

# Contributions of Volunteerism to the Prevention of Gender-Based Violence in Aceh



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**Title:** Contributions of Volunteerism to the Prevention of Gender-Based Violence in Aceh

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*The views or opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of UNV, UN Women, Partners for Prevention, or other organizations supporting the work.*

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

AMAN	Aliansi Masyarakat Anti Kekerasan (Community Alliance Against Violence)
ALLB	Aliansi Laki-Laki Baru (New Men's Alliance)
AMM	Aceh Monitoring Mission
CBO	Community Based Organization
DM	Darurat Militer (Military Emergency)
DOM	Daerah Operasi Militer (Military Operations Area)
DPIA	Duek Pakat Inong Aceh (Aceh Women's Congress)
DnP	Development and Peace
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GAM	Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (Aceh Independence Movement)
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
KPI	Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia (Indonesian Women's Coalition)
LLB	Laki-Laki Baru (New Men)
MAA	Majelis Adat Aceh (Aceh Customary Council)
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
P4P	Partners for Prevention
RI	Republik Indonesia (The Republic of Indonesia)
RPuK	Relawan Perempuan untuk Kemanusiaan (Women Volunteers for Humanity)
SP	Solidaritas Perempuan (Women's Solidarity)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
UN WOMEN	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
VAW	Violence Against Women
VIOs	Volunteer Involving Organizations
WCC	Women's Crisis Center

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Background

Thirty years of war followed by the devastating impact of a tsunami, have shaped the Indonesian region of Aceh – its geography and its people – who responded to these crises with a spirit of participation and a desire to re-build a stronger community. The people of Aceh have a strong history of volunteerism, based on a cultural foundation of *meuseuraya* or *gotong royong*, (which means mutual aid in Bahasa Indonesia) and refers to voluntary collaborative work, particularly in relation to resolving social problems. It can be said that *meuseuraya* is an example of volunteerism to the extent that it encourages people in the community to work together and help one another. This tradition has formed the basis for re-building in Aceh, though it is evident that conflict and natural disaster have had mixed impacts on community desires to volunteer as well as mixed impacts on the capacity of not-for-profit organizations to address problems of gender-based violence (GBV) and promote gender equity. The influx of energy to re-build and modernise Aceh's culture, including norms around gender-equality, show great potential; but in light of the complex social and economic factors at play in the area, it will be essential to find ways to strengthen traditional values of volunteerism, to provide a sustainable basis for ongoing social change.

A prolonged 30-year armed conflict that involved the Central Government of the Republic of Indonesia and *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (GAM / Aceh Independence Movement) caused rifts in the Acehnese community as people were divided along support lines. The ongoing conflict has had mixed impacts on the community and their willingness to participate in projects of social change. Extended experiences of conflict brought radical shifts to traditional social orders that had stressed the importance of collaboration and working together. Through the experiences of conflict, individuals became self-protective, which has led to a more individualistic society. At the same time however, shifts in social norms, combined with greater social mobility between ethnic and social groups and influence from foreign presences, have fostered an environment that is ripe for social activism, particularly around issues of women's rights and gender-based violence (GBV).

The 2004 Boxing Day tsunami was an equally influential event that has had major impacts on social interaction and voluntary participation. The tsunami led to the loss of approximately 200,000 lives as well as the destruction of property and infrastructure across the eastern and western shores of Aceh. The tsunami inspired opposing parties to end their lengthy conflict – which was solidified with the signing of the Helsinki MoU peace agreement. Following the tsunami, opportunities for new development opened up, and the people of Aceh began to rebuild a better society, based on the principles of *meuseuraya*. Rehabilitation and reconstruction processes led to new possibilities for people to be involved as volunteers on cooperative projects. It is clear that without the willingness and participation of the people to help tsunami victims, the reconstruction and rehabilitation process would not have worked effectively.

Following the tsunami and conflict, the influx of foreign aid agencies, combined with the impacts of wider social shifts, led to a rise in awareness of gender-equity principles. Many of the reconstruction programmes and development agencies involved in re-building efforts, that worked from a framework of gender-equitable principles, encouraged a wider understanding of gender equality. Also, through direct work with women's organizations, development agencies inspired many

women's rights activists to work to strengthen existing women's organizations and create new ones. During the reconstruction period, the number of women's organizations significantly increased. Gender-based programmes were key to facilitating greater involvement and voluntary collaboration between people - especially women who received NGO and donor agency support to work in post-tsunami rehabilitation programmes.

Five years after the tsunami, many international donor agencies closed their missions in Aceh, which reduced the funds available to sustain programmes that were devoted to promoting gender equity and ending violence against women. In spite of this, women's organizations have remained active and volunteerism continues on programmes devoted to women's empowerment, ending VAW and GBV prevention.

It is therefore, important to document voluntary and cooperative work in Aceh, especially the work being done to end GBV and VAW. This documentation will provide an overview of the inspirations, modalities, activities, challenges, strategies and lessons learnt by volunteer organizations in Aceh. It is hoped that this will help to develop new ideas on how to reinvigorate traditional notions of cooperative action in order to promote volunteerism on GBV and VAW issues.

## **1.2. Methodology Design**

For the documentation of voluntary and cooperative work in Aceh, especially regarding GBV and VAW, some local literature and websites were reviewed, contextual observations were made and in-depth interviews with key informants were completed.

### **1.2.1. Literature review**

A literature review of relevant documents, complemented by a web-based search of materials on the history of volunteerism in Aceh and *gotong royong* (mutual aid), has been conducted as part of the project. The documents reviewed included official donors' reports, UN reports, government documents, survey reports, organizational brochures, organizational profiles, reports, publications and websites.

### **1.2.2. Field observation**

Field observation composed a main part of the methodology design, to observe the social and cultural dynamics that shape the relationship between people, Non Government Organizations (NGOs) and local government agencies, mainly in Banda Aceh. In addition to this, field visits outside the capital were conducted to visit various GBV-related programmes of NGOs in Aceh.

### **1.2.3. In-depth interview with key informants**

Key informant interviews provided detailed information for analyzing the common issues faced by women activists and the Aceh Customary Council (*Majelis Adat Aceh, MAA*). The in-depth interviews were conducted with NGO staff and informal volunteers working on GBV programmes. The interviews aimed to provide an in-depth exploration of the voluntary work being done to support GBV programmes.

#### 1.2.4. Data collection and analysis

The scope of this study covers the work of the most relevant local and international NGOs, Volunteer Involving Organizations (VIOs) and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) working on prevention and responses to GBV in Aceh. Study participants from each organization were invited to participate in the research. Their feedback also provided suggestions for directions of future GBV work in Aceh.

## 2. Volunteerism in Aceh: Its History and Development

### 2.1. The Origins of Volunteerism in Aceh

Aceh shows a diversity of cultural norms and customs (*adat*) – a reflection of the area’s multicultural population, who come from a variety of backgrounds, display a diversity of cultural values and beliefs and express themselves through a diverse range of artforms, laws and habits. The head of the Aceh Customary Council, Badruzzaman Ismail, explains that the word *adat* is of Arabic roots and refers to “something that is done repeatedly, and applied continuously over time.”<sup>1</sup> It is important to remain aware of how this fundamental principle underpins life in Aceh, even as the region moves towards more contemporary cultural customs. Within this cultural context, that values continuity, it is important that efforts to promote gender-equity and a wider culture of volunteerism draw upon traditional concepts and values.

