17%
High Village Score	83%	57%
Low Village Score	0%	0%
Median Village Score	20%	12%
Mean Village Score	25%	17%

As previously discussed, a high level of trust correlates strongly with high frequency of village meetings, as well as the community's trust in their *Keucik*. There is an equally strong negative correlation with the villages where respondents answered 'problems are not solved': four of six villages where people selected this answer fall into the lowest six villages ranked by level of trust.

An important facet of rebuilding social capital is creating spaces for association and interchange, and re-establishing those activities and routines that bring people together. Clearly, communities that were spatially dispersed through the early months of the recovery process, have tended to recover more slowly than those where they managed to assemble – either in the same barracks, or in temporary housing in their own village or resettlement site. As well, the construction of *meunasah* or meeting halls has provided an important venue for meetings and social and religious activities. For example, as their first act after they had been allocated new land to relocate their village, the people of Cot Meukuta in Aceh Barat constructed a *musholla* (small mosque) from recycled materials salvaged from the barracks they had been occupying. In discussions and interviews, this rates as one of the most significant events of this community's post-tsunami history, and one of which they are very proud.

Most, but not all villages, have resumed many of their religious and ceremonial routines. Villages where this is not occurring are those at the tail end of the 'level of trust' spectrum. Almost without exception, women's activities, such as *wirid yasin* (reading of Koranic verses) and *seni rabana* (Koranic chanting with drums), have advanced more than men's.

> If you ask me, the advantage of women is, when compared with the men, we still get together, all the women's activities little-by-little have all come back and progressed. Just look at our *wirid yasin*, each week it gets bigger. It's the same with other activities as well. We have our cooking groups again, and we've even got programs going for the young women. (Cut Marhama, Focus Group KS-01, Kuwala Sagee)

Several villages have also reinitiated local *kenduri* (ritual feast) traditions, after a hiatus of one or two years.

Gotong-royong (community voluntary self-help) is another hallowed tradition throughout Indonesia. There has been much discussion that the prevalence of cash-for-work programs has undermined this practice in post-tsunami Aceh.[17]

> People here have become passive, they just wait for work… They're used to cash-for-work now. There's been a shift in values, less unity in the community and the decline of *gotong-royong*. (Tgk. Salman, Interview UJ-10, Ujong)
> The youth here, most have been 'damaged' by cash-for-work. They're spoiled, don't want to work, just wait for aid money. (Ledia, Interview LL-01, Lhok Leuhu)
>
> Maybe, in Aceh the *gotong-royong* spirit has been lost because of aid that wasn't well managed, the NGOs just handed out projects, used up their budget, not concerned about effectiveness. (Nusabilal, Interview KS-09, Kuwala Sagee)

On closer examination, however, it appears that the spirit is still very much alive in most of the communities in this survey. Many respondents tempered their remarks about cash-for-work destroying *gotong-royong* by stating that neighbours still helped neighbours, with funerals, weddings, or taking turns shifting temporary houses to add rooms to newly-finished permanent houses. Informal, spontaneous *gotong-royong*, it seems, is still widely practiced in Acehnese villages. Indeed, despite the criticisms, anecdotal evidence also indicates that formal, routinised *gotong-royong* is still common as well, particularly in villages with popular *Keucik* or *Dusun* Heads, or for self-help projects – such as the *musholla* in Cot Meukuta – that are clearly in the community's interest. To a question about which household members participate in *gotong-royong* activities, 89 percent of respondents from the 18 survey villages answered that one or more household members do participate.

