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Indonesia: Asian Development Bank, UN-HABITAT hand over new homes to disaster survivors

Development Bank (ADB) and UN-HABITAT this week handed over 486 new homes to survivors of two disasters that left a trail of destruction in the region.

Keys to the new homes were presented to their new owners at a special ceremony in the Nias Island village of Silimibanua to people who had lived in makeshift accommodation since the Indian Ocean tsunami that struck on 26 December 2004, and an earthquake on 26 March 2005. A month later, UN-HABITAT's Executive Director, Mrs. Anna Tibaijuka visited the region to show her solidarity and pledge the agency's assistance.

"We now have a place to call home," said Sokifhao, a farmer and father of five on receiving the keys to his new home from the Nias Settlements Support Programme (NSSP), the joint programme of the Bank and UN-HABITAT.

Mr. Pieter Smidt, the Bank's Head of Mission, said: "We believe that many lessons can be learned from the community-based housing process, in areas funded by ADB. We hope that the local government will also see the process as a potential resource to use community-based in regional development."

The Asian Development Bank and UN-HABITAT have taken a community-driven approach to reconstruction and rehabilitation in the tsunami-affected areas. "Right from the start, UN-HABITAT advocated that the 'recovery' strategy must put people at the very centre of decision making so that reconstruction becomes part of a continuous recovery process. We call this process the 'People's Housing Process'," said Mr. Chris Radford, Senior Human Settlements Officer UN-HABITAT.

Dr. F.G.M. Zebua, in a speech on behalf of the people of Nias, expressed his gratitude for the assistance provided.

Mr. Bambang Sudiatmo, Deputy Director for Housing and Settlements, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency, recognized the challenge faced by most of the reconstruction agencies working in Nias: "Project locations, which are often remote and isolated, has become unique challenges for both community and donor organizations, particularly material delivery and distribution."

Under the "off-budget" programme being implemented by UN-HABITAT and four NGOs – Muslim Aid, German Agro Action, another German NGO called Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe eV, and Cordaid of Holland, the Bank is financing the construction of about 3,000 new homes and the restoration of 1,050 other houses across Aceh and Nias including Simeulue. One third of the new homes are being constructed by UN-HABITAT.

In the neighbouring island of Simeulue, the Asian Development Bank and UN-HABITAT are assisting with the reconstruction of 459 homes in five villages.

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