

UNIFEM Responds to the Tsunami Tragedy One Year Later

Ena and Her Kiosk

Ena, her child, husband and brother, are among the lucky few who survived the 2004 tsunami. Her village of Ulee Lheu was one of the most decimated in Banda Aceh. Left with nothing, her family went to the Lhong Raya Barracks, a temporary shelter for survivors, where they now live.

As soon as she could, Ena joined a cooperative called Kelompok Swadaya Masyarakat (self empowered community group). This community group is managed by the Matahari Foundation, a local NGO working with UNIFEM. In a few months she received seed capital of Rp. 500,000 (about US\$50) to start a kiosk selling cookies, soft drinks, cigarettes and other small goods, which she set up right in front of her 4x6 m living quarters in the barracks.

"I started the kiosk hoping that I could make more income to support the family. My husband is just a *becak* (a motorized-rickshaw) driver. I realized that his earnings would not be enough, so I decided to open a kiosk."

Ena said that she had initially received training by Matahari to learn to make *abon*, a shredded fish product, but had not really liked it. "I prefer to focus on my kiosk. So I applied for an additional loan of Rp. 2,500,000 from the cooperative to fill up more goods in my kiosk."

Evi, a programme coordinator from Matahari described how hard-working Ena was - she applied for the micro loan in June 2005, and according to Evi, never missed the daily payment of Rp. 20,000. Ena's loan was already repaid in full by October. "I was really happy to get the loan from Matahari," Ena says, "before, there were a lot of things unavailable. When customers came to buy and asked for certain things, I usually did not have it. But, now as many things are already available in my kiosk, people in the barracks do not have to go far to buy things," she explained, smiling.

Ena's income from her kiosk is increasing. "Before, I could only make about Rp. 50,000 a day or at most Rp. 150,000. But now, praise to God, it has doubled." She has just obtained approval on her second loan application, for double the amount of the first one. Evi explained how approval for the second loan depended completely on the borrower's performance and discipline in paying off the first loan. Ena proved that with her determination and discipline she deserves the next loan. She's going to use the money to expand her kiosk even more, and with more goods. We wish you luck Ena!





"When recovery and reconstruction programmes respond to the realities and needs of women and support their leadership and organizing, many local and effective solutions can be scaled up and women's voices and networks empowered to build the policies and institutions necessary for a more just and sustainable future."

Noeleen Heyzer
UNIFEM Executive Director

The tsunami that hit Aceh, in Indonesia, and several other countries in December 2004 destroyed lives and property and devastated entire communities.

Aceh bore the brunt of the devastation. About 130,000 deaths, 40,000 missing and more than 500,000 displaced to makeshift shelters. The tsunami exacerbated the problems and vulnerabilities of marginalized populations due to the decades-long civil war.

Women are particularly vulnerable. They accounted for about 55 to 70 per cent of the tsunami casualty figures. They suffered multiple physical, social, economic and psychological impacts and deprivations.

Lifelines of Community Networks Challenged

In Aceh, women have traditionally played a central role in society. They have for years been at the heart of community networks. Men have been out-migrating to neighboring provinces and countries since the 1980s. According to reports, women may comprise up to 60 per cent of Aceh's population of four million. Years of conflict have multiplied women's roles as lifelines of the community. They head households, sustain subsistence economies, raise children, and care for the sick, wounded, and elderly. Women are at the forefront of survival strategies, struggling to keep communities alive, even as they suffered the violence of war and bear the burden of poverty.

