

Community Building Forum III

How to Rebuild Resilient Communities?

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*“Can you imagine in five minutes’ time,
All your wealth gone, washed away in the tsunami tides?
Can you imagine in half an hours’ time,
Your house shaken and completely devastated,
Can you imagine in three hours’ time,
Your family torn apart forever?”
“Reading the Almighty’s Sign”,
Taufiq Ismail, December 28, 2004.*

I. INTRODUCTION

1. *Macro, meso and micro* levels.

Despite the fact, that community resilience is very much focused to a community situation and condition at the grassroots or community level, but it could not be denied, that the condition and situation at the grassroots and community level doesnot stand alone. There is a strong interaction between some basic important factors at the *macro* or national levels, some factors at the *meso* or regional levels, and some factors at the *micro* or grassroots or locality levels.

The basic important factors at the macro or national levels are the degree of political stability, security and prosperity, and the degree of harmonious partnership and cohesiveness between the national government, business community and the civil society. So it is with some factors at the meso or regional levels.

2. Internal & external preventive and promotional measures

Community resilience is very important, not only for preventing any threats or hazards coming from outsides, for instance for coping with insurgency or natural disasters, but also in itself, is a strong preventive measures for preventing to internal threat, such as vertical conflicts. And the most important thing is, that community resilience is a very

¹ Presented at the 16th General Meeting of Pacific Economic Cooperation Council, September 5-7, Seoul, Korea.

² Muhammadiyah is the oldest and biggest modernist Islamic movement in Indonesia, established in 1912, with about 30 millions members and sympathicants, currently running 15 000 schools, 200 Universities and academics, 350 hospitals and clinics, 325 orphanages, thousand of mosques and grassroots community development and welfare movements. The movement is to be supported by its ladies and young ladies wings, youth movement, student movement, university student association, boys scout and girl guide movement, cultural movement and sports-self defend groups. Its organization spreads over the copuntry, down to the districts, sub-districts and the villages. Muhammadiyah organizational structure stretch out from national office, down to provincial, district, sub-district and villages levels.

strong fundamental for promoting the welfare and sustainable livelihoods of all the people who are residing in that very localities.

3. Upwards support to national resilience and stability.

We cannot denied the interaction or reciprocal relations between the all the determining factors at the *macro*, *meso* and *micro* levels, but basically, the situation and conditions of the community at the grassroots or locality levels is primarily the most fundamental. It is the situation and conditions of the community at the grassroots or locality level which gives its full support upwards to the social and political stability at the *macro* and *meso* or regional levels, just like the roots of a tree which give full support upwards to the strength and stability of the tree.

4. Grassroots citizen groups

For thousand and hundred of years most people of the world lived in a one-sector world, governed totally by the state, whatever the format of the state was. And perhaps for hundred years and decades lived in two-sector world, the government or state, and the market or the economy. The last decades of former millenium indicated, that democratization processes in some part of the world, including in Central and Eastern Europe, the awakening of civil society has become an important concept in social sciences. Even Lester Solmon³ indicated, that “*grassroots citizens group awakening, a global association revolution that may prove to be as significant as the rise of the nation state*”. The awakening of the civil society as the third sector at the end of the second millenium was indeed the awakening of a new sector, which undoubtedly will play more important role in the future in promoting community resilience, at *macro*, *meso*, and moreover at the *micro* community levels.

II. CASE STUDY

6. North Sulawesi, Conflict free region⁴.

The province of North Sulawesi, the most northern tip of the island of Sulawesi in Indonesia, is surrounded by the three conflict prone provinces, namely the province of Central Sulawesi, the province of Maluku (Mollucans) and the province of North Maluku. The bloody horizontal conflicts which occurred in the three neighboring provinces has caused serious displaced persons problems. Internally displaced persons problems have not been properly totally solved in the regions.

In 2000, not less than 50.000 displaced persons from the neighbouring province, escaped and occupied the coastal areas of North Sulawesi province, especially the districts of Bitung and Minahasa. Despite the influx of quite large number of displaced persons from the neighbouring provinces, and some provocative measures made by agitators or militants, but people of the regions could firmly keep their

³ Lester Salmon, John Hopkins University, Center for Civil Society Study, *Christian Science Monitor*, 3 February 2000.

⁴ *Profile of WKSBM, Local Community Network, Ministry of Social Affairs, Jakarta 2004.*

harmonious living under a “Unity in Diversity” (*Bhineka Tunggal Ika*) spirit.

Indeed, the community of North Sulawesi has been able to show their capability to respect pluralities and maintain their harmony of living regardless their ethnical and faith or religious background. They could prevent themselves from the influence of the conflict virus which was brought about by militants or provocators, who have been successful in provoking the peoples of the neighbouring provinces.

The secret of the strength to prevent and cope with the provocative measures is the community resilience of the people of North Sulawesi, especially in the two influcted district. The community resilience in that localities within the regions is to be supported by the existence of different local citizen groups which are actively interacting one-to-the other in daily self-help and humanitarian activities. The different local citizen groups intensively promote interactions in daily livelihoods-related activities, and this intensive interaction establish a solid civic networks, not only between individual, but most importantly, is network between community groups.

