

ERTR News

Aceh-Nias Emergency Response and Transitional Recovery



■ GOING... GOING... GONE!



Three, two, one... the moment of explosion, and Charles (*third from right*) with the TRWMP team

It stood tall and proud for more than 30 years, but took less than 30 seconds to fall gracefully to the ground. The giant Taman Sari water tower, the defunct yet famous Banda Aceh landmark, was finally demolished this month in a carefully-controlled explosion facilitated by UNDP.

Watched by an eager crowd, the long-awaited demolition went according to plan. Although its removal has left a gap in the landscape, the water tower will be useful to the community in its collapsed state. That's because 100 per cent of the tower will be recycled. The concrete will be used in UNDP road projects in Aceh, and possibly also projects at Ulee Lheue port; the steel from the tower will be sold by the local government and will fund the demolition costs; and once the site is cleared the children's recreational park located alongside the tower site can be extended.

Built in the 1970s, the 44-metre-high tower (approximately the height of a 12-storey building) was designed to improve the water supply to the city. However, problems with the pipe system meant there was never enough pressure to push water up the tower, and so it never served its purpose.



But the tower's fate was sealed when the 2004 earthquake struck. The tower's column was significantly damaged, and the entire structure was deemed a hazard.

Following a request from DKP (Dinas Kebersihan dan Pertamanan - the government's sanitary department), UNDP's Tsunami Recovery Waste Management Programme (TRWMP) helped set the wheels in motion to safely demolish the tower. A first attempt was made in late 2005 using heavy machinery. But due to the tower's substantial reinforced concrete structure, it became apparent that a stronger method was needed: explosives.

TRWMP staff spent time searching for a qualified demolition expert, and DKP eventually hired Jet Demolition from South Africa. They, in turn, sent Charles Mitchell - a registered and reputable Blasting Manager. Following TRWMP's long process of seeking permits for the explosives, storage and other aspects of the explosion, Charles finally arrived in Banda Aceh a week before the demolition date for vital pre-demolition preparations.

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The ERTR Programme commenced activities in January 2005 in the immediate aftermath of the tsunami disaster of 26 December 2004. It builds on the United Nations Indian Ocean Earthquake/Tsunami Flash Appeal, which was launched by the UN Secretary General in Indonesia on 6 January 2005.

UNDP is the United Nations worldwide development network. It advocates change and provides countries with access to the knowledge, skills and resources their populations need to improve their lives.

For the latest information on tsunami recovery efforts, visit: <http://www.undp.or.id/tsunami>

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Said Charles: "This is the broadest and thickest tower that I've collapsed to date, and I'm delighted it was a success. It's been an intense week, as we were working around the clock to get things ready. A demolition is 90 per cent preparation, and it was great to see all the workers take so much pride in making this a success. I'm especially grateful to UNDP's TRWMP staff for their endless efforts in securing the necessary permits to make this happen. Overall, it's been an emotional and positive experience."

In the days leading up to the explosion, tsunami waste that had been cleared by TRWMP from Aceh Besar's padi fields was placed around the base of the tower. This acted as a cushion for the tower's fall, and a barrier for any possible fly debris from the explosion. Then the more technical work began: 138 holes were drilled into the base of the column, into which 40kg of explosives were placed. Steel bars inside the column were exposed, and layers of sheeting and mesh were wrapped around the column's base to prevent any flying debris.

After an intense week of preparation, and after final checking and re-checking, Charles finally gave the all-clear for the detonation button to be pressed by Banda Aceh's Mayor, Pak Marwadi Nurdin, and Government Secretary Pak Husni Bahri. It was all closely watched by an eager crowd standing at a safe distance from the tower.

The countdown began; the button was pressed; a boom was heard; and in a cloud of smoke the water tower gracefully tumbled to the ground. Charles and TRWMP staff immediately inspected the site and declared it safe, meaning contractors hired by UNDP can now break down the rubble with industrial-strength pneumatic hammers.

Nigel Landon, UNDP Waste Management Advisor, explained: "It's taken a long time for this to happen, but we're delighted to see the tower come down safely, and land in the exact way we'd planned for. It's been a real joint effort with DKP, Charles Mitchell, local heavy equipment contractor PT Alhas Jaya, and all the TRWMP staff. Over the next few weeks the remains of the tower will be broken down and recycled."

Since the 2004 tsunami, UNDP has provided assistance to the local authorities in Aceh for demolition services to take down private and public buildings that were partially destroyed. This demolition work is part of UNDP's larger TRWM programme, which has cleared more than 1,084,107m³ of tsunami-generated waste, and provided employment to more than 54,000 people.

■ Taking notice of hygiene

It's big, it's bold, and it's designed to encourage people to take responsibility in maintaining a clean environment. This is just one of several notice boards created as part of a hygiene campaign from UNDP's Tsunami Recovery Waste Management Programme (TRWMP).

