

# Preventing graft, misuse of aid for quake victims

The World Bank invited Vincent Lingga of The Jakarta Post last month to observe post-quake reconstruction and rehabilitation programs in Yogyakarta and Klaten, Central Java. The following are his reports.

A region hit by natural disasters is highly vulnerable to corruption, let alone in a country like Indonesia with a public administration notoriously notorious as one of the most corrupt in the world.

The sudden rush into the affected areas of so many domestic and foreign organizations and NGOs with cash and material assistance, keen to help the victims - many of them unfamiliar with local conditions, but eager to deliver aid as quickly as possible - highlighted vulnerability to corruption and misuse of aid.

Some people, officials or even organizations, who were supposed to focus on taking care of the victims, were tempted to cut corners, paying less attention to processes and whether the aid reached the intended beneficiaries.

This was one of the major problems encountered by international donors and organizations in helping the victims of the devastating earthquake which hit Yogyakarta and Central Java in late May 2006, killing more than 5,700 people and injuring around 60,000 others. The quake heavily damaged more than 273,000 homes, adversely affecting 300,000 small and micro enterprises and costing total material losses of US\$3.1 billion.

What made the JRF aid just different from many national disaster programs was the involvement of the earthquake victims in the planning, design and implementation of housing rehabilitation and reconstruction programs.

The Community-Based Settlement Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Project (CSRRP) which was allocated US\$60 million out of the \$94 million managed by JRF, supported community planning to select and prioritize beneficiaries and develop community resettlement and reconstruction plans. However speed is very critical in delivering aid to victims, to recover lives, livelihoods, and to accelerate the reconstruction of houses and community infrastructure.

previous houses, exposing them again to a future disaster. "Transparency and accountability therefore have been foremost in the principles applied by the Java Reconstruction Fund (JRF) when it began working in the two regions together with government teams and other foreign and local NGOs and organizations in mid-2006," said Imam Kristanto deputy team leader in charge of monitoring and evaluation of the JRF program.

The \$84 million JRF, which was established by six donors under the management of the World Bank, from the outset engaged all its stakeholders, opening its projects and activities to public scrutiny and disseminating information.

The JRF was established by the European Commission and the governments of the Netherlands, United Kingdom, Canada, Finland and Denmark.

JRF project management engaged community members, through community-based programs, in planning and deciding on programs of action and setting up effective mechanisms to address complaints.

What made the JRF aid just different from many national disaster programs was the involvement of the earthquake victims in the planning, design and implementation of housing rehabilitation and reconstruction programs.

However speed is very critical in delivering aid to victims, to recover lives, livelihoods, and to accelerate the reconstruction of houses and community infrastructure.



Courtesy World Bank

## BACK ON TRACK: Earthquake victims hold a meeting in Bantul, Yogyakarta in this undated photograph supplied by the World Bank. The meeting was a consultative process within a community group, regarding the use of money from the Java Reconstruction Fund (JRF).

rapidly because CSRRP built safe and durable transitional houses for eligible families, while their permanent houses were under construction.

As it turned out, the provision of transitional shelters, not makeshift barracks, like those for the victims of the 2004 tsunami in Aceh, was effective in fulfilling the basic immediate needs of affected families. They could resume daily life much quicker and most importantly many of them resumed their livelihood, for example, by doing retail trading at their transitional shelters.

We as the project management regularly disseminated information regarding our working programs and activities through outreach to beneficiaries and community groups, face-to-face and through the JRF Secretariat for practical complaints directly to project officers and monitored feedback from projects and tracked complaints and when necessary, required separate action, directly with beneficiaries.

belonged opportunities for abuse of authority for personal benefit in such a disaster situation turned out to be quite positive in terms of accountability and acceptance of the JRF efforts by the targeted beneficiaries.

and supervised reconstruction and rehabilitation programs that were funded by the state budget.

Somehow said the JRF post-quake rehabilitation and reconstruction had been completed in less than two years after the disasters, whereby almost 275,000 earthquake-resistant houses were rebuilt and 253,000 others rehabilitated with a total budget of Rp 54 trillion (\$587 million).

when the earthquake hit returned to Bantul afterwards and still got assistance.

However, upon discussions with the community executives and field verifications with the community groups in charge of managing the planning, construction and allocations of houses the JRF Secretariat concluded that the ombudsman misunderstood some of the criteria for selecting targeted beneficiaries.

The ombudsman, for example, was not fully informed that based on the criteria agreed with the community groups, traditional multiple houses in the same dwelling were entitled to separate houses in the reconstruction programme if several independent families stayed in a single location but in completely separate spaces, Kristanto explained.

"Despite some misinterpretation, the JRF Secretariat considered the ombudsman survey findings to be valuable in helping to increase transparency and accountability," said JRF communications officer Nita Sarmita.

An eventual field check and verification by the JRF team concluded that 83 percent of the survey's results did warrant serious investigation.

The executive board of the ombudsman, however, maintained that its survey findings were correct, asserting they had overlooked the criteria used by JRF for selection of beneficiaries.

But ... a JRF team 40 percent of ... JRF had was correct. The survey also found that 40 percent of the beneficiaries did not entirely fit the JRF's own criteria. It is possible there were other humanitarian reasons whereby the beneficiaries were still entitled to the aid, they were but that is another issue," Subhan added.

**Victims could have simply reconstructed their homes to the same standards as their previous houses, exposing them again to a future disaster.**

receive support for housing was announced openly on official notice boards. If no complaints were lodged within ten days, the funding for house reconstruction was granted.

"I have recommended that the best practices, notably the multi-tier supervision, used in the JRF program be institutionalized into our national system of aid management for disaster victims," said Secretary of the National Technical Team, which was in charge of coordinating the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Java after the May 2006 earthquake.