ABOUT GIVE2ASIA

Give2Asia is a US-based nonprofit that serves as a catalyst for philanthropic investment in Asia. Since 2001, Give2Asia has connected corporations, foundations, and individual donors to charitable causes throughout Asia, funding over a quarter of a billion dollars in impactful programs over a diverse range of fields.

Through long-term relationships with local groups, we coordinate comprehensive programs that address Asia’s greatest needs. We work with our grant recipients over multiple years, supporting them and building long-term connections between these groups and international donors. We have the largest network of any international advised grantmaker working in Asia.

ABOUT ACEH, INDONESIA & THE BOXING DAY TSUNAMI

The Indonesian province of Aceh is located in the northern tip of Sumatra, the westernmost island of the Indonesian archipelago. Today its capital, Banda Aceh, is home to over 223,000 of the province’s predominantly Muslim population of 4.7 million.

On December 26, 2004, a 9.1-magnitude earthquake off the coast of Sumatra triggered a series of tsunamis that resulted in the deadliest natural disasters in human history.

When the 100 foot tall waves receded, nearly 230,000 people from 14 countries were dead or missing. No place was hit harder than Aceh, where death tolls reached 170,000.

While much of the area has been rebuilt, the province of Aceh still bears the scars and painful reminders of the disaster that occurred 10 years ago.

Learn more at www.give2asia.org
ACEH 10 YEARS LATER

Often, international development organizations working in disaster recovery are so focused on the latest events and needs that they do not have the opportunity to step back and assess the long-term impact of specific projects and efforts. However, as the increasing frequency and strength of natural disasters throughout Asia continues to shape societies through the region, it is important to reflect upon one of the most influential disasters in the last decade.

December 26, 2014 marks the 10-year anniversary of the Boxing Day Tsunami, a natural disaster that ushered in a new era in international aid response and engagement by individuals, foundations and other institutions. Beginning in early 2014, Give2Asia met with its tsunami recovery partners and beneficiaries in Aceh to better understand the impact of the effort, the success of the work we funded, and what needs remain on the ground today for those affected communities.

A DISASTER OF UNSPEAKABLE PROPORTIONS

On that tragic day, a 9.1-magnitude earthquake struck in the middle of the Indian Ocean, 240 kilometers from the coast of Aceh province in Indonesia. The quake launched a series of tsunamis that caused destruction throughout the region, but nowhere saw more than Aceh itself. Of a total population of 4.25 million Acehnese, more than 170,000 lives were lost and 90,000 people went missing. More than 500,000 people lost their homes, 150,000 children were left without schools, and 750,000 people lost their livelihoods. Public services were paralyzed, as over 3,000 civil servants died, 2,275 reported missing, and 669 government buildings were destroyed.

Two days after the tsunami, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono requested international assistance and declared Aceh open to the international community to provide emergency relief. Within a week, more than 50 international organizations were on the ground, a figure that rose to over 200 by mid-January. By the end of 2005, the international community had pledged $14 billion in funding for tsunami response.

Both the scale of the disaster as well as the scale of the humanitarian response were unprecedented in modern human history. As we approach the 10-year anniversary, Give2Asia looks back at the disaster, our role in the recovery effort, and what we have learned about effective disaster response.
Before December 26, 2004, Aceh province had been closed to most international aid agencies due to an unstable political situation. The fourth poorest province in Indonesia, Aceh had experienced 30 years of continuous conflict between separatist rebels, known as the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), and the Indonesian government. The conflict had decimated the region’s production, hampered the delivery of basic services, and traumatized Acehnese across the province. The 2004 disaster, as tragic as it was, offered Aceh an historic opportunity to bring the decades of conflict to an end and starting the process of building a lasting peace. On August 15, 2005, an MOU between the Indonesian government and GAM leaders was signed, officially marking the end of the conflict. Aceh has remained largely free of conflict to the present day.

The prevailing peace opened the door for donor communities to come to Aceh. The Chair of the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency (BRR), a ministerial level agency under President Yudhoyono’s direct supervision, estimated that 800 organizations and 8,000 expatriates from 56 countries came to Aceh to participate in the relief effort. “Build Back Better”, the rallying cry of the international donor community’s tsunami response efforts, was nowhere more imperative than in Aceh. In the aftermath, there was an enormous opportunity to rebuild lost housing, buildings and infrastructure, but also to revitalize communities and government agencies who had been mired in conflict for decades.

This huge influx of capital reached its peak in 2007 to 2009 and Aceh experienced an economic boom related to post-tsunami projects, especially in the city of Banda Aceh. While there was progress, the rebuilding effort also had unanticipated side effects on the local economy and social dynamics. The price of land increased drastically, as well as the cost of living for most residents. Donor intervention projects became very competitive and communities began to value themselves based upon how much donor money they had received. People saw the large sums of cash being spent and would demand artificially high wages to participate in a recovery project.