The notice boards are strategically located around Banda Aceh, Aceh Besar, and Pidie. They are requesting local people to place their litter in the large litter bins that are allocated below each notice board. The wording advises people to place their litter between 6pm and 6am, as from 6am onwards workers will clear each of the bins.



A total of 20 boards have now been erected in association with UNDP and DKP (Dinas Kebersihan dan Pertamanan, which is the Government's sanitary department).

■ On the road to rehabilitation



Road works: a local employee helps to lay the surface

“It is not wealth that makes good roads possible, but, rather, good roads that make wealth possible.” Those are the words of former US President John F. Kennedy. And in the context of Aceh and Nias roads, those words certainly ring true.

The road sector was one of the worst affected in the 2004 tsunami and 2005 Nias earthquake. Without an adequate road sector, people’s livelihoods and the development of provinces are severely affected. Realizing the severity of the situation, UNDP took the decision to work in partnership with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in its road rehabilitation project.

But this project is about more than just rehabilitating roads. It also focuses heavily on involving local communities, creating jobs and immediate income, helping to build the capacity of district governments, and also of local small-scale contractors in building good roads. To date, more than 850 local people have been employed in Aceh Besar, Bireuen, Pidie and Nias, which created more than 24,000 workers per day.

Many of those local people are women, who are encouraged to participate in relevant aspects of infrastructure work. Said one female worker from Gunung Sitoli in Nias:

“Thank God, now we can have a good road. We had been isolated for 13 years because of the bad road. There was almost no public transport from our village to Gunung Sitoli. We had to walk 4-5 kilometres to get to Gunung Sitoli. We are happy because we can work for the road project. We build our own road and the contractors pay us.”

UNDP initially funded ILO pilot rehabilitation projects in May 2005. By June 2006, 12 kilometres of road had been fully rehabilitated. Since then, UNDP has received USD6.4 million from the Multi Donor Fund to move the ILO project forward. To date, 22 kilometres of road have rehabilitated, and when the project is complete in 2008, a total of 85 kilometres will have been rehabilitated.

At all stages of the project, the allocation of resources is carefully planned so that people living in rural areas can access locations that allow them to meet domestic, economic and social needs. So this means determining rural access needs; deciding on the appropriate level of access; promoting participatory planning; adopting appropriate standards; and making the best use of available materials. All of this involves working with local people, and involving them at every step of the way.

Said Vanda Day, ILO National Programme Officer: “Our participatory planning process recognizes that development programmes are unlikely to succeed if stakeholders and beneficiaries are not involved in the entire process. Therefore, local people are involved in implementing the projects, and in identification, planning, operation, maintenance and evaluation. It’s all a means to building local people’s capacity, especially local contractors and KIMPRASWIL (government public works department) in districts.”

Continuous on-the-job training and capacity building is also given to contractors and contract supervisors from KIMPRASWIL. This is a new approach for Aceh and Nias, but it’s one that appears to be working well. Mirza Fuadi is a local contractor located in Bireuen. He explains:

“No organization or government has conducted training for contractors here in last five years. We have a lot of supervision, and we’ve gained many advantages from the ILO training, such as technical skills in road alignment, and management skills such as preparing tender documents. It’s an interesting process, and we now know how to do these things.”

Nias documentary takes centre stage

To mark the second anniversary of the Nias earthquake, UNDP officially launched its Nias documentary, *Solidaritas*, during a screening to journalists in Medan during late March. Attendees from media outlets including *The Jakarta Post*, *Kompas*, *Waspada* and TVRI came along to watch the 25-minute documentary, and learn more about UNDP's work throughout Nias.

It was also an opportunity for journalists to ask relevant questions to UNDP Team Leader Simon Field, and UNDP Nias Programme Associate Christian Usfinit, who also attended the screening.

The Nias earthquake, which measured 8.7 on the Richter Scale, killed almost 800 people, damaged or destroyed 80 percent of homes in the island's two largest villages, and left 85,000 people homeless.

Despite this colossal damage, Nias received little media attention. But *Solidaritas* captures the results achieved in rebuilding infrastructure, livelihoods and a market economy in the region.



Documenting the process: copies of UNDP's *Solidaritas* dvd



Question time: Christian (left) and Simon answer queries from the media



MATTERS OF FACT: UNDP IN NIAS

- 172 houses completed in two villages.
- 800m access road to dumpsite completed, 500m drainage cleared, and ongoing construction of 2,500m² dumpsite in Teluk Dalam, South Nias.
- Ongoing construction and rehabilitation of 15 km rural road in 13 villages in Nias.
- 16 CSOs strengthened and 979 CSO members/beneficiaries received small grant for livelihood improvement.
- Production of Tourism Assessment document to support development of cultural tourism and establishment of cultural living museum in South Nias. 468 beneficiaries in three villages trained in traditional handicrafts to preserve traditional knowledge and support job creation.
- Providing support and expertise in three villages (pilot areas) to establish community-based disaster risk reduction.