The customs of Aceh developed over a long historical period - from the rise of the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam, under the reign of Sultan Ali Mughayatsyah (1496-1528) to the decline of the Kingdom in 1903. Core to Acehnese culture is the notion of “*Hukum ngon adat, lagee zat ngon sifeut*,” – that the customs of Aceh must always be harmonious with and not contradict Islamic law. Similarly, volunteerism has a long history in Aceh that stems from the cultural practice of *gotong royong* (mutual aid). Amongst the Aceh people themselves, *gotong royong* is known as the spirit of volunteerism amongst the people of Aceh is founded by a life philosophy taken from a local *Hadih Maja*<sup>2</sup> “*Udeep sare matee syahid*” (live in peace and die for the truth). This philosophy embodies local values of equality and truth. This notion is further complemented by the local concept of “*meuseuraya*” or “*rambate rata*”, which means that all classes of society are considered equal in their involvement in various social activities. This concept is unique to Aceh and stems from local principles of religious devotion.<sup>3</sup>

Historically the people of Aceh have been considered “model citizens,” in Indonesia when it comes to their practice of *gotong royong*, for the role they played in the fight for Indonesia’s independence. In the early days of independence, people in Aceh donated gold to assist the country to buy its first airplanes, to enable Indonesia’s leaders to promote Indonesia’s independence internationally. This culture of volunteerism continues in Aceh and manifests itself in acts of public interest: the construction of mosques and *meunasah* (cultural education centres built in local villages); through the spirit of giving displayed at social activities such as *kenduri* (a practice where local people donate

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Badruzzaman Ismail, chief Aceh Customary Council of Aceh 5 July 2011.

<sup>2</sup> *Hadih Maja* or *Nariet Maja* is a proverb (of local wisdom) amongst Aceh people. *Hadih Maja* contains philosophical values that are used as advice/warning/explanation or subtle insinuations to follow in one’s daily lives.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Badruzzaman Ismail, 5 July 2011.

food and goods to celebrate special occasions, such as the birth of a child and marriage); and through traditional practices of donating land to future generations, or for religious purposes.<sup>4</sup>

## 2.2. Post-Conflict Development

Emerging from thirty years of conflict, Aceh has faces many challenges in its attempts to re-establish a culture of cooperation and volunteerism. People have shown a great desire to re-build their society but the effects of war, which encouraged a culture of isolated self-preservation, will take time and effort to overcome.

The heterogeneity of Aceh, combined with new forces of modernity, make it difficult to root values of volunteerism and gender-equity in a particular set of cultural understandings. Aceh is inhabited by a number of tribes: Aceh, Gayo, Melayu Tamiang, Alas, Kluet, Devayan, Sigulai, Aneuk Jamee, and others. Over the course of history, these tribes have lived in peace under the law of the kingdom (sultanate/empire) contributing to Aceh's multicultural society. Modernising processes however, have had an impact on aspects of local life, culture and mindsets, as new practices emerge alongside, or at times, in replacement of traditional practices. According to Badruzzaman, cultural value systems within a community have two important aspects: norms and values. The validity of norms is contingent upon aspects of time, space, place, and the social group in which the cultural system is practiced; whereas the applicability of scale values is more universal. In the development of society, which is currently becoming more modern, universal social and cultural values can also fill every principle of social life in Aceh.<sup>5</sup> Within this context, there are a wide array of competing voices and cultures vying to be involved in the regeneration process, which has led to a series of competing push/pull factors that will influence Aceh's future.

In the wake of the conflict and tsunami, there was a strong will to reform Aceh's culture, which had more or less, degenerated under the affect of ongoing conflict and extended practices of violence. Since the tsunami (and the subsequent end of the 30 year conflict) there has been a surge in movements looking to reinstate traditional cultural codes and practices. New writers and musicians have begun to re-examine the history and culture of Aceh. Some examples include Taufik Taufik Al Mubarak, a young journalist who worked for the *Harian Aceh* newspaper; Dr. Mohm. Harum, M.Pd. who wrote, '*Memahami orang Aceh*' ('Understanding the People of Aceh'); and musicians such as Rafli and Kande, who have adopted typical ethnic musical styles have also become important symbols for promoting traditional culture and values.

According to the Aceh women's movement figure, Suraiya Kamaruzzaman (also founder, chairperson and executive director of Flower Aceh), *Ulamas* (charismatic religious leaders) and *Salafi Ulamas* (traditional religious leaders) have played a central role in the re-building process of Aceh. Kamaruzzaman believes the prominent role being played by *Ulamas* now, is linked to the instability experienced over the past 30 years. Under such conditions, where the function of customary institutions were weakened, *Ulamas* played a prominent role in shaping local culture through the leadership of *pengajian* (prayers held in halls) and through the issuance of *fatwas* (legal pronouncements in Islam issued by religious law specialists) and *ijtihad*s (religious guidance on

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with Hasan Basri M. Nur, 19 July 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Badruzzaman Ismail, 5 July 2011.

matters that are not directly addressed by the Quran or hadiths – for instance concerning how boys and girls should be taught, the role and service a wife should provide for her husband, etc.)<sup>6</sup>

According to the socio-cultural observer Hasan Basri, informal leaders, including youth groups that consist of young people that move around much, have also influenced cultural change and brought new perspectives in Aceh. Youth groups have shown great determination in pushing for the greater involvement of women in politics and for the inclusion of gender-equity principles in public policy. Though the involvement of women is not a new aspiration amongst the people of Aceh - women have been involved in the public sector and politics since the days of the Kingdom of Aceh – younger generations have continued to progress the cause.<sup>7</sup> The existence of youth groups also increased the demand for information technology and the internet, which brought about new cultural paradigms and perspectives.

The Chief-Editor of the Aceh Feature news office, Linda Christanty, who has documented the post-conflict and post-tsunami situation in Aceh, has also noted the particular role played by students, in re-building the area. After the tsunami, an increase in scholarships allowed more students from the area to attend prestigious universities around the world. This fostered a new youth culture and generational shift of ideas. This process of generational change has been further facilitated by media personalities, who have played an important role in voicing new forms of culture and spreading news on current developments and situations to the public. Christanty also noted the role political groups have played in the cultural transformation process. The former members of the Aceh Independence Movement (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, GAM*), have through Aceh Party (*Partai Aceh, PA*) spread cadres throughout Aceh, that consist predominantly of former GAM members. PA also dominates the parliament by 33 chairs out of 69 giving them the power to produce *qanuns* (rules) and policies concerning new cultural change (in context of Islamic Sharia) in Aceh.

### **2.3. Post-Tsunami Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Period**

Post-tsunami rebuilding efforts created a catalyst for new attitudes of cooperative action. This combined with an influx of foreign aid involvement led to the spread of gender-equity principles and a renewed desire to partake in voluntary actions. The ongoing effects of this however have been mixed, as organizations have struggled to maintain this momentum and develop sustainable solutions.

An earthquake reaching 9.3 on the Richter scale occurred on 26 December 2004 just before 8am local time. The epicentre was located in the western Sumatra Sea, north of Simeulue Island (approximately 160 km west of Sumatra). The centre of the quake was situated 30 km below sea level. The resulting tsunami led to the deaths of 283,100 people; an additional 140,000 people went missing and 1,126,900 lost their homes. Dozens of buildings were destroyed, particularly in Meulaboh, Aceh Jaya, Aceh Besar, and Banda Aceh. In Banda Aceh, approximately 50% of all buildings were damaged by the tsunami.<sup>8</sup>

The surge in humanitarian aid post-tsunami, acted as another catalyst for cultural change in the area, leading to both positive and negative results. Various donor agencies have been criticised for

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with Suraiya Kamaruzzaman, 27 July 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Hasan Basri M. Nur, 19 July 2011.