“The rebuilding effort also had unanticipated side effects on the local economy and social dynamics”
Prior to 2004, Give2Asia had never conducted a disaster response initiative, and this effort in Aceh still stands as one of the organization’s largest responses to date. From 2004 to 2007, Give2Asia’s Tsunami Relief Fund helped hundreds of thousands of people affected by the Boxing Day Tsunami, coordinating efforts between Give2Asia and local partner organizations in Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka and India.

Early on, Give2Asia conducted the Aceh Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Appraisal (ARRA), an assessment to guide the work in post tsunami in Aceh. The ARRA was conducted six months after the tsunami with specific areas of attention: health and education services, housing, distribution of survival allowances, restoration of ownership documents, and economic recovery.

Many of the initiatives Give2Asia supported were informed by the ARRA report. For example, to address the lack of women participating in programs in the livelihood sector, Give2Asia provided funding to the women’s youth group of Muhammadyah, the second largest Muslim organization in Indonesia, to rebuild women’s lives and families. The organization provided trainings to female heads of households on how to produce and market tempe and soymilk. Another example was funding the Education for Aceh and North Sumatra (PUAS) program to provide emergency education to keep children in school. The program recruited volunteer teachers to teach at survivors’ camps, enabling children at the camps continue their studies.

Give2Asia funded a total of 22 projects in Indonesia, granting out a total of $1.5 million to partners embedded in local communities.

As Give2Asia’s first disaster response effort, the lessons learned has since shaped the organization’s unique approach to more than 40 natural disaster recovery programs. By funding locally based organizations, Give2Asia was able to develop recovery projects that were generally more sustainable as well as provided longer-term impact. For example, projects developed with Muhammadyah and the Crisis Center University of Indonesia were able to maintain contact with their beneficiaries, developing lasting relationships that continue to help remedy social issues long after the recovery programs had ceased. Local organizations with ownership of an initiative tended to take greater responsibility for sustainability of their program, and social pressures of being part of a community helped to ensure accountability and continuity of activities.

“The lessons have shaped our unique approach to disaster recovery. Programs based on ideas that came directly from locally based organizations were generally more sustainable and had longer-term impact.”
ACEH TODAY: NEW LANDSCAPE OF OPPORTUNITIES

Decades of conflict and poverty were the primary social issues addressed by NGOs in Aceh before the 2004 tsunami, but the disaster shifted that focus dramatically. The signing of the peace MOU in 2005 brought with it an unprecedented level of security and stability, resulting in an influx of capital and opportunities for NGOs to help rehabilitate Aceh. However, when that funding started to dry up local groups found it difficult to survive. A 2010 United Nations Development Program (UNDP) report on Human Development in Aceh found that the following challenges remain:

1. commitment to peace and security
2. poverty and inequality
3. women’s welfare
4. disaster preparedness

With regards to commitment to peace and security, the challenge today is to reintegrate the ex-GAM combatants into economy, so that they can become contributing members of society. It is also important to ensure a stable law enforcement presence in anticipation of acts of violence and oppression.

Aceh is one of the richest provinces in Indonesia in terms of natural resources, but one of the poorest in terms of economic activity. Reconstruction and rehabilitation funding after the tsunami energized the local economy, but those funds have long since ceased. In order to maintain a stable economy, Aceh needs investment to create both formal and informal sector jobs. Six out of ten people in Aceh now work in the informal sector, which includes agriculture. One of the challenges facing formal job creation is in part caused by the the minimum wage set by the province. Currently, the minimum wage in Aceh is one of the highest, primarily caused by high inflation in the years after the tsunami. While this will eventually be corrected, in order to fully energize the economy, Aceh needs to improve the investment climate and guarantee security for investors. Aceh also needs to ensure support for the least developed districts in West and South Aceh by improving access to infrastructure and other public services. Left unchecked, economic development will only widen the gap between the rich and the poor.

“Aceh is one of the richest provinces in Indonesia in terms of natural resources, but one of the poorest provinces in terms of economic activity.”
Women’s welfare remains one of the biggest challenges facing Aceh. In the period after the disaster, local governments, organizations, and communities became more aware of gender issues, and women began to participate more fully in civic life. Since 2009, women’s participation in politics has decreased, with only a small number of women holding senior positions. Domestic violence and lack of opportunity for women in the communities are still common problems.

Aceh is still considered highly prone to disaster. Although disaster preparedness had been given precedence following the tsunami, no overarching integrated approach involving all elements of building resilient and stable communities has been widely implemented. Recognizing that the donor community is often heavily focused on immediate disaster relief, rather than supporting disaster preparedness and resiliency, Give2Asia launched its NGO Disaster Preparedness Program (NGO DPP) in 2014. This new program is specifically focused on implementing disaster preparedness programs in Indonesia, and five of Asia’s most vulnerable countries.

