



## Aceh Community-Based Recovery Initiative

**The Challenge.** The December 26, 2004 earthquake and ensuing tsunami devastated much of coastal Aceh and caused enormous human suffering, prompting an unprecedented humanitarian response. As relief activities move to completion, affected communities, the Government of Indonesia, and the donor community must now address the challenges of long-term recovery. Meeting this challenge demands an effective partnership between local communities and private-sector contributors.

**The Response.** A key requirement in building effective partnerships is identifying and acting on local priorities. Currently working with more than 50 communities—representing a population of 33,000 persons, or 8 percent of the estimated affected population—USAID’s Community-Based Recovery (CBR) initiative facilitates participatory planning to identify local needs and provides grant funding to achieve clear results in the near-term.

CBR places the community at the forefront of the recovery process. Local communities develop initiatives based on their own assessments of their own needs, manage the implementation of their plans and activities, and assess the impact of their actions. This local ownership ensures that CBR initiatives are designed appropriately and will achieve measurable, near-term improvement.

The result is a demand-driven program that assists communities to rehabilitate basic social and economic infrastructure—schools, clinics, markets, irrigation canals, and rice fields—building a foundation for sustainable recovery and development. CBR helps communities move from dependency on relief to self-reliance through viable and sustainable economic activity.

As a critical part of this process, CBR promotes partnership between communities and local government agencies. It also promotes the participation of women, youth, and other vulnerable groups in the decision-making and planning processes and ensures they have equal access to resources to develop their livelihoods.



Acehnese men and women come together to plan their own recovery efforts.

**The Strategy.** To attain optimal impact, CBR selected clusters of two to five communities (roughly 600 families or 2,000 persons per cluster). This clustering approach builds a critical mass at the village level that can help shape governance performance and practices at the subdistrict level. Criteria used to select project villages include the extent of destruction of social and economic infrastructure, the size and composition of the current population, the opportunities for rehabilitating livelihoods, and the willingness of the community and local government agencies to participate and contribute. Furthermore, this strategy effectively allows the private sector to “adopt” a cluster of communities.

CBR facilitators—employed through a grant agreement with Syiah Kuala University in Banda Aceh and trained by CBR specialists—work with community and government leaders to identify and prioritize needs through a process that engages the entire community. Facilitators then work with leaders to design associated activities and prepare management and implementation plans.

CBR awards grants directly to communities to implement priority activities established through the planning process and likely to produce quick, visible impact. At present, USAID resources fund most grant awards, but the participatory planning process also identifies activities that could be funded by other donors and the private sector. Communities also identify activities that they will implement without external assistance.

Finally, CBR facilitators assist communities to manage the implementation of grant-funded activities, using community-led monitoring systems to increase transparency and accountability to the whole village, thereby reducing opportunities for corruption and misallocation of funds.

**The Results.** Initiated in March, CBR has awarded more than \$2.7 million in grants to support recovery in participating communities. These funds support various activities, many of which generate short-term employment in affected communities. More than 210,000 person-days of labor have been created, yielding \$900,000 in cash payments to workers and benefiting 28,000 persons.

Most villages chose as their first activity to clear debris from agricultural land. Knowing that planting a rice crop in May is critical, and that the subsequent harvest would provide food and income for the community, CBR moved quickly to fund the clearing of 1,500 hectares of rice paddy and 37 kilometers of adjoining drainage and irrigation canals.

Activities just completed in Blang Krueng village exemplify the impact of CBR funding. Like many coastal communities, Blang Krueng was all but destroyed by the tsunami. Despite having lost nearly a quarter of its population and all its infrastructure, Blang Krueng's remaining families gathered to make plans to clear their rice paddy of debris in time for planting. Working with CBR facilitators, the community developed a proposal that CBR approved immediately. As a result, 120 farmers cleared debris from 60 hectares of land and 1.2 kilometers of canal, gaining short-term employment and earning \$25,000 in wages—cash they can use to purchase seed, plow fields, and plant a rice crop. In this way, partner communities gain immediate benefit (cash wages) and prepare a foundation for future self-reliance.



Participants in USAID's CBR program clear debris from rice paddy and prepare for planting.

Many partner communities, having lost nearly all public buildings, placed high priority on constructing simple meeting and office facilities. To date, CBR has provided funding for 22 meeting centers where community members can come together to discuss needs, prioritize projects, and prepare action plans. The centers also serve as information posts where people can go for advice and assistance in recovering lost documents such as government-issued identification cards, birth records, and marriage certificates.

**The Future.** CBR is operational, with proven systems and skilled personnel in place to facilitate quick recovery in partner communities. Opportunities exist for private-sector contributors to channel resources to current CBR partner communities and to expand the initiative to new areas quickly and efficiently. With additional resources, CBR can help communities recover their self-reliance through viable and sustainable economic activity.

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