
POST-EARTHQUAKE RESPONSE AND RECONSTRUCTION

Gender-sensitive advocacy in Indonesia



Ibu Darmulis, a public health community mobiliser in West Sumatra (Boy Amra/Kabisat/Oxfam local partner)

Around one million Indonesians are affected by natural disasters every year. Despite significant government investment in early warning systems and disaster management, the impact of the 2009 earthquake in West Sumatra showed that much more needs to be done. Oxfam's post-earthquake advocacy work aimed to build understanding of how gender inequality shapes vulnerability and to promote women's participation in designing the emergency response. Oxfam conducted research into the differential impact of the earthquake on men and women supported the UN and the government of Indonesia to integrate this information into their own responses.

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INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Indonesia is a vast archipelago of thousands of islands spread between Asia and Australia. It has a population of more than 230 million, although fewer than half of the islands are inhabited. Indonesia has made advances in reducing poverty over the past few decades and is now rated as a middle-income country. The country's gross national income per capita rose from \$2,200 in 2000 to \$3,720 in 2009¹. It ranks in the top five countries that have made the fastest progress in human development from 1970 to 2010, on income and non-income dimensions.² Important pro-democracy legislation has been enacted and the country now has a free media. Despite this progress, the increase in prosperity has been highly uneven. Poverty levels remain high and more than 32 million Indonesians currently live below the poverty line, with approximately half of all households remaining clustered around the national poverty line set at 200,262 rupiahs per month (\$22).³

Oxfam has been working in Indonesia since 1972, focusing on creating sustainable livelihoods, promoting gender equality, and improving disaster preparedness and mitigation. A key objective for Oxfam's future work is that the poorest and most vulnerable people are better able to cope with shocks, including human-made and natural disasters and the negative impacts of climate change. Oxfam has prioritised support for women's capacities to prepare for, respond to, and lead in disaster situations.

Lying near the intersection of shifting tectonic plates, Indonesia is prone to natural hazards, including tropical flooding, droughts, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions. The country is rated at 'extreme risk' and ranked second (after Bangladesh) in terms of vulnerability on Maplecroft's Natural Disaster Risk Index 2010.⁴ On average, one million Indonesians are affected by natural disasters every year. From 1980 to 2008, there were 293 natural disasters, which caused an estimated \$21.2bn in economic losses. The government has made efforts to reduce the risks people face from natural disasters. Early warning systems have been developed, and in 2007, a new Law on Disaster Management (Law 24/2007) was enacted as well as regulations and guidelines for its implementation. The government also established a National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB), replicated in some of the country's provinces. Yet the aftermath of the 2009 earthquake showed that existing efforts did not significantly reduce the risks or impact on people's lives. Much more needs to be done to build people's resilience to future disasters.

GENDER ISSUES

Despite the Indonesian government's strong commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment, with an established legal framework and institutions in place at national and provincial level to implement it, progress has been mixed and significant challenges remain. Women's participation in decision-making at all levels is very low; just 1 per cent of the 500 *bupatis* (head of district, and therefore one of the most powerful local government positions under decentralisation) are women. The same appears to be the case in the institutions charged with disaster management and preparedness.

In Indonesia, women are generally more vulnerable to chronic poverty due to gender inequalities in the distribution of income and access to credit, and unequal control over property and natural resources. Women's access to paid employment, and wages when in employment, is also lower than that of men. While the total number of men in paid work has continued to rise, women's employment has stagnated or decreased, among both the existing female labour force and new female entrants to the labour market. In 2005, the percentage of women in paid employment was 40 per cent lower than that of men.⁵

Women are also disproportionately affected by disasters and emergencies. They are more likely to die, or to experience major changes in their role, including taking on greater care-giving responsibilities for younger or older survivors – often with little support and few resources. They play a central role within the family, securing relief from emergency authorities, meeting the immediate needs of survivors, and managing temporary relocation. Destruction of homes, water, and other facilities puts considerable strain on women's ability to carry out these responsibilities; and when food is scarce, women usually reduce their own food intake before that of their children and/or their husband. Women play a vital part in disaster mitigation and response efforts, whether acting within their traditional gender roles or going beyond them. But despite this, they are often portrayed as victims, and their central role in delivering the response is frequently overlooked.