■ Building for a brighter future in Nias



Office work: drilling a well outside the Bupati's office in Nias

With many people spending more time in their office than at home, a comfortable work space is vital. But many government workers in Nias have been forced to work in uncomfortable conditions following the damage caused by the 2004 tsunami and 2005 earthquake. Not only has this affected their working environment, but also the level of service they can realistically offer the public.

But a UNDP programme is helping to rectify the situation by supporting the local government in building its infrastructure and capacity. The programme, titled Strengthening of Regional Government in Recovery of the Economy, aims to help the regional government become more actively involved in the recovery and reconstruction of Nias. It will eventually mean the regional government's role is not just a granter of work permits for external institutions - it will also be an active coordinator for rural development for a brighter future.

Pak Fahuwusa Laia, the Bupati of Nias Selatan, explained that to redevelop his region, improvements were needed to infrastructures that would help strengthen the capacity of each government institution. This, in turn, will allow them to provide a better public service towards the community.

"I am so glad that UNDP is committed to supporting this district by improving the infrastructure," he explained. "I'm optimistic that we can improve the social and economic life of the Nias community through a better public service for a prosperous future."

Christian Usfinit, UNDP Programme Associate in Nias, explained: "Currently, only one government department in Nias has its own office, while others still rent family houses

that have neither a meeting room nor toilet. As this is unsatisfactory, UNDP is assisting the government and the people here in Nias Selatan to redevelop their home land."

The construction process of the UNDP programme began in May 2006 and will continue until May 2008. It involves office construction complete with wireless internet connection, internet training, financial and budgeting training for five government institutions, with one additional office for the UN Joint Secretariat Programme in Nias Selatan.

Pak Blazius, a government officer for more than 20 years in the Bupati's office in Nias Selatan, can vouch for the situation. He explained:

"Previously there was no clean toilet in this office, and I felt embarrassed when guests asked to use the toilet. But I'm relieved that UNDP built a new toilet and installed a water pump for my office. It makes us more comfortable while working."

Semi-permanent offices planned for construction include the District Development planning agency; the Settlement and Infrastructure agency; the Tourism office; and the Marine and Fisheries department. Once land approval has been cleared by the local government, work will begin immediately.

Christian added: "We have built sanitary facilities for the government offices, built four toilets, drilled a well and water pump for the Bupati's office, and installed internet and radio communication to improve communication for government staff. Our work in socializing this programme has been helped by building a good partnership with the local community, who are great people to work with."

■ Donating livestock to meet children’s educational needs



YPSDI facilitators visit Mariani and the goats donated by UNDP

Education is vital for any child. But when a parent struggles to meet the costs of that education, it can only lead to feelings of despair. Such was the case following the 2004 tsunami. Thousands of livelihoods were destroyed, leaving parents struggling to fund their children’s educational needs.

But many of these parents and children are restoring hope through a UNDP CSO (Civil Society Organization) programme. Its Sustainable Livelihood Small Grant Project has recognized the most important needs in recovering livelihoods of tsunami-affected people in Aceh and Nias. In partnership with local NGO Yayasan Pengembangan Sumber Daya Insani (YPSDI), UNDP identified vulnerable families who needed to support their children’s education. Since November 2005, the project has helped some 3,500 households in 19 districts in Aceh and Nias.

One of those families belongs to 40-year-old Mariani. She and her husband have two children who attend school in Seupu village, Aceh Besar, close to the airport. Their wooden traditional house almost collapsed in the earthquake. Mariani’s husband works as a manual worker or helps on neighbours’ farms in planting seasons. He usually receives Rp20,000 per day, which is not enough for daily expenses.

“Sometimes I have to wait until my husband has money before I can buy my children the school books they need,” Mariani explained. “It makes me so sad, as I only have money for our daily expenses.”

Mariani was identified as one of the beneficiaries of the UNDP/YPSDI Sustainable Livelihood Small Grant Project. Along with 49 others in her village, Mariani received four goats from UNDP to support her children’s education. She also followed the programme’s training to manage her livelihood income.

“When I received the goats, my children were so happy and said they wanted to take care of them after school time, as they knew the goats are for their scholarships,” she enthused.

YPSDI facilitator, Taufik, explained that the project aims to deliver a sustainable livelihood for the village community. The 50 beneficiaries are obligated to revolve the fund back to their group after saving for their children’s education costs. This revolving fund will be used for other new beneficiaries requiring financial help for their livelihoods.