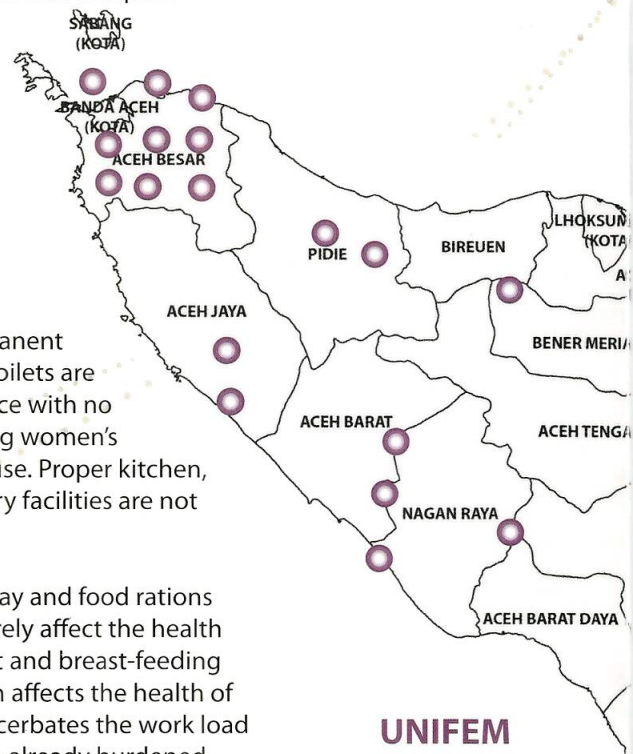
For the women who survived this disaster, several challenges remain in the aftermath of the tsunami:

Thousands of women in Aceh still live in camps and other temporary facilities.

Many of these places lack adequate sanitation, clean water, health services and security. In many instances, women's needs and priorities have not been taken into account in the design of temporary or permanent housing facilities. Toilets are situated at a distance with no privacy, heightening women's vulnerability to abuse. Proper kitchen, cooking and laundry facilities are not available.

Often one meal a day and food rations of low quality severely affect the health of elderly, pregnant and breast-feeding women. This in turn affects the health of children which exacerbates the work load for women who are already burdened with their own poor health.

Women suffer from increased domestic violence in camps and temporary shelters. Inadequate protection is provided by administrative authorities because of the general perception of violence against women being a personal matter.



**UNIFEM
Project
Sites in Aceh**



☞ The tsunami exacerbated women's access to land. Women in Aceh often face the challenge of claiming rights to land and properties registered under the names of their husbands or fathers.

☞ Women have lost their jobs and sources of livelihood. Many women in Aceh supported their families by growing paddy and cultivating vegetables, coconuts and other crops. The tsunami salinated a huge part of the coast and destroyed the livelihoods of the surviving women.

☞ One societal perception is that the tragedy reflects the "sins of women that provoked God's wrath".

Drawing from more than a decade of experience working in conflict-affected communities globally, UNIFEM has identified three priority issues in the tsunami-affected areas:

1. **Leadership:** Supporting local women's leadership and the mobilization of women's networks to ensure women's participation in relief, recovery and reconstruction efforts. This must include providing financial assistance to women's organizations to respond to women's needs quickly.

2. **Livelihoods:** Helping revive women's livelihoods, including restoring their productive assets, processes and supply chains, strengthening market links, and helping them to access reconstruction assistance.

3. **Protection:** Working with other UN, government and civil society partners to assist women's groups in advocating for greater protection for women and girls from human rights violations in the relief, recovery and reconstruction period and beyond.

UNIFEM in collaboration with partners has launched 26 projects benefiting 3,715 beneficiaries in all tsunami-affected districts. Initial work has focused on Banda Aceh, Aceh Besar, West Aceh, Pidie, East Aceh,

North Aceh, and Aceh Jaya. UNIFEM has also established gender focal points network for the whole province.

Mobilizing Women's Leadership & Organizing

As part of UNIFEM's efforts to strengthen provincial Governments' capacity in the reconstruction process, we have supported a strategic planning workshop with various district-level units of the Women's Empowerment Bureau.

The All Acehnese Women's Congress was organized in June 2005. The Congress gathered about 400 women together to discuss their concerns and articulate their role in the recovery and rebuilding process. These consultations were convened to ensure that efforts at the policy level reflect

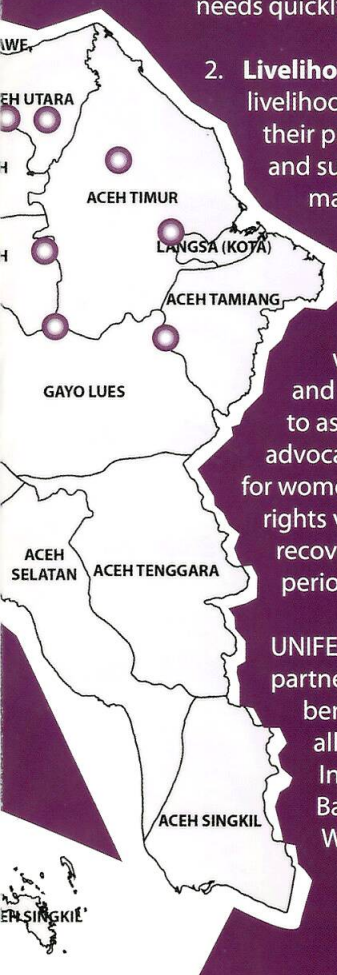
"If women's voices are seriously taken into account in policy and decision making, it will be creating a revolution"