<sup>8</sup> According to United State Geological Survey.

their failure to incorporate local understandings and beliefs into aid delivery plans – particularly in relation to incorporating local understandings of *gotong royong* and working together. Foreign aid mechanisms that overlooked these local socio-cultural strengths not only struggled but contributed to weakening the tradition of *gotong royong* in Aceh. The influx in aid also led to a sense of dependency amongst the people of Aceh, who came to see donor assistance as the one and only route to recovery following the tsunami and conflict. As a consequence, people in Aceh have become more consumptive and less productive.<sup>9</sup> Local writer, Hasan Basri, claims local culture has come to be based on principles of instant gratification, but sees hope for a return to more positive and productive cultural values as before the tsunami. In order to achieve this it will be necessary to: improve economic and employment opportunities; provide guaranteed quality education to all; and work to revitalize positive cultural values based on the Acehnese sense of togetherness.<sup>10</sup>

This same culture of aid-dependance has also developed in post-conflict areas that, while not directly affected by the tsunami, received financial benefits as a result of the assistance provided for reconstruction efforts. Various mechanisms and models of assistance chosen by development agencies, contributed to this culture of dependence. The payment of per diems and travel allowances to attend meetings eroded traditional values of cooperation and volunteerism. Previously, people would voluntarily participate in public activities held in their area. As a result of foreign aid implementation, people have become aware that they are able to receive money – in some instances more than they may receive as a daily wage – by participating in agency meetings.<sup>11</sup>

## **2.4. Volunteerism and a New Culture**

Over the five-year time period allocated for post-tsunami rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes – which ended in 2009 – Aceh was physically and culturally transformed. Public infrastructure has improved and the people of the area seem open and prepared for change. Post-tsunami rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes provided the people of Aceh with opportunities to develop their human capacities. Many agencies provided technical assistance on future planning for Aceh's human resources, as well as direct capacity building activities geared at building skills and experience. The presence of donor agencies also opened doors for people to become more actively involved in NGO work - an important part of the capacity development process for the people of Aceh which gave them the opportunity to build experience and become agents of social change.<sup>12</sup>

What's interesting is that new behaviour and lifestyles are adopted by many people of Aceh, whether they were involved directly or indirectly in the reconstruction process, which reflects the current dynamics related to the 'emergence' of new cultures. One example can be seen in the younger generation, who have become more familiar with technology, can easily access information, and have higher mobility. This has been further complemented by an increase in the availability of internet services, which has led to new behaviours, particularly among the youth of Aceh. This

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with Linda Chistanty, 22 June 2011, social observer, residing in Banda Aceh for Aceh Feature news office, and active writer.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Hasan Basri M. Nur, social observer, residing in Banda Aceh and active as a write for printed media, 19 July 2011.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

process has been aided by the increase in small shops (*warung*) or coffee shops that provide free Wi-Fi for people, as well as the economic growth through group enterprises facilitated by NGOs, become an important part of these dynamics of change. As a result, social activities have begun to absorb principles that are usually applied by NGOs - such as the principles of accountability, transparency and professionalism, as well as gender and social inclusion.

Field observations made for this report would also indicate that the tsunami has led to shifts in living practices that were more culturally varied co-habitation environments. After the tsunami, living in groups became a more common phenomenon. The construction of new residential complexes, as part of relocation programmes led to new living systems: while people had previously lived within homogeneous groups in their original area, the relocation process forced some to live with people from a mixture of areas, tribes and religious backgrounds. These changes in turn, contributed to wider shifts in mindset and lifestyle. These new housing arrangements, in fact, led to a rise in individualistic behaviours that placed an emphasis on instant gratification, which has had a corrosive effect on traditional values of togetherness and patience.

The attitude of wanting things done instantly is starting to show in communities in the relocation areas. There has been a change in the people's lifestyle towards one that is more modern; where demands for consumer goods are higher - for instance the demand for cars and household appliances; where everything is obtained instantly - exemplified by the use of catering services instead of traditional communal banqueting events (*kenduri*), parties and customs; and mobility away from home are quite high. This change was brought about by the shifts to heterogeneous living environments, where these new sorts of cultural practices come together – which had previously only been associated with the elite social classes.<sup>13</sup> This occurs in a number of heterogeneous communities, specifically those who were victims to the tsunami, and also gives positive influences in supporting a better life in terms of economical welfare, and builds motivation to continue fighting for a better life. According to Linda Chistianity, in these conditions, the people of Aceh must have an orientation towards the future, placing history as a foundation of civilization, and escape from a close-minded, exclusive perception of culture.<sup>14</sup>

The group living situation in relocation areas, however, holds great potential for fostering principles of cooperation and volunteerism, to reinvigorate the notion *gotong royong*. The people of Aceh have long implemented the principles of social living based on values of togetherness, making the habit of helping one another and *gotong royong* that was once commonly practiced, easy to re-established in this new communal environment.

### **3. Volunteerism in the Work for Eradicating GBV through NGOs**

#### **3.1. The Role of Volunteerism in Various Organizations Working against GBV**

The period following the conflict and tsunami was marked by an emergence of new NGOs, and community activist organizations committed to the re-building process. The term 'NGO' became one of the most popular terms used among people after the tsunami – an indication of the dominant role NGOs played in transformation process. Prior to this process, there had been a few NGOs

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<sup>13</sup> According C. Wright Mills in *The Sociological Imagination 1959*.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Linda Chistianity, social observer, residing in Banda Aceh for Aceh Feature news office, and active writer.

working on issues of gender-equity but following the tsunami and conflict there was also a rise in the number of organizations committed to achieving gender-equity and promoting women’s rights. The presence of NGOs, including NGOs fighting for gender and women’s issues, was important for humanitarian efforts that were the main focus of NGO work and their existence was crucial for nurturing values of volunteerism – this was particularly true for women’s rights NGOs that worked to get people actively involved as volunteers working to prevent and eradicate VAW and enforce gender equity laws in Aceh.

Below are the profiles of a number of the NGOs working in Aceh, who engage volunteers to work on issues of women’s rights, VAW and gender equity. The below profiles only document a few of the numerous NGOs working on gender and women’s issues, in order to provide a snapshot of the important role women’s NGOs are play in strengthening local values of cooperation and volunteerism. PULIH Aceh, an organization devoted to involving men in achieving gender-justice, is described separately in section 3.5.

### 3.1.1. Relawan Perempuan untuk Kemanusiaan (RpuK, Women Volunteers for Humanity)

Organizational information	
<b>Founded</b>	2 June 1999
<b>Vision and Mission</b>	Realizing gender-aware people, and promoting economical recovery for women
<b>Donator</b>	NOVIB, UN WOMEN, UNICEF, World Bank, and others
<b>Staff</b>	13 people (9 women and 4 men)
<b>Main programme</b>	Developing women’s economy through the organization of groups and supporting equality between men and women
<b>Area of work</b>	7 regencies/towns affected by tsunami and conflict
<b>Contact</b>	Telephone/Facsimile: +62651-7551659; Email: tim_rpuK@yahoo.co.id
<b>Address</b>	Jl. Rukun Damai Utama No. 9, Kp. Pineung Banda Aceh 23116

*Relawan Perempuan untuk Kemanusiaan* (RPuK) was established to run local programmes with a gender focus, long before the tsunami. Founded during the peak period of conflict, RPuK’s efforts focused on providing services for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) looking for refuge. During the evacuation period, a number of women’s groups and volunteers were involved with distributing necessities to the IDPs. Through this process, volunteers became aware of the lack of attention being provided to the specific needs of women living in the camp. To address the problem, female volunteers engaged donors to cover the expenses for children and women’s needs (such as menstrual pads). NOVIB, a Dutch organization for international development, was willing to provide this support. Starting from this experience, a number of women volunteers who worked together in the distribution team formed an organization now known as RPuK.

