

Indian Ocean Tsunami 26 December 2004: Resilience and Reflection from Banda Aceh – Indonesia

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Abstract

Aceh was the area most affected by great earthquake and Indian Ocean tsunami in 26 December 2004. The victims reached the number of 165,708 with 128,645 people death and 37,063 missing mostly female, children and elderly. In addition, more than half million people were displaced and required urgent health and assistances. Higher victims in Aceh compared with other similar tsunami in other areas (i.e. Japan) might relate with a numbers of factors such as high population density live in low-lying costal area, close to epicentre of tsunami, limited relief response in the first week of tsunami, not well functioning of local government during the first month of tsunami and have lack of public awareness of tsunami hazard. Acehnese have no prior tsunami knowledge and experiences except those who live in Simelue Island (one of Districts in Aceh). In this island, even if the location was relatively close to tsunami epicentre, the victims were less than ten people death. Those who survive from tsunami, most of them were at risk of mental health problems and most of them have to start their life from the scratch. However, a lot of people are able to cope and face such reality and stand up for a new life with new hope for new future. Some of them believe and see that the tsunami as an act of God and it was a sign of God's love to end the 30 years conflict between free Aceh movement and central government and provided the opportunity to have a better society, both in religious and in socio-economic terms. Some sources to the resilience have been indentified including spritual sources, human and other internal and external factors. A number of lesson learned were also highlited including the urgency of the development of a tsunami risk culture in the populations that could have considerably reduced vulnerability in the future.