> The cash-for-work 'virus' hit our village as well, but fortunately in our case, it was for a self-help housing project, and well managed by the NGO in a way that empowered people. (M. Ali, Interview BM-15, Blang Mata)

This research was unable to establish a positive link between the amount, frequency and duration of cash-for-work programs in particular survey villages, and the vigour of those villages' *gotong-royong* activities. This is due partly to the coarseness and unevenness of available data on cash-for-work programs,[18] also a lack of quantitative detail in the interview data. The cash-for-work/*gotong-royong* lament does appear more frequently in transcripts from particular villages. However, these villages did not experience noticeably different

---

17 A relatively recent innovation in post-disaster responses, Cash-for-Work (CFW) programs are considered easier to administer than Food-for-Work (FFW) programs, and can be less disruptive to local markets; they infuse cash into economies, and harness idle labour where people are no longer able to participate in their routine employment activities. CFW programs were initiated in Banda Aceh within two weeks after the tsunami, and soon spread to outlying areas, reaching their peak intensity during the first three to four months of 2005. Total figures of numbers of participants or the amount of funds distributed are not available, but the vital role played by these programs is widely acknowledged. For a discussion of CFW programs' contribution to disaster recovery, see Adams and Winahyu (2006) and Doocy et.al. (2006).

18 All cash-for-work programs had ended throughout Aceh by the end of 2005, more than 18 months before this research was conducted. Due to a combination of high staff turnover, decentralised management, and different reporting protocols among different agencies, it was difficult to collect and compare accurate data on the practice.

levels of cash-for-work assistance than the others in this survey. Rather, the complaint that *gotong-royong* is in decline is more common in those communities where questionnaire data indicated ambivalence or dissatisfaction with village leadership.

Conclusion

It is no coincidence that much of the preceding reads like the pages of an NGO community development training manual. The sheer volume and intensity of the tsunami recovery effort has created a unique situation with its own spatially and temporally distinct constellation of values, political structures and cultural vocabularies – a sort of post-tsunami institutional greenhouse. To a significant degree, agendas and standards are being set by the international donors and NGOs that fund and administer much of the recovery effort. To what extent do the changes we are witnessing represent fundamental shifts in Acehnese political structures and practice, or are they more of a circumstantial response to stimuli emanating from international donors and NGOs?

Located at an important crossroads between the Indian Ocean and Java Sea, the Acehnese have had economic, political and cultural links with a diverse range of regional and global polities dating back to the 14th century. Acehnese are adept at positioning themselves in relation to 'outside' powers, influences and cultures; sometimes resisting, sometimes subordinating themselves, sometimes cooperating, sometimes dominating and subsuming, all along incorporating aspects of these foreign entities into their own uniquely Acehnese identity. The current international disaster relief community in Aceh is no exception to this pattern.

The most interesting questions arising from the ACARP research project involve the 'sustainability' of recovery inputs and institutional forms, and the future trajectory and velocity of the nascent 'trends' identified in the survey villages. Post-tsunami, post-MoU Aceh has witnessed an efflorescence of political inclusion and openness. At the same time, however, new constellations of patronage and privilege are forming, as the province's new political leaders consolidate their power and positions. It will be several more years before the contours, conduct and capacities of the institutions currently being constructed can be fully comprehended. This is as true of village-level institutions as it is of the relationships and structures presently reforming at the provincial level.

The ACARP research shows that there is no single pathway to recovery and reform – different villages have combined different strategies, resources and actions to achieve their goals. Nonetheless, a few salient points can be extracted.

The finding that stands out most clearly from the village surveys is the correlation between good leadership and good recovery outcomes (and the corollary relationship between poor leadership and unsatisfactory outcomes). The role, and character, of the village *Keucik* plays prominently in this dynamic. Since the tsunami, donors and government alike have attached unrealistic hopes and expectations on the *Keucik*, needing them to be effective modern project managers, but who are also imbued with the supernatural and spiritual powers and attributes set out by Ibrahim above. If anything, this has only intensified since the new Law on Governing of Aceh and the provincial and district elections of 2007-07, the introduction of several new *Qanun* on village government, and the new Governor's pledge to 'build Aceh from the *gampong*' (Sujito and Rahman 2007).