Given the size and spread of the Indonesian archipelago, it is not surprising that it is home to many different ethnic groups. In the province of West Sumatra, one of the country's most disaster-prone areas, the *Minangkabau* ethnic group (also known as *Minang* or *Padang*) is indigenous to the highlands. Their culture is matrilineal, with property and rice land passing down from mother to daughter, while religious and political affairs are the realm of men (although some women also play important roles in these areas). Women and girls in West Sumatra have had an active role in the economy and thus are significantly affected by the damage to property and disruption to communication and markets caused by disasters. Because of widespread male migration, there are many female-headed households across West Sumatra, many of whom (especially older women) may be excluded from or unable to take up available support when a disaster strikes.

EARTHQUAKE IMPACT AND RESPONSE



On 30 September 2009, an earthquake measuring 7.9 on the Richter scale struck a densely populated area (home to 4.3 million people) in West Sumatra. Eight areas were worst affected (see map): Padang city, Pariaman city, Padang Pariaman district, Bukittinggi city, Pesisir Selatan district, Solok district, Pasaman Barat district, and Agam district. More than 1,000 people died and more than 3,000 were injured. Approximately 300,000 houses were damaged and there was considerable destruction of schools and hospitals. Around 6,000 people were displaced by landslides in the districts of Agam and Padang Pariaman. Oxfam was involved in the emergency response to meet people's immediate needs and was well

placed to respond because of the disaster preparedness mechanisms that had already been put in place, including a programme focused on building relevant skills of local partners. This paper focuses on Oxfam's advocacy work, which aimed to strengthen women's participation and increase their visibility in the 2009 earthquake response and in future humanitarian responses.

Within hours of the earthquake, the Indonesian government declared a state of emergency and subsequently requested international assistance. The government planned to provide 100bn rupiah for the emergency operation that would meet the needs of 200,000 affected people. Commitment to provide assistance, either financial or emergency response, came from international agencies as well as other countries. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) activated six clusters⁶ to support the government's response: shelter, WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene), education, food, health, and protection.

However, a rapid response by the international community was hampered by the lack of clear data on the nature and scale of need.

The Indonesian government declared the end of the emergency phase on 30 November 2009 and the rehabilitation and reconstruction plan for West Sumatra was also finalised in late November. Its implementation spanned until 2011. In January 2010, the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB) established a Technical Assistance Team to help the governor of West Sumatra implement the rehabilitation and reconstruction plan. As the province had not yet established its Provincial Disaster Response Agency, the Technical Assistance Team played the key role of policy-making and decision-making body, co-ordinating the response of many national and international humanitarian actors. It also developed and shared technical implementation guidelines, and provided other policy inputs to the governor. For this reason, Oxfam decided to provide policy support to the Technical Assistance Team, focusing on facilitating the involvement of West Sumatra civil society organisations in co-ordination meetings, and mainstreaming women's rights among community facilitators implementing the reconstruction phase at village level.

Though co-ordination and information management was generally considered adequate, especially between government and UN clusters, local NGOs, including women's organisations, did not strongly participate in cluster activities, and gaining access to government representatives for influencing purposes proved difficult. This was because of women's lack of information, language skills, and even transport to get to meetings. Co-ordination mechanisms had also not provided adequate space and opportunity for women and their representatives to participate, or to voice women's issues and needs.

OXFAM'S RESPONSE

A week after the earthquake, Oxfam's West Sumatra Earthquake Response Plan was developed and began to be implemented, a process that continued for five months. Its interlinking objectives covered the response and recovery phases: emergency shelter, WASH, livelihood recovery, and advocacy for improved emergency response and disaster risk reduction (DRR).

The specific objectives of the plan were:

- to ensure effective communication and co-ordination among humanitarian actors, i.e. government, UN agencies, international and national NGOs;
- to ensure that the needs of the worst-affected communities, including women and men, are met;
- to ensure women's active participation in designing the humanitarian response, which must address their short-term practical needs as well as their longer-term strategic needs;
- to ensure that the response in specific sectors adhered to minimum standards established by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)⁷ and Sphere;⁸
- to promote sound disaster risk reduction measures and policies for the province.

The longer-term intentions of the programme are referred to in the following press release of 4 October 2009. David MacDonald, Oxfam's Indonesia Emergency Response Manager, said, *'Needs are huge in Padang and they don't just include immediate emergency supplies. Oxfam is also looking at how best we can help people to get back on to their feet quickly – those affected need to be able to get on with rebuilding their lives after the devastation.'*

Oxfam's advocacy strategy and operational plan included objectives on advocacy and research to strengthen engagement with those in positions of power. It also aimed to build an evidence base that could be continually updated in collaboration with the international community,

provincial government, and local civil society actors. Key to the overall response strategy was to advocate for effective co-ordination to ensure an adequate and timely emergency and recovery response, based on international humanitarian standards and principles of equity, participation, and accountability. Oxfam provided policy support to the Indonesian government authorities, UN agencies, and donors. After the National Agency for Disaster Management established the Technical Assistance Team (TPT), Oxfam's strategy and plan was revisited to accommodate the newly established body.