RPuK’s vision is to achieve equality between men and women through the economic empowerment of women.<sup>15</sup> RPuK has conducted and implemented many programmes for the economic empowerment of women and protection of children. In implementing its programmes, RPuK often facilitates the formation of community groups and specifically women’s groups.

It is clear that RPuK was established by a group of women who were strongly committed to principles of volunteerism. Moreover, the process described above illustrates how women’s issues -

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Azriana, General Secretary for RPuK, 18 July 2011.

or the desire to fulfill the needs and rights of women and children - is an important source of inspiration for becoming involved in social-humanitarian work and is a sentiment that may be further capitalised upon, to rebuild values of *gotong royong* and volunteerism.

RPuK faces increasingly funding pressures as the number of donors working in Aceh decreases. In order to overcome these reductions, RPuK has undertaken efforts to economize its budget. They have started to work closely with relevant government bodies (such as *Badan Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak*, BP3A, Agency for Protection of Women and Children) to receive assistance in the form of training spaces and other types of in-kind support that can help reduce programme expenditures. Fundraising has also been conducted, to cover the costs associated in the event of a possible emergency – such as in the event of another tsunami, flood, fire etc. In addition to these initiatives, RPuK has begun to discuss the possibility of salary cuts for staff. Though this policy has yet to be implemented, these discussions confirm that the people working for RPuK are not there for financial gains. Their focus remains on providing to the needs of the community, especially for marginalized and vulnerable populations.

### 3.1.2. Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia (KPI, Indonesian Women’s Coalition) Region of Aceh

Organizational information	
<b>Founded</b>	19 January 2006
<b>Vision and Mission</b>	The realization of gender equity as part of a democratic, prosperous and civilized society
<b>Donors</b>	DnP (Development and Peace), UN WOMEN, Oxfam, IOM, AMM, World Bank, and others
<b>Staff</b>	8 people (7 women and 1 man)
<b>Total members throughout Aceh</b>	3,842 people
<b>Main programme</b>	Economical development through revolving funds. Empowerment and education of political cadres, advocacy for changes in policy in becoming gender-equal and democratic in political, economical, and all other aspects of life. Strengthening the organization in aspects of funds, human resources (members), organizational mechanism, work devices and network.
<b>Area of work</b>	Aceh Besar, Aceh Timur, Banda Aceh, Bireuen, North Aceh, Pidie, Aceh Jaya and Abdya
<b>Contact</b>	Telephone: +62651-635925; Email: <a href="mailto:kpi_wilayahnad@yahoo.co.id">kpi_wilayahnad@yahoo.co.id</a>
<b>Address</b>	Jl. T.Iskandar, Lr Tgk Pagar Air, No. 17, Gampong Lambhuk Ulee Kareng, B. Aceh 23118
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.koalisiperempuan.or.id/">http://www.koalisiperempuan.or.id/</a>

*Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia* (KPI) was established at the national level in 1998 and now exists in a number of provinces throughout Indonesia. KPI Aceh was founded on 19 January 2006 and was mandated to independently manage activities held in Aceh. KPI works directly with donor agencies and facilitates the wider dissemination of principles of women’s participation, by working with various development programmes based in former-conflict areas.

The organization’s vision is to achieve gender equality as a part of a wider project to encourage a democratic, prosperous and civilized society. The organization employs a women’s gathering

structure in order to mobilize its mission and functions at various levels of society - from the provincial level to the *gampong* (village)<sup>16</sup>. The implementation of KPI's activities is based on principles of community cooperation, - exemplified by the branch and level structures and the use of the chairperson's house, known as a *balai* (hall), for coordination and meetings. Almost all facilities used by KPI are provided voluntarily by the heads at each level.

KPI Aceh was established to help tsunami victims, specifically those living in barracks or shelters. Initially, KPI's activities focused on providing consumables and a soup kitchen. Seeing the situation in IDP camps, women activists from KPI noted the lack of awareness of women's needs and the lack of knowledge women had of their own rights. Mothers in camps were not aware of their rights as women, or of their reproductive rights. The KPI activists felt it was important to raise awareness of reproductive health and other women's rights issues. KPI wanted to raise awareness of reproductive rights and to contribute to building a society where women and children are treated equitably within their own family.<sup>17</sup> After establishing itself in Aceh and areas affected by the tsunami, KPI extended its network to former conflict areas.

KPI Aceh focuses on promoting gender equity and women's rights by advocating for gender-responsive policies in cooperation with the Development and Peace organization (DnP). Other programmes include training for members; each member must attend trainings on the rights of women, human rights, and women's participation. With these trainings, it is expected that they will build the capacity to deliver information on women's rights at the community level, via community forums and meetings at the *gampong* (village hall). In realizing its vision and mission, KPI works to establish networks; KPI currently has 3,842 members from 8 regencies/towns throughout Aceh, who formed various community groups to act as agents of change, in order to achieve women's equity.

Like other institutions, KPI emphasizes principles of volunteerism in the implementation of its activities and programmes. It is obligatory for all KPI members to pay monthly fees, to be dispersed throughout various regencies in Aceh. The funds raised are used for loans, or as a revolving fund, to be used by members when needed. Though funds raised are small, this process promotes a sense of belonging and cooperation among members.



**Photo: Eng Eong TV production as a campaign for women's participation in development and politics in the post-conflict era.**

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Evany Clara Yanti, Secretary for KPI Aceh, 25 July 2011.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Evany Clara Yanti, Secretary for KPI Aceh, 25 July 2011, also see website KPI via <http://www.koalisperempuan.or.id/>.

### 3.1.3. Flower Aceh

Organizational Information	
<b>Founded</b>	23 September 1989
<b>Vision and mission</b>	The realization of a fair social order in relation to women and men, in all aspects of life
<b>Donors</b>	USAID, HIVOS, ICO, UN WOMEN, the Norwegian Embassy and others
<b>Staff</b>	10 people
<b>Main programme</b>	Advocacy of policies and socialization of gender-just laws as well as the development and empowerment of women's economy
<b>Area of work</b>	7 regencies/towns consisting of Aceh Besar, Banda Aceh, Bireuen, Pidie, Pidie Jaya and West Aceh
<b>Contact</b>	Telephone/Facsimile: +62651 8056410
<b>Address</b>	Jl. T.nyak makam no.3 Lampineung, Banda Aceh, Indonesia
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://floweraceh.or.id">http://floweraceh.or.id</a>

Flower, founded in 1989, was the first women's organization in Aceh, dedicated to promoting women's rights and gender equity. Flower was founded by a number of activists who came together in response to the experience of one woman, who, as a teenager, had been forced to discontinue her studies in order to marry. The timing of Flower's inception was further motivated by the implementation of the *Daerah Operasi Militer* (DOM, Military Operations Area), which opened room for many forms of violence and inequity against women, including physical and sexual violence as well as rape, which at the time was not a main concern of the government; this created new reasons for exploring issues of VAW and inequality in the context of conflict in Aceh.<sup>18</sup>

More recently, Flower has evolved to become *Perkumpulan Flower* (Flower Association). Perkumpulan Flower unites stakeholders from across society, including religious figures, academics and women's rights activists, in the fight for gender equality. By forming an association, Flower has been able to maintain its financial resources, to pay for resources and staff involvement with programmes. With sufficient human resources, Flower has been able to continue its work, providing facilitators to a variety of NGOs, government institutions and universities. These facilitators form the backbone of Flower's operations.