All the villagers become member of the “village association” or “Syarikat Umum”. At the block level within the village they are members to their respective “block citizen association”, or “rukun warga”. Within each respective block, they set up different groups, such as “Youth groups or Club”, “Young Women Club”. While the religious groups, among the Christians, who belong to the Gereja Masehi Injili Manado (GMIM or the Manado Church Congregation), who constitutes the majority of the local population, they set their grassroots groups or the “Kolom”, or small group of approximately 25 members. The Muslim community, they have their Majlis Taklim or Islamic community groups. Still there are some independent local community groups doing farming activities, small cooperatives and some other voluntary works. It is the dynamic interaction in daily sustainable livelihoods activities among the different local community groups, which promote the cohesiveness among the people. This grassroots civic networks is indeed the fundamental and backbone of the community resilience.

7. Singapore People’s Association⁵.

In 1960 Singapore decided to withdraw from the Malaysian Federation. In fact Singapore was encountering two simultaneous severe threats, that was the economic recession and the communist subversion.

The young, dynamic and visionary Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, hand-in-hand with the people of Singapore, established a grassroots people’ movement, the People’s Association (PA), which is a “from the People, by the People, and for the People’s movement”.

The basis of PA is the neighbourhood, where all people residing at the neighbourhood, are automatically and proactively members of the neighbourhood association. They take part all kind of daily life

⁵ “A better Community of Life, if Best Leaders Come Forward”, *The Straits Times*, Singapore, 26 November 1980.

activities, such as in sports, religious affairs, cultural and arts affairs, youth affairs, vocational training activities, senior citizen and the likes. The neighbourhood associations are then tightened up at higher community levels, and are respectively facilitated with a community center, in order to facilitate and consolidate all the community activities.

As a community-based organizations and movement, PA is indeed an effective mean for political education in making the people of Singapore aware the need to unite and mobilize the multi-ethnic country towards a strong and prosperous Singapore.

PA has proven itself to be an effective community levels forum, and has ever since found successful in promoting effective counter measures to the communist subversion and economic recession. In 1970, ten years after its first establishment, the two common threats to the stability and unity of Singapore have been successfully overcome. PA has established 150 community centers, managed by 1500 managers, 450 volunteers, and were supported by 2000 management committee.

In 1980, PA had been able to collect Singapore \$ 20.9 millions of community funds. This fund, subsidized by the government, were utilized to support the running of the community centers, in promoting prevention and promotional measures to all folks of life in their respective neighbourhoods.

The Singapore PA is indeed a good and successful example, on how the government authorities, and hand-in-hand with the community groups at the grassroots levels, prove themselves capable in managing the grassroots organizations to be the fundamental of effective civil society movement in a modern society. Some could always criticize, that Singapore is a small state island, which very likely encounter no problems in organizing her small number of people. The point is not whether the country is big or small in terms of its territory or number of population, but indeed, the PA concept its self is a simple but smart concept, where the Government and people of Singapore have their strong commitment to fully support the day-to-day dynamic way of life of the people right from the bottom.

8. “*Phantom symptom*” in Aceh post-tsunami.

In her doctorate promotion dissertation on “*Phantom Symptom in Rehabilitation of the Disabled*”⁶, Dr. Wirda, a specialty in medical rehabilitation at Dr. Cipto Mangunkusumo hospital in Jakarta, indicated that in some cases which quite frequently happen, an amputated persons may immediately feels pain or itching somewhere on his finger or any other parts of his or her amputated arm or leg, which should not likely happen, since the arm or leg is gone or amputated already. Or even the amputee thought that their amputated arms or legs were still normally there, so that they may immediately make a gesture or movement as if their arms or legs were there, in responding to any situation affecting themselves. So that they could

⁶ Dr. Wirda Wijoyonitisastro, University of Indonesia, Jakarta, 7 October 2004

stumble or fall down due to the “movement” of the imaginative arms or legs. This is what Dr. Wirda mean with “*Phantom symptom*”.

So it is with the people of Aceh, who are the victims of the tsunami which caused around 220.000 dead and missing toll, and 600.000 displaced persons, to cover 12 coastal-line districts. The displaced persons did lost their lands, their houses, their beloved families and belongings. A wide range of communities who were residing in certain coastal zone were totally wiped out. However, as Acehnese community, who have their strong roots of religion, culture and tradition, they still maintain their strong cultural values and norms, also their community institutions or tradition. What is missing is their community social and cultural infrastructures, and this is the very missing “*phantom symptom*”.

Eight months after the tsunami, the 600.000 internally displaced persons are mostly still residing in poor displaced persons camps or barracks, despite their strong will to move back to their respective former lands to restart their normal livelihoods. This could not easily be done, because the complicated problems of land ownership. Therefore, the local government or Aceh Board for Rehabilitation and Recovery (BRR) has to move very carefully. First thing to be done is mapping of the land through a “participatory rural appraisal” (PRA) approach. The local newspaper, Serambi (means Veranda)⁷ reported, that only one village out of the 98 villages in the provincial capital of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam, Banda Aceh, which has been successfully mapped out through the participatory process. This single phenomenon on the mapping of the single village 8 months after the tsunami, by itself indicates the overall situation: the poorly devastated area, the poor capacity of the local government, the prolonged poor conditions of the displaced persons.