As Royseptia Abimanyu, Advocacy Co-ordinator for Oxfam in West Sumatra, said, '*... the team decided that it was important to have triple tracks parallel advocacy: directly with TPT, through the clusters (notably, protection, shelter, and general co-ordination), and by encouraging partners to engage with TPT and provincial and district governments*'.

As of January 2010, Oxfam's three advocacy priorities were as follows:

- To ensure women's participation and ensure that their immediate and longer-term strategic needs are met, a gender working group should be included in post-disaster governance.
- To strengthen governance by establishing a complaints mechanism for affected communities in the province regarding abuse of power and corruption in handling the rehabilitation and reconstruction.
- The provincial government should formulate a clear policy and establish a clear line of responsibility for internally displaced people (IDPs), covering resettlement and the transition period, including access to basic services and support for rebuilding livelihoods. Although the government's action plan for rehabilitation and reconstruction mentioned this vulnerable group, it did not state which department was responsible for dealing with IDPs, nor did it allocate any budget to activities supporting IDPs.

These three areas marked a strategic gap in the government's plan for rehabilitation and reconstruction. When the government's plan was released, Oxfam and others conducted a joint critical analysis of its consideration of gender issues. Advocacy work to address this gap included release of a joint response to the media and lobbying of key targets within government and relevant UN agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNOCHA. Oxfam was instrumental in taking forward the first priority (establishing a gender working group), which was the main focus of Oxfam's advocacy work with the TPT, and with the IASC on UN cluster co-ordination. This involved engaging with the clusters to encourage them to work with all relevant development and disaster management institutions at national, provincial, and local levels. Key media were also lobbied to ensure that they highlighted the needs and voices of women and communicated the role of women and women's organisations in the response.

Integrating gender into the emergency response

The response of government, UN, and international and national NGOs to the earthquake had not taken a strong gendered approach. Many Oxfam partners and other humanitarian actors lacked female staff, particularly in technical roles. This was even more pronounced in government departments, and village leadership structures were almost exclusively male. There were few attempts to collect or analyse gender-disaggregated data; cluster reporting templates did not always ask for gender-disaggregated data; and situation reports (sitreps) largely ignored women's needs and roles. Oxfam engaged in immediate advocacy to address this absence of gender-disaggregated data and to promote methods of collecting data from women. Oxfam facilitated a meeting between the gender sub-cluster and the Head of Statistics of BNPB in Padang to emphasise the importance of collecting and incorporating gender-disaggregated data in future responses.

In the international cluster co-ordination system, gender was positioned within the protection cluster, with a clear mandate relating to gender-based violence. Some cluster co-ordinators

expressed an interest in getting support to integrate gender effectively into the work of their agencies; Oxfam and other organisations, including the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), gave such support by participating in co-ordination meetings, holding training events, and helping to draw up checklists and other documents, which were distributed to community facilitators.

Oxfam conducted research on the differential impact of the earthquake on men and women, which informed the design of subsequent advocacy activities. A team of researchers from outside Western Sumatra carried out interviews with local men and women and with government officials, and analysed secondary information from humanitarian agencies. The research found that although women and men share some vulnerabilities, physical life cycle factors such as pregnancy and breastfeeding, as well as social roles and responsibilities – including lack of access to information and restrictions on women’s free movement outside the home – make women and children more vulnerable during disasters than men. As a result of destruction of homes, many women also lost their home businesses. However, the research also found that women are very resourceful during a crisis. This was demonstrated through increased social networking or starting up small businesses like community kitchens to contribute to the response.

Oxfam also included gender analysis in their field assessments. This involved finding out how important the matrilineal culture is to women’s coping mechanisms and post-emergency livelihoods recovery, as well as gaining information on the extent of women’s land and property ownership. Oxfam’s objectives in conducting these assessments were:

- to build a stronger understanding among all humanitarian actors of how gender inequality shapes vulnerability;
- to promote the active participation of women in designing humanitarian response;
- to identify opportunities and strategies for addressing women’s short-term practical needs as well as their longer-term strategic needs.

The resulting information was shared with key agencies through a series of advocacy activities that included highlighting the issues in the media, as well as holding seminars and lobbying those in positions of power.

