



United Nations Human Settlements Programme

Programme des Nations Unies pour les établissements humains

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PRESS RELEASE

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UN-HABITAT HANDS OVER PERMANENT HOUSES TO TSUNAMI- SURVIVORS IN PEURADE, PIDIE

Today, Wednesday, 21 December 2005, the survivors of the devastating tsunami tidal waves at Peurade village, in Pidie district, start feeling a real relief after going through a year of unbearable hardships living in tents and temporary shelters. In a modest ceremony taking place on a ground amidst their new houses, which have just been completed, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) will officially hand over 28 out of the 200 houses contributed by the agency to 200 tsunami-affected families in the fishing village. To mark the event, the survivors will organize a local ritual meal (*kenduri*) as a gesture of thanks, followed by local arts performances to express their happiness.

The 155 new masonry houses, 42 square metres in size, along with 45 rehabilitated residences, were built in October 2005 with a total cost of Rp 5.7 billion (approximately US\$570,000) donated by the Government of Japan. The fund was made available by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) through the UN-HABITAT's Aceh-Nias Settlements Support Programme (ANSSP). The rest of the houses are expected to be completed by the end of January 2006.

The UN-HABITAT recovery project is implemented through a community-driven approach putting the survivors at the centre of the reconstruction activities. At the outset, the field team of the agency explained the various house designs and the construction systems to the potential beneficiaries, in order to provide confidence and inform them the types and building materials being used.

Once they agree on the conditions of their participation, the selected beneficiaries form a cluster of eight to ten families. The financial contribution of Rp 35 million for a family to build a house provided by UN-HABITAT is processed through each cluster. Each cluster opens a bank account in the names of the head, the secretary, and the treasure of the cluster, who are selected by the cluster members. The financial assistance into the bank account of the cluster. The installments of 20%, 45%, 20% and 15% respectively are linked to the progress scheduled for the construction of the houses.

Building their own houses

The difference from other resettlements' construction programmes in general is that during the development process of the houses in Peurade there are no contractors involved. The members of the clusters themselves choose the workers and the building materials. The labour cost of Rp 6 million per-house is included in the total cost. In order to minimize the cost and to take advantage of the opportunity for income generation, a lot of survivors join in and work as a brick-layer or a carpenter. Several houses were even built by the whole members of the families.

"In order to save the cost, and if possible to earn some small money, we, the whole members of my family, build the house," Budiman, 50, said. He is preparing a set of timbering for the roof of his house. His wife helped him mixing cement and sand, passing planks and wooden bars to her husband.



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"My son also joins the work force," he said with roaring laughter. His son is a high school student, leaving to school in the morning and returning home at noon. "However, he only gets Rp 5,000 per-day, enough to buy sweets or snacks, since he starts working after school hours," he said chuckling.

In this village, the wage of a worker is about Rp 40,000 per-day. Asked how much he pays his wife, Budiman answered with a quick and witty response: "She gets the biggest share since she is the one who manages everything," he said giggling.

Budiman has been a carpenter for years. No wonder his house is the tidiest of all the houses there.

For months, life had been washed away by the deadly tidal waves rolling as high as a coconut tree, leveling the village into extinction. Now, it is ticking again. All members of the community, the young, the adults, as well as the elderly are responding to the call of a new life, contributing to the reconstruction process according to their skills and ability.

"I am grateful. During my life I never dreamt of having a house worth Rp 35 million. I am poor...," said Aisyah, 55, a widow who supports her life with the money provided by her son who is working as a fisherman. When the tsunami hit the village almost a year ago, Aisyah together with her sons and grandchildren escaped to the hills six kilometres away. For six days they stayed in a cowshed after driving the animals out and leaving them roaming in the open. And for the next six months they went through sorrowful days and nights in tents and makeshift shelter until the day when UN-HABITAT arrived in with a miraculous offer: a new house to live in and to own.

"I don't believe I could survive and return home, and get a house as good as this one," Aisyah said, looking at her house while her old hands covered a pile of wooden bars from the drizzle with a large plastic sheet. That is the way she prevents the building materials from spoiling. She smiles as her mind flies a far imagining a life in her new house, where she has to be accustomed to a new life style. In her new house there is a bathroom and toilet, so that she doesn't has to walk far away to the beaches to wash as she used to. With the new houses, a new culture is looming in this coastal village.

With the handing over of the new houses to the tsunami-affected villagers in Peurade, the field teams and the whole staff of UN-HABITAT in Banda Aceh are even more confident in the community-based settlements programme approach which puts people at the centre of the overall reconstruction activities. Cooperation and improved coordination with the local communities are crucial in this undertaking.

"Building with the community is a team process: a meeting of local ideas and imported expertise. An outcome all can support is a success for the community and UN-HABITAT," says Ian Hamilton, Programme Manager, Aceh Settlements Support Programme, UN-HABITAT. ***