Dr Kuntoro Mangkusubroto

Director, Bureau of Reconstruction and Rehabilitation

the needs and priorities of women on the ground. These meetings were the first of its kind where women from different affected districts and villages came together to discuss and express their needs and concerns in the recovery process. The women highlighted their immediate concerns about livelihoods, inheritance and property rights, and the creation of adequate settlements and housing. But more importantly, they emphasized the critical need for more opportunities for women - to interact with local and national authorities, and to be a part of decision-making in the reconstruction process.

The recommendations from these consultations were submitted to the BRR. The BRR Chief promised to recognize and consult the Aceh Women's Council (the body set up to represent Acehnese women), and has invited UNIFEM to be its gender advisor.



...women's voices and networks empowered to



The Biggest Public Meeting after Tsunami

All Acehese Women Congress "Duek Pakat Inong Aceh II" (DPIA II) was the biggest public meeting after tsunami in Aceh. 393 women from all 21 districts in Aceh, including the Acehese diaspora, participated in this landmark event.

In the spirit of evolving a new development paradigm that positions women as equal and complementing partners of men, the Congress ratified 39 recommendations across six themes:

1. Women and Islamic Syar'iah Law in the context of Aceh's custom, social norms and culture
2. Women and peace in the perspective of law, human rights and state policy
3. Women and politics
4. Women in economy and labour
5. Women in education and health
6. Women and children at IDP camps

UNIFEM has also supported the training of women as social workers and volunteers on camp management in internally displaced persons (IDP) barracks. Mobile training on gender, human rights and advocacy is also being provided. This involves women living in barracks as well as other stakeholders such as the Women's Empowerment Bureau, women 'ulemas', NGOs and activists.

UNIFEM has initiated a Women's Mobile Discussion Series to ensure information exchange and communication between women at the grassroots and the mainstream women and development network. This represents a bottom-up process of information sharing and networking among women activists, leaders and inter-region

and inter-sectoral organizations. The Mobile Discussions serve as capacity building in knowledge and information, awareness-raising on the importance of women's groups in the reconstruction process and education on socio-cultural, political, economic and legal issues affecting Acehese women.

Furthermore, a Gender Rights Watch mechanism is being set up. This mechanism will serve as a province-wide sustainable network to monitor and ensure that recovery policies, plans and programmes take into account women's needs, concerns and rights.

The results of the Strategic Planning for 10 district Bureaus of Women's Empowerment would be ascertained in 2006. And in our continuing efforts to give women a stronger voice, a priority concern is to encourage and facilitate community-based participation and the building of women's groups and networks for women's participation in decision-making. This will include involvement in the local and regional planning process and in the upcoming and first direct election process. It is equally important to develop databases of existing resources, including organizations, schemes and networks. Integrated into the Geographic Information System, these databases serve as tools for planning, programming and policy advocacy.

Revival & Restoration of Livelihoods

Small grants to local partners help to fill gaps in service delivery. They do so by targeting the specific needs and priorities of women, particularly IDPs, widows and women heads of households. Aided by UNIFEM, local

"It's time that women began to discuss reconstructing our lives, but we have no mechanism to do that. We should begin to do the work we were doing before the tsunami, even if we work from our IDP camps, that's ok. But we must begin!"

Woman tsunami survivor interviewed during UNIFEM's rapid assessment, January 2005

build the policies and institutions necessary for a more just

*"We don't need any more free food.
Give us the land and some tools –
I want to grow some healthy food
for my family."*

Woman from IDP shelter in Aceh

women's groups give direct assistance to women to rebuild their small-scale businesses. They also provide skills training and market linkages to increase employment opportunities and stimulate income generation.