Oxfam provided some support to co-ordination clusters (specifically the protection cluster) and to government to enable them to integrate gender into the relief and recovery response, as a way of influencing policies and practices from a gender perspective. Oxfam worked with the UNFPA (the protection cluster lead) and the IASC to encourage local civil society organisations to establish a gender sub-cluster, which became very active within the protection cluster. This group benefited greatly from the arrival of the Yogya gender group, which had been formed on the basis of best practices adopted after the tsunami in Aceh and earthquake in Jogjakarta, and included local women’s organisations. The two groups combined to form the gender working group (GWG).

Oxfam held a capacity-building workshop with members of the gender working group on how they could influence operations of the other clusters, and also supported the setting up of networks for sharing information and joint advocacy work. Oxfam provided ongoing support and technical advice to the GWG, including some funding and a venue for holding meetings. It helped the group develop terms of reference for its activities and to write funding proposals, getting access to official documents and other information and paying for translations when necessary. Oxfam also supported the Provincial Office for Women’s Empowerment and Family Planning to take a leading role in the GWG. This increased its legitimacy in the eyes of various actors and enabled the group to participate in government discussions about reconstruction and to influence those discussions. In addition, Oxfam staff participated directly in seminars and

other events where reconstruction plans were being discussed, offering policy suggestions that would increase local women's participation and promote their rights more broadly.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE INFORMS GENDER-SENSITIVE REHABILITATION

During the implementation of its response programme over a period of five months, Oxfam adopted approaches that recognise women's diverse vulnerabilities and capacities, specific to the regional and cultural contexts. Women were always included in community consultations carried out by Oxfam. For example, groups of women heads of household were set up during provision of clean water interventions; and gender-specific needs were considered in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) activities in IDP camps and with affected neighbouring communities. Feedback from affected women influenced the design of the response as discussed below, in Box 1. Oxfam also had a clear understanding of local household practices in terms of structure that was vital to inform cash-for-work interventions that were part of the livelihood recovery work. The gender analysis identified the matrilineal nature of local society and showed that it is often normal practice for women to manage the household economy. A lot of female-headed households were created by male migration but even where men were present, feedback from the community suggested that, in most cases, women managed cash transfer payments and men and women discussed together how to use the cash. Thus, the cash transfers did not create conflict within the households.

Box 1: Women's role in the response: mobilising communities

Ibu Darmulis, a 56-year-old woman from Limo Puruik village, Kampung Ladang sub-village, V Kuto Timur sub-district, was at home praying with her three grandchildren on 30 September when the earthquake hit. Her house was badly damaged and one of her grandsons was trapped under the rubble. The boy was hospitalised for seven days before he was discharged.

'When he was released, I took him to my relative's house so that all the family could be together. We were too scared to return to the house. We didn't have any shelter and couldn't face going back there after seeing my grandson buried in the rubble right in front of me.'

Conditions were very cramped in the home Ibu Darmulis and her family were staying in temporarily. There were 13 people in the house and resources were scarce, especially as Ibu's Darmulis's family lost most of their belongings when the earthquake hit. Ibu Darmulis was not aware of the compensation scheme planned by the government.

All of Ibu Darmulis's clothes were buried under the rubble when her house collapsed. She recalls how she went without any clean underwear for seven days after the earthquake, and found this especially hard. Ibu's views prompted Oxfam to design two different hygiene kits especially for women as part of the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) emergency activities. As a result, women in Kampung Ledang received kits containing two bras and other underwear. Pregnant women received a kit specifically designed to meet their needs, as well as extra supplies for the delivery, soap and clothes for the baby, and a kitchen set.

'I didn't realise that this could be an inspiration. I still feel shy about it though,' Ibu Darmulis said with a hearty laugh when asked if she knew where the new kits came from.

'It's amazing that an ordinary person with nothing special like me can inspire other people's work and help make a change', she said.

Three months after the earthquake, Ibu's Darmulis's life had started to settle down slowly, along with tens of thousands of residents of Padang Pariaman, one of four areas worst

affected by the disaster. Now, in her role as a public health community mobiliser, Ibu works every day to 'convince people in my community to change their hygiene behaviour'.

Ibu Darmulis took her responsibility very seriously and went from door to door to explain why and how simple changes in personal hygiene and sanitation could improve people's quality of life. She had also conducted two community meetings on 'contamination routes or diarrhoea transmission routes' and the 'safe water chain'. More than 55 women had attended and learned better hygiene practices.

'Many people still ask me why they should use soap to wash their hands or have a proper toilet, but that's OK, I won't give up. I want my village to be clean, so I will continue working with Oxfam as long as I can', she said.