According to the results of this research, communities' hopes and expectations are more realistic. Respondents were unambiguous in their preference for village leaders who facilitate and support, rather than command. 'Open', 'transparent', 'accountable' and 'just' were the adjectives most commonly attached to descriptions of a good *Keucik*.

As noted earlier, direct *Keucik* elections are generally contributing to a shift toward more accountable local leadership in Aceh. These elections have served as effective community- and consensus-building exercises in several of the survey communities, and have probably strengthened nascent democratic institutions even in those villages where the contests were more divisive. However, the experiences of two survey villages where unsuitable candidates bullied and/or bought their way into (or held onto) power, indicate that this process can still be subverted.

It is a credit to BRR, the provincial and district governments of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam, the exuberant print media that has grown in Aceh since the Helsinki MoU and new Law on the Governing of Aceh, an increasingly savvy and intrepid local and national NGO community, and scores of aid agencies operating in the province that the discourse of transparency and accountability has grown deep roots in Acehnese society in such a brief period. Its practice however, still lags behind in some communities, to the obvious detriment of the people living there. Rather than deal with the obvious corruption and malevolent leadership in these communities, many donors and even government agencies are simply taking their aid elsewhere. Those that do still operate in these villages seem willing to turn a blind eye to the leaders' egregious behaviour.

Patronage and exclusionary behaviour can flourish in the superheated environment of post-disaster recovery situations such as post-tsunami Aceh. In a few of the ACARP survey villages, the actions of particular aid agencies or agents were found to have exacerbated factionalism and encouraged paternalistic empire building. The expedient of creating special operational units at the village level, rather than working through the village government bureaucracy, can have the effect of creating a sort of 'multi-gate' decision-making and program management structure with little or no downward accountability, often leading to confusion, frustration and suspicion in the community, and asymmetrical distribution of benefits.

This having been said, donor interventions such as the long-term placement of village facilitators; recruitment, training and support of village development cadre; and establishment of dedicated structures to manage community block grants, have been shown to be effective means of empowering and enabling communities – village 'civil society' – to take control of the recovery process, and mould the type of village institutions and government they desire. One of the most positive outcomes in a number of ACARP survey villages has been the incorporation by village government leaders of a number of participatory planning and collective decision-making, open and accountable financial management, and participatory monitoring and evaluation procedures and protocols, which were initially introduced as requirements of a particular donor block grant or economic development program.
Those villages that have successfully incorporated ex-GAM combatants or commanders into village government and program management structures are reaping prodigious benefits in terms of community unity, motivation and overall effectiveness of reconstruction programs. There were a number of examples as well from the survey villages of customary (*adat*) leaders and institutions playing active roles in the planning and implementation of recovery

initiatives, significantly impacting the effectiveness of aid delivery and uptake in their respective communities.

Another stand-out finding of this research is the robust correlation between the frequency of village meetings, and a host of other positive values including mutual trust in the community, trust in community leaders, equity and harmony. While this may seem self-evident, the tremendous variability between villages as to how often meetings are held, indicates that this obvious truism is not always applied.

Conducive facilities for conducting meetings represent an important early priority in communities recovering from disaster, and the modest costs incurred in supporting community meetings result in significant increases in the efficiency and effectiveness of future programs. Those instances where village groups have been able to make collective plans or decisions and act upon them, have in each case provided a powerful boost to these communities' belief in their capacity to solve their own problems, and to the momentum and quality of recovery efforts there.

Regarding women's participation in village government and aid program implementation, no strong correlation could be established between increased women's participation and significant shifts or patterns in other governance or social capital indicators. Clearly, in villages where women are now more fully engaged in village meetings and recovery program design and implementation, both women and men express satisfaction and confidence in the changes they have witnessed. Women in these communities show great enthusiasm for their newfound 'voice', and revel in their new roles as citizens and managers. It is also evident that in those communities where women are not formally incorporated into village community decision-making and problem-solving structures and procedures, they still play an active informal role, at the neighbourhood and household level.