However, the approach done by Aceh BRR through the participatory mapping is just right, because this indicates the awareness to the important role of the grassroots community, and this will be the starting point of a longterm efforts in reawakening the community social infrastructure at the localities.

9. We believe there are so many similar examples of good cases of grassroots community resilience in many other countries beside the two cases from Indonesia and Singapore. We note that Korea, Japan, Cina, Thailand, India and every country has different setting of grassroots community resilience, but similar advantages in promoting prevention and coping mechanism towards all kinds of hazards and threats to the community, such as against the threat of natural and made disasters, against the threats of drugs or psychotropic substances, even for the promotion of community livelihoods.

III. DISCUSSION

10. “*Three legs stool approach*”

⁷ Serambi, Banda Aceh, 27 July 2005.

Using the “*three legs stool approach*”, community resilience is to be supported by its three legs. The top of the leg is the existence of strong norms and values, as the common spiritual ground and forces which encourage people from a certain locality to adopt certain behaviors. The second leg at the bottom is the community institutions, traditions, customs and habits which are living and have been practiced by the people from generation to generation. While the other leg at the bottom is the existing social cultural infrastructures which are the organizational means for people at the locality to organize their day-to-day livelihoods and social activities.

The promotion of community resilience has to cover all the three legs all together. Displaced persons who are residing in barracks or camps for longer duration, have no sufficient infrastructures or organizational means to undertake their day-to-day activities covering all aspects of daily life.

11. Associational civic networks.

Norman Uphoff⁸ indicates that decision making and action of the community take place at ten different levels, starting from (i) *individual*, (ii) *family*, (iii) *primary groups*, (iv) *community groups*, (v) *locality*, (vi) *sub-district*, (vii) *district / municipality*, (viii) *regional / provincial*, (ix) *national*, (x) *international*.

However, Uphoff emphasized, that the most efficient and effective decision making and action take place at the (iii) *primary group*, (iv) *community group*, and (v) *locality* levels. The basis of the decision making and actions process are mostly the community groups.

While Ashutos Varshney⁹, distinguish civic networks into two parts: associational civic engagement, and everyday civic engagement. The former ties are formed in organizational settings such as business association, professional organization, reading clubs, film clubs, sports clubs, festival organizations, trade union and the likes. While everyday forms of civic engagement consists of simple, routine interactions in daily life, such as in a neighborhood setting.

Varshney concluded that associational forms of civic engagement is much more stronger as compared to the everyday civic engagement, in terms of the capacity for providing support in peace building as well as in preventing the outbreak of any communal conflicts.

It could be easily understood, that the associational civic network, which is supported and established by the dynamic interaction of different community groups at locality levels, is basically the social infrastructure which become the back-bone of civil society at grassroots levels. Undoubtedly, associational civic network will be also basic fundamental in building a resilient community.

12. Community preparedness

Community resilience is in general the basic requirement for prevention and promotional measures for any community instability

⁸ Norman Uphoff, “*Local Institutions and Participation for Sustainable Development*”, *International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), Gatekeeper Series No. 31, Ithaca 1992.*

⁹ Ashutos Varshney, “*Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life*”, *Yale University Press, 2002, based on his research on community violence in eight cities in India: Ahmedabad, Bombay, Aligarh, Hyderabad, Meerut, Baroda, Calcutta and Delhi.*

which may be caused by internal or external factors. However, specific community preparedness measures are required, moreover if we are aware of the persistent threat or hazard of natural or man-made disasters.

The simple formula of disaster is:

$$\text{DISASTER} = \text{VULNERABILITY} + \text{HAZARD}$$

Therefore, preparedness could be best done by (i) promoting effective precautionary measures to minimize vulnerability among the people, and (ii) to minimize the likely adverse effects of a hazard, (iii) promoting organizational efficiency to be supported by a solid associational civic engagement.

IV. CONCLUSION

13. Community resilience has its vertical and horizontal supporting components. The vertical component is, that community resilience at grassroots or micro levels, has its reciprocal linkages with the resilience at the meso and macro levels. While the horizontal component is, that community resilience has to be supported by its social and cultural infrastructures, its community institutions and traditions, its common values and norms which encourage the people to specific behaviors.
14. Cohesiveness of the community is the main element of the resilience. While everyday or individual and routine civic engagement is important for day-to-day harmonious living of the people, but associational civic engagement, which is supported by dynamic interaction among the existing community groups or associations, is the best way to promote the cohesiveness.
15. Community resilience needs a viable and sustainable livelihoods, which will further determine the quality of life of the people. The quality of life will further determine the community security, prosperity and stability. The higher the quality of life, the lesser the vulnerability of the people. While the less vulnerable community could build up a strong preparedness measures against every hazard.
16. Community resilience which is supported by different community groups and individuals with different ways of life, is basically also the fundamental of a solid civil society at the meso and macro levels.

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