Source: Earthquake Response 2009–2010 Gender and WASH story

Six months after Oxfam's programme ended, Ibu Darmulis's influence is still valued in her village. She was chosen to become village facilitator for the government's rehabilitation and reconstruction activities co-ordinated by the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB). Her role was to facilitate community discussions on how the cash provided to rebuild housing would be used. Her role in community mobilisation as part of Oxfam's WASH emergency response activities helped Ibu Darmulis to build her self-esteem and gain the trust and respect of her community.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND NEXT STEPS

Following a series of consolidation meetings and workshops with civil society groups, international agencies, and provincial government representatives, including the Provincial Planning Agency, Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Children's Protection, and Provincial Women's Empowerment and Family Planning Body, the gender working group (GWG) was formally established. This is perhaps the most concrete achievement of Oxfam's collaboration with local women's organisations and other humanitarian stakeholders. Oxfam has continued to provide administrative, logistical, and consultation support to the group.

The next stage for Oxfam was to plan and implement activities to promote stronger collaboration between members of the GWG and other key stakeholders individuals as well as revising previously agreed actions in line with the changing political environment and new developments in government policies and plans. Activities were geared towards enabling the GWG to mainstream gender interventions. About 6,000 copies of a gender manual, adapted from the IASC's internationally agreed gender standards, were distributed to village facilitators, who also received training and capacity building support from the GWG to help them raise gender issues within their community.

Members of the gender working group also held several lobbying meetings with provincial officials, including the governor of West Sumatra. The governor supported this initiative and issued a provincial decree to institutionalise the gender working group as part of the provincial government's Women's Empowerment and Family Planning Office. This important move conferred a degree of legal legitimacy on the group, strengthening its hand in dealings with senior government officials and with the TPT's rehabilitation and reconstruction activities. The Provincial Office for Women's Empowerment and Family Planning formally assumed leadership of the GWG. In the past, it had been difficult to integrate gender considerations into rehabilitation and response work. But these changes succeeded in embedding gender concerns into government structures, which means they will be more fully integrated into future response work. The provincial decrees provided a 'legal' base for the GWG to work from and gave them a degree of legitimacy in their dealings with senior government officials.

To ensure that adequate recovery and reconstruction assistance is provided, which meets the needs of women as well as men, and to enable communities to integrate DRR work, Oxfam has continued to engage with government, participating in cluster co-ordination activities, including lobbying and information gathering with key stakeholders. Oxfam has continued to support the work of local partners, including research, advocacy, and engaging with the media. This has included providing funding in some cases as well as building links with other resources, e.g. to information and media staff. A longer-term capacity-building initiative by Oxfam aimed to enable local NGOs and community members to monitor, document, and carry out advocacy work on issues relating to assistance for affected communities during the reconstruction period.

Effective early response and longer-term reconstruction assistance must be based on a strong understanding of the needs and capacities of women and men in different local contexts. By using gender-sensitive tools and approaches, Oxfam's field research was able to identify the gendered vulnerabilities and risks facing people, as well as their capacities to contribute to the response.

While much progress has been made in developing the emergency response in Indonesia, more needs to be done, including raising awareness among local authorities and communities on gender equality issues and how these affect people's vulnerability during a disaster. There also needs to be greater representation of women and women's organisations in advocacy and decision-making forums. Women must be more involved at all stages of the response, including assessment, planning, implementation, and monitoring of all disaster management activities.

NOTES

- ¹ The World Bank, Indonesia Overview, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/indonesia/overview> (last accessed September 2012).
- ² United Nations Development Programme (2010) *Human Development Report 2010, The Real Wealth of Nations: Pathways to Human Development*, New York: UNDP, http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2010_EN_Complete_reprint.pdf, pp 39-40 (last accessed August 2012)
- ³ The World Bank, Indonesia Overview, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/indonesia/overview> (last accessed September 2012).
- ⁴ www.maplecroft.com
- ⁵ Asian Development Bank, 'Indonesia Country Gender Assessment', <http://www.adb.org/Documents/Reports/Country-Gender-Assessments/ino.asp> (last accessed August 2012)
- ⁶ The cluster approach is a mechanism aimed at strengthening preparedness, co-ordination, and technical capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies by ensuring leadership and accountability in the main sectors or areas of humanitarian response.
- ⁷ Inter-Agency Standing Committee, <http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/>
- ⁸ The Sphere Project (2011) *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response*, <http://www.sphereproject.org/handbook/>

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