Learn more about Give2Asia’s NGO Disaster Preparedness Program at www.give2asia.org/disasterprep.

**CHANGES STILL NEEDED**

When the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency (BRR) completed its mandate in 2009, the Aceh Sustainable Reconstruction Agency (BKRA) was put in place to synchronize ongoing rehabilitation, reconstruction, and revitalization efforts in affected communities. The report produced by BKRA summarized reconstruction outcomes:

- Almost 200,000 SMEs received assistance
- 150,000 workers trained
- 40,000 houses rebuilt
- Almost 70,000 hectares of land rehabilitated
- Almost 40,000 new teachers trained
- 7,109 boats replaced
- 3,781 mosques rebuilt and renovated
- 3,696 kms of road reconstructed
- 1,759 schools rebuilt
- 1,115 health centers rebuilt
- 996 government buildings renovated
- 363 bridges repaired
- 23 ports rebuilt
- 13 airports or airstrips rebuilt
Following the BKRA’s efforts in coordinating the region’s rehabilitation efforts, ongoing reconstruction was handed over to the local governments. Today, the Aceh provincial and district governments have the responsibility to ensure reconstruction is fully completed, requiring capacity building assistance in the absence of support from the central government and international development community.

Although the poverty rate has declined from 28.28% in 2006 to 20.98% in 2010, and unemployment has also declined from 9.84% in 2007 to 8.60% in 2010, many challenges remain. In addition to improving public services, infrastructure, education, and health services available to most are still in poor condition. Some, though not all, gaps in public services can be addressed by the NGO and the international community.

Give2Asia’s partners and beneficiaries in Aceh have identified ongoing needs of their communities. Mulyadi from Crisis Center cites the need for disaster preparedness activities in schools and continued trainings on handling psychosocial issues. Similar views were shared by Susan Sofia of Sukma Bangsa, whom claimed that teaching standard curriculum for students in Aceh, especially in eastern city of Lhokseumawe, is insufficient because of trauma suffered by the students and their families. Without proper training, it is difficult for teachers to educate students with this unique background.

Munzir, also from the Crisis Center in Banda Aceh, mentioned the needs for social enterprises to fund pilot projects such as the one implemented by the Crisis Center in 2005. Having worked for various different organizations, including the American Red Cross, Munzir appreciated the flexibility the Crisis Center had on the ground. The flexibility has enabled the Center to adapt to the needs of the teachers and students in a way that larger INGOs generally cannot.

Through the years, Give2Asia has learned that disaster response is an inherently inexact science. There are no hard and fast rules that apply in every disaster, because every disaster is truly different. However a recurring theme in all of Give2Asia’s disaster recovery work since the Boxing Day Tsunami has been to partner with community-based groups in disaster zones. They have been shown time and again to achieve better results, and can use funding more efficiently than larger external organizations. This not only has important implications for beneficiaries, but for donors looking for impact as well.
For the 10-year anniversary, Give2Asia’s Indonesia field advisor Anna Juliastuti returned to visit its partners in Aceh to better understand Give2Asia’s role in the recovery work, examine what worked, and learn from what did not. During her trip, she met with representatives from Rahmania Foundation, Education for Aceh and North Sumatera (PUAS), Muhammadyah, and Crisis Center University of Indonesia.

**Muhammadyah**

Asraf and Mariana provided training in the survivor’s camp for women-led household to produce tempe for livelihood activities and soymilk for their children. They came from a women’s youth group of Muhammadyah, one of Give2Asia’s partners in Aceh. The occupants came from different areas in Aceh, some from Banda Aceh, some from the Aceh Besar district, and some from the Aceh island. When they returned to their villages, Asraf and Mariana continued to provide assistance, even after the project had ended. Mehran from Banda Aceh and Zaida from the Aceh Besar district are amongst those who have been successful in continuing the tempe production as a business.

Mehran, a civil servant in Banda Aceh who lost her husband in the disaster, received a training from Disaster Management Agency (LPB) of Muhammadyah when she and her kids stayed on a barak penampungan after the tsunami. Muhammadyah provided soymilk and tempe production training and equipment to a total of 240 women in the camp, including Mehran. Soon after receiving the training, Mehran started to produce tempe and she was able to earn additional income to renovate her house. She later married Sarmadi Zakaria, and both produced tempe and sold fried tempe for events in their respective offices and in nearby coffee shops. In addition, Mehran shared her knowledge with other women’s groups through her work as a civil servant in the local agriculture office. Both she and her husband travel to neighboring districts as extension agents and as a result at least 70 additional women have received training on how to produce tempe.

