



## PRESS RELEASE

### Tsunami recovery seen through the eyes of the Acehese community

**14 April 2008** – A new research study explores the key factors that helped communities in Aceh to recover and rebuild their lives after the devastating earthquake and tsunami of December 26, 2004.

The study titled “The Acehese Gampong Three Years On” brought together AusAID, UNDP, Oxfam, CRS, the World Bank, Muslim Aid, Syiah Kuala University and the Executing Agency for the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Aceh and Nias (BRR) in a joint effort to find out what worked, what did not work and why in the reconstruction of Aceh.

Importantly, the study looks at the recovery process from the viewpoint of the people who were most affected, the Acehese communities. Villagers from 18 communities affected by the tsunami in the districts of Aceh Barat, Aceh Jaya and Aceh Besar were interviewed in the course of the study. The contribution of the dedicated and competent Acehese social researchers on the ground was praised by the senior researchers who led the research team. The research team is led by senior researchers from Banda Aceh, Jakarta and Australia.

Senior Research Advisor Craig Thorburn said while hundreds of agencies and billions of dollars have been committed to the recovery effort, it was important to understand the response from the Acehese perspective, especially as some communities have recovered more strongly than others.

“We found the successful villages had strong local leadership, village heads who facilitated recovery, and regular meetings that involved the community, including women, in decision-making,” Mr Thorburn said.

“Communities that were able to reunite quickly after the disaster and revived their cultural practices recovered more quickly.”

The study also assessed how well donors’ programs for governance, livelihoods, housing and infrastructure assisted communities.

“Programs that were designed and implemented in collaboration with communities and encouraged their participation facilitated their path to resuming normal lives,” Mr Thorburn said.

“These lessons are not only important for the international community to consider in responding to large-scale disasters in developing countries throughout the world but is also beneficial to the Acehnese community as they continue their journey of recovery”.

The earthquake and tsunami of December 26, 2004 was the largest natural disaster in living memory. Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam was the hardest-hit province in Indonesia with almost 170,000 people killed and over 500,000 people displaced.

“The Acehnese Gampong Three Years On” is available at [www.indo.ausaid.gov.au](http://www.indo.ausaid.gov.au)

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