The absence of any robust correlation between increased women's participation and other governance or social capital indicators is probably due to the fact that only a small number of the survey villages have fully embraced gender mainstreaming principles, and because this process has only been underway for a short time. It is anticipated that these links may become more pronounced with the passage of time.

In the social, social welfare and small-scale enterprise spheres, anecdotal evidence indicates that women's groups and women's programs are evincing stronger growth, and greater endurance, than their male counterparts. One factor that contributes to this is the fact that men have more options to work as labourers on various infrastructure and other recovery projects. The recovery effort in Aceh has come a very long way during the three years since the tsunami. It was widely acknowledged from the outset that the damage to Aceh's social institutions and structures was no less severe than the devastation of the province's physical infrastructure and productive assets, and that the task of rebuilding these would be more complicated and difficult. It seems these predictions underestimated the tenacity and ingenuity of Acehnese village communities.

References:

Adams, L. and R. Winahyu (2006) *Learning from cash responses to the tsunami. Case Studies.* London: Humanitarian Policy Group, Overseas Development Institute (HPG-ODI). http://www.odi.org.uk/hpg/papers/BGP_Tsunamilessons.pdf

BRR and International Partners (2005) *Aceh and Nias One Year after the Tsunami: The Recovery Effort and Way Forward.* Banda Aceh: BRR. http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2005.nsf/FilesByRWDocUNIDFileName/KHII-6K54EE-brr-idn-15dec.pdf/$File/brr-idn-15dec.pdf

Doocy, S., M. Gabriel, S. Collins, C. Robinson and P. Stevenson (2006) 'Implementing cash for work programmes in post-tsunami Aceh: experiences and lessons learned', *Disasters* 30(3): 277-96.

DSF (2006) *GAM Reintegration Needs Assessment: Enhancing Peace through Community-level Development Programming.* Banda Aceh: The World Bank. http://www.conflictanddevelopment.org/data/doc/en/regCaseStudy/aceh/GAM%20Reintegration%20Needs%20Assessment2.pdf

Harper, E. (2006) *Guardianship, Inheritance and Land Law in Post-Tsunami Aceh.* Banda Aceh: International Development Law Organisation (IDLO) http://www.idlo.int/publications/19.pdf

Ibrahim, S. (2006) '*Kewibawaan dalam Pandangan Masyarakat Aceh*' (Authority in the Viewpoint of the Acehnese), *Jurnal Ilmiah Administrasi Publik* VI(1) http://publik.brawijaya.ac.id/?hlm=jedlist&ed=1125507600&edid=1135589533

KDP (2007) *2006 Village Survey in Aceh: An Assessment of Village Infrastructure and Social Conditions.* Banda Aceh: The World Bank. http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTINDONESIA/Resources/226271-1168333550999/AcehVillageSurvey06_final.pdf

Kenny, S. (2007) 'Reconstruction in Aceh: Building Whose Capacity?' *Community Development Journal* 42(2): 206-21.

McCarthy, J. (2000) 'Village and State Regimes on Sumatra's Forest Frontier: A Case from the Leuser Ecosystem, South Aceh', RMAP Working Papers, No. 26. Canberra: Resource Management in Asia Pacific Project, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University.

Sinar Harapan (2003) '*Para "Keucik" yang Terjepit antara TNI dan GAM*' (*Keucik* are caught between TNI and GAM), 12 June 2003. http://www.sinarharapan.co.id/berita/0306/12/sh02.html

Sujoti, A. and F.H. Rahman, eds. (2007) *Membangun Aceh dari Gampong: Catatan Ringan dari Riset Monitoring Pemilihan Keuchik Langsung (Pilciksung).* [Building Aceh from the Gampong: Notes from Research and Monitoring on Direct *Keucik* Elections (*Pilciksung*)]. Yogyakarta: Institute for Research and Empowerment (IRE).