**Muhammadyah**, based in Yogyakarta, is Indonesia’s second largest Muslim organization. Give2Asia provided funding to Muhammadyah to mobilize hundreds of skilled volunteers to care for survivors of the tsunami. Give2Asia also provided funding directly to the organization to scale up their disaster response efforts in general, and to provide medical care to thousands of sick and injured survivors. In addition, funding was provided to Nasiyiatul Aisyiyah, the women’s youth group of Muhammadyah, to rebuild women-led households in the survivors’ camps. Nasiyiatul Aisyiyah provided training on how to
produce tempe and soymilk, as well as marketing guidance, and all of the necessary equipment for production. Tempe was chosen as a product since it is nutritious and a staple of Indonesian cuisine, and soymilk because it was difficult to get cow’s milk for their children in the camps. The organization continues to provide support in areas experiencing disasters across Indonesia with various programs such as microfinance, community development, and disaster management for schools and hospitals.

The Crisis Center University of Indonesia

Mulyadi (left) is the principal of Muara Batu Elementary School. He received training from the Crisis Center University of Indonesia when he was a teacher at another school in a nearby sub-district. Because of his leadership Maura Batu is a model more other schools, and is actively involved in the Teacher Working Group network along with five other schools in the district. The network is a platform for sharing information on teaching methodology among teachers. Mulyadi still using and sharing the methodology he received from the training through the Crisis Center: class management, brain exercise, and relaxation. Now that he is the principal, not only he is using the methodology, he also trains teachers and other staff on how to implement it into their work.

Mundzir (right) is a graduate from Faculty of Psychology, University of Indonesia in Jakarta. He became a volunteer and facilitator for the teacher’s training conducted by the Crisis Center in the North Aceh district. Mundzir maintains contacts with many of the teachers although he lives in Banda Aceh (5 hours from North Aceh) long after the program has ended. Whenever possible, he visits the schools and the teachers. Mundzir finally married a girl from Banda Aceh, and when he got married, many of the teachers came to his wedding.

The Crisis Center University of Indonesia was established in 1998 in response to riots in Indonesia that year. The Crisis Center’s mission is to provide psychosocial assistance to individuals, groups, and communities affected by conflict and disaster. Give2Asia provided funding to the Crisis Center from 2005 to 2006 to train elementary and junior high school teachers to address the psychosocial problems faced by the children due to prolonged conflict and the tsunami in the North Aceh district. One hundred teachers were trained on how to identify symptoms of psychosocial trauma and strategies for counseling affected children. The Crisis Center is still very active today, providing community-based capacity building trainings and counseling services related to psychosocial issues in the context of disaster, and conducting research, program evaluation and assessment.
Rahmania Foundation

Give2Asia provided funding directly to Rahmania Foundation for two projects: to build a youth skills center and hostel, and to provide support for Aceh’s orphans. Rahmania Foundation has been active in Aceh since November 1996 and has run an orphanage and a vocational education center offering courses on auto mechanics as well as refrigerator and air-conditioning repair, though progress had been slow and incomplete due to the economic crisis of 1998 and the resurgent conflict in Aceh. Rahmania Foundation remains active in Aceh to this day, running the orphanage and an integrated farm in the North Aceh district. The Foundation has also been active in West Sumatra and West Java to provide emergency relief after disasters.

Rahmania Foundation experienced difficulties in maintaining the orphans skills center and youth hostel built with funding from Give2Asia and has since partnered with other groups to maintain its operation. The skills center is currently run by two groups of local youths and is being used as a community learning center providing a public library, an English course and a school of democracy. One of these groups is a local NGO called Sepakat. Sepakat runs a program called School of Democracy (Sekolah Demokrasi). School of Democracy is one of seven such schools established across Indonesia. This school becomes a reference for members of legislature, civil servants, business people and community members who want to learn about democracy in Indonesia. Another group runs an English course for profit, but also provides free English courses to local orphans. There is also a plan to make use of extra rooms in the building as a day-care or toddlers library, since the building is adjacent to a kindergarten.

Education for Aceh and North Sumatera

Teacher Susan Sofia (center, wearing red), a teacher originally hailing from Jakarta, came to Aceh for the first time as a volunteer teaching at one of the camps. She got the opportunity to attend a teacher’s exchange program to Yogyakarta organized by Education for Aceh and North Sumatera (PUAS), a Give2Asia partner. She was then based in Sukma Bangsa School in Lhokseumawe, a school that provided scholarships for students as tsunami and conflict victims. She found the teaching method she learnt from the exchange was very useful and she still uses the method today. She is now the principal of Sukma Bangsa Junior High School in Lhokseumawe and is a favorite amongst her students.

Education for Aceh and North Sumatera was a program designed to address the issue of children who were forced to leave schools due to the tsunami. Many schools were destroyed and families uprooted to live in camps, which left existing schools inaccessible for many. There were three primary projects funded by Give2Asia: Emergency Education to Keep Children in School, Strengthening the Capacity of Boarding Schools in Aceh, and Teachers’ Exchange Program to Yogyakarta.