Said Taufik: “Overall we are pleased, as most beneficiaries can buy new goats. This includes Mariani; she is a great mother who is working hard for her children, and now she can purchase livestock.”

UNDP CSO Officer, Pak Susanto, said that the project also aims to synergize the recovery efforts with local economic empowerment by delivering sustainable livelihood small grants for various types of businesses. These include farming, trading, fishing, sewing and embroidery, and other small home industries. In addition, UNDP also builds community capacity in managing businesses through vocational trainings.

“During the project implementation, we work closely with YPSDI to manage the grant distribution to the beneficiaries. Together with UNDP staff, YPSDI directly monitors the condition of beneficiaries who received a grant, and assists them in managing their livelihood income,” explained Susanto.

“Most of the project’s beneficiaries are women. These women raise the goats while also managing the household income. This kind of participation also becomes a positive way of encouraging other women to help their family.”

Women such as Mariani can now face each day with more spirit, as they strive to improve their children’s lives. “I’m glad I can save more money for my children through the goat donation from UNDP. I really do hope they can receive a better education in future,” she concluded.

■ Beneficiaries voice their opinions for improvements



Being heard: beneficiaries from this women's group in Meulaboh took part in the research

How can UNDP improve its project implementation? How can it develop the capacity of its implementing partners? And how can it learn how effective its programmes really are? There is one group of people who can help answer these questions: UNDP beneficiaries.

In partnership with the Research Unit of Syiah Kuala University (UNSYIAH) in Banda Aceh, UNDP began an assessment of its Livelihoods programme in Aceh and Nias in June 2006. The assessment focuses on improving and strengthening project implementation, and its result will become a constructive tool for UNDP in developing effective project implementation in the coming years.

Fadrial, a researcher from UNSYIAH, explains: "There are 451 randomly-selected participants throughout Aceh and Nias taking part in the research, and they currently benefit from the UNDP Livelihoods project. Myself and the research team drafted questions that cover several critical aspects, such as the types of aid received; the fund management in the household; the impact of fund on household income; the business comparison pre and post disaster; and the impact for female beneficiaries."

Fadrial added: "We haven't faced any significant difficulties while visiting the participants, as they are generally willing to take part in our 30-minute interviews. So far, myself and the fifteen other surveyors found some very positive achievements from female beneficiaries due to their involvement in supporting their family income. But while many beneficiaries have been able to restart their business and increase their income, they are still unable to expand and improve their business due to a lack of knowledge."

The UNDP coordinator for the assessment project, Firza, explained: "There are many aspects to consider when implementing a UNDP programme, so through this assessment we hope to find solutions for all related issues that impact our programme achievement."

"The research is due for completion in May. We hope it can provide the criteria for developing more effective, eligible, and transparent projects designed to help vulnerable people in the future."

■ Turning up the volume on Disaster Risk Reduction



Reaching out to the media: DRR staff member Angel Sumendap

Aceh's airwaves have been alive with the sound of the UNDP Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) team recently. They have joined up with local radio station Jati FM (103, 6 FM) to help spread the word loud and clear regarding disaster risk reduction.

As part of its public information campaign, the DRR team produced clear and informative public information inserts for Jati FM. The broadcasts outline the types of hazards experienced in local communities, and give tips on how to deal with those hazards. As the station's broadcasts reach 150 km from the centre of Banda Aceh, it means more people can increase their knowledge of disasters.

The first two inserts, broadcast in March, highlighted DRR and hazards in general. Throughout April, a further five inserts will be broadcast on Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction; DRR and Environment; DRR and Education; Good Building Practices; and Early Warning Systems. In the following months, the DRR team will replicate this effort in other areas of Aceh to reach more communities.

Asri Wijayanti, UNDP DRR Early Warning Liaison Associate, explained: "It's our goal to raise awareness of these issues and motivate people to empower themselves in becoming more resilient and resistant to the hazards around them. We'll continue to provide communities with various DRR concepts that relate to local conditions in Aceh."

The DRR team also provided Jati FM with materials for its daily Disaster Mitigation Program. The materials cover Aceh's common hazards, such as earthquakes, floods, epidemic diseases, landslides and tsunamis. The nature of these hazards, the typical adverse effects and the causes of these effects, are well described.

Robin Willison, UNDP's Advisor on Disaster Risk Reduction, explained: "These radio broadcasts are just the start of our public information initiative. We plan to work closely with a variety of media to reach more people in the greater part of Aceh. Public information is a key part of informing the community so that they can make better decisions to improve their safety against future hazard impacts, which are common in Sumatra. The media has an important role to serve the communities with accurate and relevant information that affect their lives."

ERTR News will keep readers updated of the DRR team's progress over the coming months.