Flower's programmes focus on: providing legal education, raising awareness of reproductive rights and capacity building to facilitate the economic empowerment of women. Flower advocates on behalf of female victims of state violence (victims of political, socio-economical, cultural, or legal discrimination) and for policy changes to incorporate women's rights and interests. Flower continues to run activities and programmes in throughout Aceh, to promote women's rights, including programmes to provide savings and loans to women's businesses, and programmes to educate women and teenagers on reproductive health and rights.<sup>19</sup>

Volunteerism forms the basis of much of Flower's operations. Many team facilitators willingly work for nominal amounts, while others contribute for no pay at all. Flower has further been able to subsidise its finances by establishing a health clinic that raises funds to support the institution's

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Desy Setiawaty, Managing Director for Flower Aceh, 14 July 2011.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

operational costs. Although the health clinic has not been able to sufficiently cover the financial costs of the institution, it has nonetheless contributed to the local community, by providing publically accessible health services and specifically, women’s reproductive health services.<sup>20</sup>



**Photo: Training on making *tempeh* (traditional soy product) as a form of assistance to women’s groups that were tsunami victims**

Flower also fosters economic empowerment by promoting crafts made by women victims of conflict. By doing so, Flower assists women to have economic independence in order to attain a better life based on social equity between men and women.<sup>21</sup>

### 3.1.4. Balai Inong Gampong Alue Deah Teungoh

Organizational Information	
<b>Founded</b>	August 2007
<b>Vision and Mission</b>	Build the capacity of women through the development of human resources and economical empowerment
<b>Donor</b>	WDC, BP3A, Flower, World Vision, UN WOMEN and others
<b>Staff</b>	40 members (consisting of 3 groups)
<b>Main Programme</b>	Increase women’s capacities in areas of education and strengthening life skills of women tsunami victims
<b>Address</b>	Gampong Alue Deah Teungoh, Meuraxa Subdistrict, Town of Banda Aceh
<b>Area of Work</b>	Town of Banda Aceh

*Balai Inong* is a community-based women’s organization that works to assist female tsunami victims. Balai Inong operates in a number of villages throughout Banda Aceh. This report focuses on Balai Inong’s operations in the subdistrict of Meuraxa.

Formed in 2007, by a number of female tsunami victims, Bilai Inong’s main goal was to ensure women’s participation in aid and development processes, to ensure aid was dispensed in a fair and

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Desy Setiawaty, Managing Director for Flower Aceh, 14 July 2011.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

equitable way. Urged on by the discrimination they saw in the field, several women felt it important to form a community-based organization to ensure due consideration was given to women’s needs.

Balai Inong relies on volunteers to achieve its ambitions. Unlike many other institutions, none of Balai Inong’s staff receive salaries. Balai Inong’s female members volunteer their time out of a sense of community and *gotong royong*. It is common for members to contribute their own money to assist the organization in achieving its goals. Two shelter units, or meeting places, have been provided by donors to house Balai Inong’s daily activities. The chairperson’s house is also used as an office and a place for other operational activities when necessary.<sup>22</sup>

Balai Inong in Meuraxa conducts various activities to build the economic capacity and education of women. Many female tsunami victims lost their jobs and main source of income, while others were forced to find work as a result of being widowed. Balai Inong provides economic capacity building in the form of training sessions for women on: cake-making, tailoring and the production of oyster sauce. The implementation of these programmes has been supported by a number of donor agencies.<sup>23</sup>



**Photo: Cake-making as one of Balai Inong’s training programmes in building the capacities of female tsunami victims**

The spirit of volunteerism demonstrated by Balai Inong can be seen through the dedication of its staff, who provide time, money, and effort in order to conduct women’s empowerment programmes. Their commitment and willingness to learn in order to create change is highly evident.

### 3.1.5. Solidaritas Perempuan (SP, Women’s Solidarity) Region of Aceh

Organizational Information	
<b>Founded</b>	January 2004
<b>Vision and Mission</b>	Establish a democratic social order, based on principles of anti-violence towards women and an appreciation of religious freedom
<b>Donors</b>	NOVIB, APLD, UNFPA, UN WOMEN, HIVOS, The Johaneter, IRC, AJWS and others
<b>Staff</b>	40 members spread throughout Aceh, consisting of 42 women and 7 men - 8 staff

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Rasyidah, Head of Balai Inong Gampong Alue Deah Teungoh Subdistrict of Meuraxa, Kota Banda Aceh, 14 July 2011.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<b>Main Programme</b>	Attaining equity in peace for women as well as women in the politicization of religious values
<b>Area of Work</b>	Bener Meriah and Aceh Besar
<b>Contact</b>	Telephone: 0651 31100; Email: paceh-bj@yahoo.com
<b>Address</b>	Jl. Belibis, Lr Adam, No.22, Labui- Ateuk Pahlawan, Kota Banda Aceh
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.solidaritasperempuan.org/">http://www.solidaritasperempuan.org/</a>

*Solidaritas Perempuan* (SP) was founded in January 2004, while Aceh was still under emergency military control and during the time of regional elections. *Solidaritas Perempuan* exists throughout Indonesia to fight for gender equality and the end of VAW. SP's main mission is to build women's capacity to participate in politics - as voters and candidates - and to contribute to efforts to ensure that elections are implemented in a democratic and gender-equitable way.<sup>24</sup>

SP's field experiences indicated that the needs of women in post-conflict areas were being overlooked by the government. SP dedicated itself to working with these women, as a focus point for the wider fight to promote women's rights in Aceh. SP has worked with various international donor agencies to broaden the opportunities for women in Aceh to participate in politics - an important step in fighting for gender-equality.<sup>25</sup>

SP's main programme advocates for the rights of women, especially female tsunami victims, and works to raise community awareness of their rights. SP conducts training and community education programmes to promote women's rights and economic empowerment. SP Aceh has 49 members, many of whom volunteer resources in order to implement programmes. Similarly, many community members in the areas receiving assistance also donate resources. This form of participation and *gotong royong* from members of the community is integral to the implementation of activities and programmes and the achievement of SP's wider goals to promote gender equity and women's rights in Aceh.<sup>26</sup>

Working in a post-conflict environment poses particular difficulties however. Communities can be closed off to outsiders and, as experienced by SP activists, locals can harbour great suspicion towards intervention efforts. These initial challenges however, helped SP to gain experience in managing conflict. One lesson learnt was that taking a sensitive approach helped to break down associated tensions – which culminated with SP staff members staying and living with local residents during the course of their programme.

SP has managed to garner the support of several female activists, who have volunteered without pay, to assist with the implementation of programmes. This has not only been of assistance to SP as an organization, but also garnered wider public support for the organization's objectives.

