

Mid-term Evaluation

***Support for Tsunami Victims at
Reconstruction of Houses and
Communal Infrastructure and Income
Earning Capacities***

***Pidie and Bireuen Districts, Aceh
Province, Indonesia
(IDN 1014)***

WELTHUNGERHILFE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation fulfils the mid-term evaluation planned for Welthungerhilfe's IDN1014 project, based in Pidie and Bireun Districts, Aceh province, Indonesia. This project was established in order to respond to the needs of the populations affected by the Indian ocean tsunami of 26th December 2004, and has concentrated on the reconstruction of houses and community infrastructure, the re-establishment of livelihoods through a Saving and Loan scheme, and planting of vegetation to increase coastal protection.

The evaluation has found that Welthungerhilfe has managed to maintain its approach of participative project planning and implementation despite the numerous constraints and pressures faced due to the overwhelming and unprecedented humanitarian response to the tsunami. This meant the agency competition was immense, with upwards of 20 agencies trying to work in small villages of 100 households at times. A 'spoilt' attitude has emerged as a result of this, making it even harder for agencies to engage the populations in contributing to their own assistance projects. The participative approach employed by Welthungerhilfe has meant that currently there is a very strong link between the organisation, local implementing NGOs and the communities themselves.

The very appropriate decision to expand the work to a village affected by the conflict that ran for 30 years prior to the tsunami is also one that should be emphasised. These villages have been largely forgotten in the wake of the tsunami, despite these communities often facing greater loss and vulnerability than those living near the coast. The huge relief effort has also now increased the disparity between the populations. Welthungerhilfe's efforts here have been very well received by the community and a huge potential exists for the work that is carried out here to be done with greater participation at the design phase, particularly in terms of livelihoods activities, so that the impact and sustainability will be far greater in the long-term.

Additionally, the coastal protection work that has been initiated within the last year is another good addition to the project. The damage that was caused by the tsunami is being compounded on a daily basis by tides and storms, and the local communities have begun to recognise the danger this poses to their lives and livelihoods. This makes for a good pilot project, with the potential for the government and local environmental based organisations to recognise the needs, and the simplicity with which they can be addressed, with the hope they could expand the project to other affected sections of the coastline.

At this point in the project the majority of the house reconstruction has been completed and the community members are very satisfied with their new homes. However, the long-term impact of the reconstruction work, in relation to the design and materials used, is not yet evident, and there are questions as to whether the sudden increase in housing standards will create greater community disparity in the future as people are not wealthy enough to maintain such a standard.

The Saving and Loan scheme, which was a change to the originally planned distributions of livelihood equipment and materials, was a very appropriate shift in the approach to helping re-establish peoples livelihoods. However, as the project currently stands, the community members engaged in the scheme have not had the time to fully understand the concept of a Saving and Loan system, which has been largely due to time pressures in terms of spending donor funds. This has led to the system being implemented in a way that is somewhere between a social grant and a loan, with every group deciding the split the money equally between members and agreeing on the same repayment terms and conditions, regardless of the business need and risk of each individual. The problems with the system have been identified by the Welthungerhilfe staff and the local organisations, and work is underway to make improvements.

There are several key learning points to date. The primary one is seeking the right balance of participation and guidance. Whilst Welthungerhilfe have pursued the participation approach despite all the constraints, there have been clear examples where greater guidance in terms of

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technical and/or social thinking may have improved the long-term impact of the project, rather than leaving the communities in question to determine every aspect of the activities. This is particularly important in a community that has been largely closed off from the outside world for 30 years as a result of the ongoing conflicts, and has therefore likely missed out on many technological and social developments in that time.

The main constraint to the timely and effective implementation of this project has been the lack of key, experienced international personnel. This has led to implementation of the livelihoods activities having to be rushed in order to comply with the donor spending regulations, before adequate time has been allowed to fully understand the context in which the project was to be implemented, and so adequately develop and prepare people to work with that process. Whilst the money distributed has been positive for many people, the long term effect of such a Saving and Loan scheme would likely have been increased had this not occurred, particularly given the fact that Welthungerhilfe plan to leave the country by the end of 2009.

The other key finding is that of how Welthungerhilfe has engaged with local organisations. Working through partners is traditionally the approach taken by the organisation, but in this instance it was deemed necessary to begin through direct implementation due to the lack of capacity locally, as well as the restrictions placed on funding use by BMZ. This appears to have been the most appropriate decision. Since then however, the issue of moving towards an approach of partnership does not seem to have been adequately addressed and so the current situation of using local organisations only as service providers has continued much longer than was necessary. Since the most recent project manager has been in post a large amount of informal and ad-hoc capacity building and support has occurred to the two primary organisations, PASKA and FOSOMA, which both are very appreciative of. However, the sustainability of the work that agencies such as Welthungerhilfe do is greatly enhanced if it can be done in conjunction with systematically building local capacity to continue such work in the future.

The main recommendations resulting from this evaluation centre around the key learning points discussed above, and full recommendations can be found in the final section of this report.

The problems encountered with the Saving and Loan scheme need to be identified and addressed, probably through concentrating on groups that have been functioning well in order to provide an example to the rest of the communities. Women have been identified as being the most diligent and committed to the scheme and so focusing on them would be sensible, although not to the exclusion of the men. PASKA and FOSOMA should be encouraged and assisted to develop training formats and materials that might be more appropriate to the communities in question.

There is great potential in Paya Bilie, the conflict affected village, to implement the Saving and Loan scheme in a way that is more appropriate to the community there. They have seen the system at work in Matang Bangka and have concerns over the effectiveness of it, and at the same time have some very sound ideas as to what might work for themselves. Preparation for the implementation of this part of the project should begin immediately to ensure its effectiveness and impact.

Finally, the development of a country exit strategy in conjunction with preparation of a systematic capacity building plan for each local organisation is imperative in order to ensure the sustainability of the work that has been started. This should be done in communication with Hivos, who are best placed, and seem willing, to be involved in the exit/handover process. There is great potential for the work that has been started by Welthungerhilfe to have lasting impact on the individual community members, and in terms of assisting in strengthening the civil society found in Aceh. However, this will only happen if the remaining time of this project is oriented by a detailed exit strategy.