UNIFEM provides immediate assistance to women craft makers, such as *bangkuang* (natural plant fibre) weavers, to restart their economic activity and stimulate the local economy. To-date, about 450 women in IDP shelters in Aceh have resumed businesses as a result of vocational and business skills training and revolving credit facilities. A mobile training unit is also teaching computer literacy and administrative skills to young people in remote locations to help them enter the job market.

A UNIFEM Micro Credit Fund for Acehese Women providing micro-credit to women in 10 locations in Banda Aceh, Aceh Besar and Pidie districts is being "initiated" in partnership with local groups. Under this fund, women can borrow small amounts of capital to restart or develop small-scale enterprises. Additionally, UNIFEM is also working to strengthen gender mainstreaming in micro-credit institutions so that more women can have access to such credit facilities.

Protecting Women's Rights

UNIFEM is building the capacity and leadership of women's organizations to advocate for the promotion of women's rights in all reconstruction processes.

UNIFEM gender advisors are being put in place in Aceh. We have been advocating with the Government, UN Country Teams, and NGOs on women's needs and priorities, and ensuring these are part of mainstream recovery

efforts. UNIFEM is also working closely with local coordination agencies and task forces, such as the Aceh Bureau for Reconstruction and Rehabilitation (BRR) to highlight women's leadership roles. Support is also provided for capacity building of national women's machineries to form gender units or women's desks to monitor the inclusion of women's perspectives in all decision-making. Local women's groups are receiving support for skills training in organization and advocacy. They are also being supported to mobilize women to participate in grassroots activities through forums and mobile discussions.

The Aceh provincial legislative council is in the process of drafting a new bill on the governance of Aceh, following the MoU signing in 2005 between the Government of Indonesia and Free Aceh Movement *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka*). This bill will shape the region in the future, politically and economically. UNIFEM and MISPI (True Partner of Indonesia's Women) have moved quickly to mobilize women's networks as well as other civil society organizations and the academia in reviewing the draft bill. UNIFEM is also supporting leading women activists in their advocacy with key individuals and organizations at the local and national levels.

Additionally, UNIFEM is addressing the problem of the paucity of relevant sex-disaggregated data. To this end, UNIFEM is further developing the databanks created in the emergency with ongoing collection of detailed information on all local organizations working on gender issues, including informal and traditional groups. Surveys have been carried out in IDP shelters to obtain more first-hand data on women's situation – these will be made available in early 2006.

Balai Inong

Re-establishment of Balai Inong or women's houses is an important initiative, which is underway. Such houses were found in some villages in Aceh but were destroyed by the tsunami. These houses provide a safe space and place for women to come together to network, discuss their needs and concerns and conduct joint projects. The identification of this basic need is a reflection of the Achenese women's desire to re-knit their communities, strengthen their networks and ensure their voice in decision making at the community level. UNIFEM in collaboration with an NGO partner, Building Bridges, will open the first Balai Inong in Rumpet Village in December 2005.



and sustainable future.

Looking Ahead

UNIFEM has a unique role to play both as a convener of women's groups and as an interlocutor between women's groups and the international community. The work now and for the next few years is not just restoration of damaged property or infrastructure but about recreating communities, which have been destroyed. UNIFEM actively dedicates itself to creating communities and a society based on justice and on the principles of equality, non-discrimination, development and peace in Aceh. UNIFEM brings the voices of affected women to key decision makers and planners through its work with women's organizations and grassroots communities of women.

UNIFEM strategies include:

- ☞ Advocacy with Government, donors and the UN system to ensure that the relief, recovery and reconstruction efforts are gender responsive. Women's specific needs and perspectives will be taken into account and women's participation and leadership in reconstruction, plans and programmes will be ensured.
- ☞ Capacity building of the Government, NGOs and the UN to develop a gender sensitive response to post-tsunami reconstruction.
- ☞ Building and supporting women's networks and alliances, representatives of institutions of local governance and informal community leaders such as religious leaders, tribal chiefs and health workers that will serve as a voice to women's priorities and needs and thereby, provide critical assistance to their livelihood.

For more information, please contact:

UNIFEM Project Office in Aceh
Jl. Kampus Muhammadiyah No. 49
Batoh, Lueng Bata, Banda Aceh
Indonesia
Tel/Fax: 62-651-33773
Email: sylvia@unifem-eseasia.org

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