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<sup>24</sup> Interview with Ruiada, Programme Coordinator for SP Aceh, 21 July 2011.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

### 3.1.6. Balai Syura

Organizational Information	
<b>Founded</b>	22 April 2000
<b>Vision and Mission</b>	Develop a good relationship pattern between men and women in building a more gender-equal Aceh
<b>Donors</b>	IRI, UNDEP, The Asia Foundation, USAID, UN WOMEN and others
<b>Staff</b>	3 permanent staff and 750 association members (volunteers)
<b>Main Programme</b>	Advocates for the inclusion of women in politics and policy-making; meeting victims' needs; advocates for the humanitarian implementation of syariat Islam
<b>Area of Work</b>	Province of Aceh
<b>Contact</b>	Telephone: +62-51635109; Email: balai_syura@yahoo.co.id
<b>Address</b>	Jl T. Iskandar, Sp Iliiek, Lr Poskesdes, Gampong Lamteh, Ule Kareng, Banda Aceh

*Balai Syura Ureung Inong Aceh* (BSUIA) was founded in 2000, in response to the first mandate of the *Duek Pakat Inong Aceh* (DPIA) or *Musyawahar Perempuan Aceh* (the Acehese Women's Conference). At the time, women were demanding a greater level of involvement with peace-processes, policy-making and in economic life. *Duek Pakat* initially formed to respond to concerns about the conditions for women during the conflict. Many Acehese women were victims of the heated conflict but at the time, women's groups were not receiving adequate consideration in conflict resolution processes

Since that time, *Balai Syura* has formed groups known as a *majelis*, to act as representatives of women for each regency/town of Aceh. *Balai Syura* also operates as a conduit for the messages of other women's organizations and engages in its own advocacy work to ensure that policies relating to tsunami victims are implemented in a gender-sensitive way. They also monitor and attempt to ensure that Islamic Sharia is implemented in a 'humane' way.<sup>27</sup>

*Balai Syura* relies on the support and volunteer work of academics, women activists and religious figures, to implement its programmes and activities.



Photo: Meeting in *Rumah Perempuan Politik Aceh* (RPPA); one form of involving women in politics and policy-making.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Nursiti, Head of Presidium for Balai Syura Ureung Inong Aceh, 14 July 2011.

## 3.2. Volunteerism and Other Strategies Employed by Women's NGOs

The desire to volunteer and participate in efforts to solve social problems has played a key role in the development of most women's organizations in Aceh. Often motivated by the events of the tsunami and conflict, women's organizations have fought to promote social-humanitarian values and community action. Although these institutions have received financial aid from donor agencies, it does not undermine the spirit of volunteerism and *gotong royong* demonstrated by the activists involved. The need to maintain the ideas of non-profit engagement as a mitigation strategy for times when donor support is lacking has forced women activists to develop solutions to ensure the ongoing existence of the organizations. Based on observations and interviews, the following are a number of insights related to the forms of volunteerism exhibited by various NGOs working on gender issues in Aceh.

### 3.2.1. Fundraising

The post-tsunami reconstruction and rehabilitation period opened the doors for donor agencies from around the world to start operations in Aceh. In performing their missions, international donor agencies engaged in partnerships with local NGOs, including women's organizations. However, not all NGOs received sufficient funds to complete their programmes. Towards the end of the reconstruction and rehabilitation period, monetary assistance became increasingly limited. Local women's organizations in Aceh had to develop their own solutions, to overcome these funding problems – one of which was to engage in fundraising activities. Although fundraising initiatives often failed to cover operational costs for programme implementation, these efforts demonstrated the importance of volunteerism and not-for-profit approaches. Fundraising initiatives have taken many forms, including:

- **Organizational subsidies for human resource provision.** This particular fundraising mechanism has been used when a member of staff is requested as a resource person by another institution – to act as a facilitator, trainer, or to present certain material. 40 % of the fee allocated to the facilitator is returned back to the organization. This practice has been implemented by SP, RPuK, Balai Surya, KPI, and Flower Aceh;
- **Maximising transport and per diem allowances.** In order to cut on programme operational expenditures, organizations organise their programmes to maximise the financial gains that can be made through transport and travel per diems. Organizations hold events close to the community to save on travel expenses. The same thing also applies to staff members attending field visits; some organizations limit allowances, to redirect funds back to the organization's treasury. These practices are implemented by SP and KPI as well as a number of other organizations;
- **Salary cuts.** This approach to saving resources is applied when the organization no longer has sufficient funds available. If there are insufficient funds left to cover programme costs, staff members may agree to a pay cut. Staff are free to use their remaining time to work elsewhere for additional income. This method has been used by SP, RPuK, Balai Surya, and KPI;
- **Monthly contributions.** Community associations or *majlis* often require members to make monthly contributions (in accordance with the financial abilities of individuals). Contributions from members are collected and used as additional funds to support the implementation of

programmes. The collective contribution can also be used as a savings and loans scheme through cooperatives managed collectively;

- **Private donations.** This occurs when organizations receive donations, in the form of money or goods, from individual sponsors or supporters. Although this rarely occurs, private donations have been given to organizations such as Flower Aceh;
- **Voluntary work.** On occasions, the employees of women's NGOs will work on a voluntary basis when funds become limited towards the end of a programme. Staff members continue to work as usual, but do not receive (full) pay. Additionally, a number of women activists voluntarily join organizations for no pay. For some people this decision is based on a sense of dedication, while others see it as an opportunity to conduct research. These incidents have occurred in KPI and SP.<sup>28</sup>

### 3.2.2. Resources

The establishment of humanitarian organizations in Aceh has provided key opportunities for the development of human resources and skills in the area, which has led to increased opportunities for the empowerment of women. Women's NGOs have been able to develop the skills of their staff and build their capacity to disseminate information to the public through various forms, including through training sessions.

Examples of training sessions that have been conducted include:

- Leadership training;
- Training on the law and rights of victims of violence;
- Training on reproductive rights and health;
- Training tailoring skills and entrepreneurship capacity building;
- Awareness raising on gender-sensitive laws for *gampong* officials<sup>29</sup>

### 3.3. Constraints Involved with Working on GBV

Working as part of a movement for change to promote gender equity and women's rights, requires dedication and hard work. At a fundamental level, this movement involves changing the perspectives, perceptions and ideologies of people. Therefore, gender equity and women's rights issues face several challenges related to sociocultural perspectives, and in some contexts even religion. In order to tackle these challenges, gender equity programmes require sufficient funding to ensure effective implementation. To date, women's organizations in Aceh have been financially dependent on aid from donor agencies. A number of efforts have been made to reduce this dependency and to use more local resources (including contributions from community members). In light of the level of challenges faced however, this has not been an easy task. Field observations and interviews with a number of women activists identified a number of common challenges faced by organizations working for gender equity.

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<sup>28</sup> Results of interview with various NGOs working for the eradication of gender-based violence; consisting of RPuK, SP Aceh, KPI Aceh, Balai Surya, Flower and Balai Inong Gampong Deah Teungoh.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

These included:

- **Continuation of patriarchal values.** In spite of Aceh's 'development progress', patriarchal attitudes still dominate the daily lives of people in Aceh. Women's involvement in politics and various public institutions remains very low. Discriminatory or gender-neutral laws, regulations and policies are still common. All of these factors inhibit the people and government from supporting the movement to eradicate of GBV and empower women;<sup>30</sup>
- **Gender-biased interpretations of religion.** Islam, which is the faith for 98% of the people of Aceh, is a very important aspect of life, and therefore shapes the way of life for people in Aceh. Gender-biased interpretations of religion pose great challenges to the work of women activists. Current religious interpretations predispose people to view gender empowerment initiatives negatively. This makes it harder to win the people's support or encourage them to get actively involved as volunteers with campaigns;<sup>31</sup>
- **Lack of awareness of GBV.** A lack of awareness in Aceh prohibits people from supporting and participating in efforts to eradicate GBV. Patriarchal values and religious biases are at the root of this. In response to this, women's activists have stressed the need to incorporate local wisdoms, cultural perspectives and religious perspectives - including traditional concepts of *gotong royong* and *wirid yasinan*<sup>32</sup> – into efforts to promote gender equity; they have also stressed the need and importance to collaborate with religious and traditional figures;<sup>33</sup>
- **Lack of government involvement.** The Local Government has issued several regulations or *qanuns* concerning women's empowerment but implementation remains weak. This deters people from being actively involved with efforts to address GBV.<sup>34</sup>
- **The long-term effects of conflict and tsunami.** The prolonged experiences of living in a conflict-zone, followed by the tsunami, weakened levels of community solidarity. The violent conflict encouraged people to focus on maintaining their own safety and survival. Consequently, values of cooperation and solidarity have been weakened. It is difficult to regenerate this spirit of volunteerism - especially with regards to issues of women and gender. Again, a culturally sensitive approach that engages local resources and knowledge will help to strengthen and re-build this culture of community involvement.<sup>35</sup>

### 3.4. Post-Donor Period: Looking for a Solution

The exit of donor agencies after the reconstruction period left a major gap in the funds available for post-tsunami development work in Aceh. The decrease in financial resources for organizations had serious ramifications for women's organizations, some of which were forced to close from the lack of funds. Other organizations managed to survive by engaging in fundraising activities as described in section 3.2.1. Women's organizations have now begun to prepare themselves for the possibility of a financial 'crisis', which could threaten the continuity of their work.

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<sup>30</sup> Interview with Azriana, General Secretary for RPuk, 18 July 2011.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Suraiya Kamaruzzaman, Aceh women's activist figure, 27 July 2011.

<sup>32</sup> Wirid Yasinan is one of the means to promote gender equality for women; Wirid Yasinan is a religious moment for women, like a social gathering and reading the Quran together.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Desy Setiawaty, Managing Director for Flower Aceh, 14 July 2011.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Evany Clara Yanti, Secretary for KPI Aceh, 25 July 2011

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Ruiada, Programme Coordinator for SP Aceh, 21 July 2011.

Possible approaches to addressing a financial crisis may include:

- **Advocating for government support.** Although the government has shown minimal concern for gender issues, it will be important to advocate for stronger government involvement on issues of gender equity and women's rights and to demand that the state will fulfil its duty to uphold the rights of women. Of course, such advocacy efforts are difficult and require hard work;<sup>36</sup>
- **Networking.** In an environment of decreased financial resources, it will be important for organizations to develop their networks and work together. In Aceh, organizations working on gender equity have already established strong relationships and have a history of cooperating together. It is now a matter of optimizing these networks, to reach the shared vision of gender equality;<sup>37</sup>
- **Fundraising.** The decrease in financial aid has made it important to approach the business and private sectors. This may also encourage community involvement and voluntary support for gender equity issues. Before taking this step however, women's organizations will need to think strategically about who to target and how to approach various groups.<sup>38</sup>

### 3.5. Volunteerism and Men's Involvement: A Case Study of the Pulih Foundation

*Yayasan Pulih* (the Pulih Foundation) was established in Jakarta in July 2002. In 2005, *Yayasan Pulih*, which is also known as Puleh Aceh, began its operations in Aceh, to provide counselling services for tsunami victims and to establish survivor support systems for the many people who had experienced domestic and sexual violence during the conflict period. *Pulih* also provides counselling assistance for humanitarian aid workers, who are prone to exhaustion and secondary trauma. *Pulih Aceh's* vision is to empower survivors of violence and disasters, by caring for their mental health, so that they are able to contribute to a democratic society. Pulih upholds values of humanity, peace, human rights, and social and gender equity.<sup>39</sup>

Since 2011, *Pulih Aceh* has been working with *Aliansi Laki-Laki Baru* (the New Men's Alliance), Rifka Annisa, and UN Women to establish a programme to strengthen men's ability to participate in processes to eradicate violence against women and promote gender equity. Efforts to involve men originated out of a desire to take a preventative approach to ending GBV – to stop violence before it occurs. Ultimately these efforts have not only been implemented by men, but by anyone whose mission it is to prevent and eradicate GBV.

Male involvement in VAW and GBV initiatives remains contentious among women activists. There are concerns that such efforts could lead to male domination of agenda-setting therefore reassert, rather than deconstruct, the patriarchal values that underpin problems of gender inequity. Within this context of ongoing debate, it is important that organizations encourage open debate around the involvement of men.

The following is an overview of programme activities Pulih has implemented to facilitate the engagement of men and boys and to encourage a wider culture of volunteerism in Aceh.

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<sup>36</sup> Interview with Nursiti, Head of Presidium for Balai Syura Ureung Inong Aceh, 14 July 2011.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Evany Clara Yanti, Secretary for KPI Aceh, 25 Juli 2011.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Ruiada, Programme Coordinator for SP Aceh, 21 July 2011.

<sup>39</sup> [www.pulih.or.id](http://www.pulih.or.id)

### 3.5.1. Seminar on “Involving Men in Efforts of Preventing Violence against Women in Aceh”

This seminar was the first of many efforts to strengthen the involvement and contribution of men on issues of gender equity. The seminar was aimed at the media, to raise awareness and influence public discourse on men’s involvement with gender issues. The seminar was attended by approximately 50 women’s rights activists and journalists from various organizations and institutions - both government and non-governmental - in Banda Aceh.

Issues discussed included:

- Why the involvement of men is necessary in eradicating gender-based violence in Aceh;
- The background to the principles of male engagement and local initiatives to work with men and boys;
- The need to expand notions of masculinity, in order to achieve wider goals of gender-equity.

From the seminar, it was evident that gender equity programmes need to provide an open space for people’s participation in issues of gender equity and women’s rights, specifically in Aceh. It is highly likely, especially for men’s groups, that people face difficulties when they wish to be more actively involved in efforts of improving gender equity and women’s rights. Moreover, it became clear that more must be done to engage men in the region on issues of gender equity and the eradication of VAW. Historically men have faced difficulties when trying to engage with the women’s rights movement or be involved with the fight for gender equity. This may be overcome however, if men’s efforts are placed within a context of wider concepts of social change and considered a part of wider efforts to encourage community action.



Photo: A one-day seminar on involving men in the effort of preventing violence against women in Aceh

### 3.5.2. Speech Competition for Senior High School Students

Students, as one of the most important communities involved in creating change, must be a key partner in efforts to encourage gender equity and eradicate VAW. In an effort to engage students and institutions, Pulih held a speech competition that asked participants to respond to the topic: “Let’s talk about men in Aceh: The role of teenagers in eradicating violence against women”.

This activity provided an entry-point to increase students’ awareness of gender issues and to encourage involvement in the gender equality movement. The speech competition also functioned

to promote voluntary action amongst students. Further to this, involving students offers strategic opportunities to create partnerships with educational institutions. It is important to engage educational institutions, so that they are able to address violence within their own settings. Recently, cases of bullying, fights between schools, motor gangs and teacher-pupil violence, have all been reported in educational settings.

Based on field observations, the speech contest contributed to building a sense of participation, by directly involving students in the agenda for gender equity. The competition did not provide travel or per diem allowances, or large material rewards for winners - to diminish the risk that participants might be motivated by rewards and to encourage participation on a voluntary basis.



**Photo: Participants of the “Let’s talk about men” speech contest posing together with the panel of judges and Pulih Aceh at the selection of winners at Politeknik Aceh**

The speech contest examined the relationship between gender-equity and wider causes of social-humanitarian work. It inspired ongoing plans to host informal discussions on issues of gender, sexuality and women.

### **3.5.3. Joint Learning Forum and Peaceful Demonstration**

Joint learning forums have also played an important role in involving men, by encouraging critical thinking and perspectives on issues of gender, sexuality, and women. These forums are based on the principles of free speech, open thought and zero-tolerance of discrimination or violence. In addition to the activists that were involved in organising the events, a number of university students from across Banda Aceh attended. The involvement of these ‘new’ participants expanded the networks available to promote notions of male involvement and gender equity. The space for participation on issues of GBV was widened and managed to reach younger generations at university.

At the conclusion of the above-mentioned speech contest, participants showed their enthusiasm by staging a peaceful demonstration to reject all Forms of Violence in the town centre of Banda Aceh, under the banner of Aliansi Masyarakat Anti Kekerasan – AMAN (Community Alliance Against Violence). This peaceful demonstration was an invitation to the public to be more aware of issues of violence to take part in moves to eradicate it.



Photo: Peaceful demonstration in Bundarana Simpang Lima Banda Aceh by activists involved in Aliansi Masyarakat Anti Kekerasan (AMAN).

### 3.5.4. Involving Men for Sustainable Change

Sustainability is an important issue to consider in the development of programmes to increase men's participation and contribution. It is important to consider how notions of male involvement can avoid being implemented as one-off projects, by ensuring that these concepts are consistently incorporated into the development of all projects. In doing so, projects may find new ways to encourage increases in voluntary involvement. *Pulih* and other organizations and activists plan to continue their efforts around working with men, as a part of the wider push to obtain gender equity in Aceh. Forums to encourage reflection and discussion continue to be conducted by volunteers working from a perspective of *gotong royong*. Some activists are willing to act as hosts and agree to have their homes used as meeting places. If this continues, it will eventually form an important tradition for the movement towards gender equity and women's rights in Aceh.

## 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 4.1. Conclusion

Based on field observations and interviews, below are a number of conclusions on volunteerism and participation in the fight for gender equity and women's rights in Aceh:

- Social-cultural practices that encourage enthusiasm for volunteerism have long-existed in Aceh and can be seen through their traditions of *meuseuraya* or *gotong royong*;
- Among women's rights activists, there is an understanding that gender-programmes must be grounded in humanitarian commitments to: attaining gender equity, eradicating GBV, upholding women's rights, and promoting social justice;
- Activists working to achieve gender equity have shown their willingness to work voluntarily by: accepting salary cuts; maximising the benefit reaped from travel or per diem allowances; and by passing the fees, provided to staff members when they work as resource persons, back to the organization;
- The exit of development agencies after the post-tsunami rehabilitation period has created financial challenges for women's rights organizations. They have, however, responded

strategically to the problem by: engaging in fundraising activities; strengthening their networks; improving the efficiency of programmes; advocating for (more) government support; and encouraging volunteerism in order to ensure the survival of organizations;

- There are constraints that inhibit people's awareness of GBV, which also limit their ability to volunteer for gender-equity causes. The lack of government involvement on gender issues limits the capacity to raise awareness, or encourage community members to get involved with gender-equity efforts. The government's lack of commitment encourages people to see issues of gender inequality and VAW as trivial and undeserving of public involvement.
- The patriarchal values embedded in society are the root causes of gender inequality and VAW. These patriarchal biases further inhibit people's involvement as volunteers and *gotong royong* in the fight for gender equity and eradication of GBV in Aceh. In order to overcome this, it is important to be aware of local socio-cultural constructions of patriarchy and to encourage volunteerism as a long-term, sustainable way to continue fighting for gender-equity.
- Being a professional does not prohibit people from becoming or upholding the principles of volunteerism. For paid staff working on the implementation of programmes, it is important to work with a sense of dedication to the goal. Conversely, volunteers must also work with a high sense of professionalism, despite not receiving any remuneration or pay.

## **4.2. Recommendations**

These recommendations are based on interviews with various sources and direct observations of several women's organizations. They particularly relate to strengthening local traditions of volunteerism, as part of the fight to achieve gender equity and end GBV:

### **1) Improve organizational networking and coordination**

There are countless organizations working in Aceh to achieve gender equity and this should be recognised as an asset for re-invigorating a 'culture' of volunteerism in the area. Several networks have been formed to connect and encourage cooperation among these organizations, such as the Gender Working Group (GWG) and *Jaringan Masyarakat Sipil Peduli Syariah* (JMSPS / Network of Civil Society Concerned with Sharia). There are many other organizations in addition to those previously mentioned, such as KKTGA, LBH Apik, CCDE, Violet Grey, PKPA, and many more. The existence of these organizations is an asset for the empowerment of the 'culture' of volunteerism in issues of gender equity and women's rights in Aceh. More needs to be done, however, to connect organizations that are working on similar programmes – to encourage cooperation and the sharing of useful results. Increased cooperation will also enable greater efficiency in programme delivery - especially considering the limited financial resources available since the departure of donor agencies. In this context, the reduction of donor agencies should push women's organizations to strengthen their cooperation with organizations that share the same vision.

### **2) Develop capacity to work with government**

Improving and developing new opportunities to work with and cooperate with government is important for budgetary reasons, and has the potential to improve government awareness and will to address gender inequity. Improving cooperation with the government is also important for monitoring purposes - specifically in the relation to gauging the effectiveness of the implementation of various gender policies. Women's organizations need to consider efforts to approach and build relationships with government as an integral part of their fight to achieve gender equality.

### **3) Re-invigorate the culture of volunteerism and *gotong royong***

Thirty years of conflict, the effects of the tsunami and the ensuing culture of aid-dependency that grew up in Aceh all contributed to eroding traditional perspectives on volunteerism and *gotong royong*. Realizing that the tradition of *gotong royong* and volunteerism has been part of the society for generations, it is important to revitalize this tradition once more. Efforts to encourage men's participation in gender-equity causes could be an entry point for strengthening this tradition of *gotong royong*. It is also important to consider how local wisdoms and customs can be applied to building cooperative relationships with institutions and different levels of society.

### **4) Encourage men's involvement in GBV prevention**

Approaching men to engage with women's rights initiatives remains a contentious issue. There is a common perception that the involvement of men would cause more problems. However, it is essential to consider how to develop initiatives that engage men in efforts to eradicate GBV, as a part of the wider process of encouraging gender equality, and as a means to promote the prevention of violence before it starts. Moreover, the involvement of men would also diminish perceptions that only women are responsible for matters of gender equality. Recognizing this, a Men's Community for Gender Equity and Equality (*Komunitas Laki-Laki untuk Keadilan dan Kesetaraan Gender / KLLuKKG*) has been formed in Aceh. Under the network of various organizations working against GBV, a new space has been created for men who are against violence against women and promote gender equality.

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