

NGOs, Post-Tsunami Social Reconstruction and Two Examples from Banda Aceh and Meulaboh, Aceh¹

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Abstrak

Lembaga Swadaya Masyarakat (LSM/NGO) memegang peranan yang penting dalam rekonstruksi dan pemulihan kembali masyarakat Aceh pasca-Tsunami 2004. Studi ini merupakan upaya untuk mengungkap dinamika peranan LSM di Aceh melalui dua LSM (Uplink di Banda Aceh, dan Yayasan Pengembangan Kawasan – YPK di Meulaboh). Dua LSM ini terpilih karena dianggap mewakili dua model LSM yang berbeda, baik dalam pendekatan dan strategi pelayanan dan program ke masyarakat maupun dalam berhadapan dan relasinya dengan otoritas kekuasaan di Aceh. Untuk memahami peranan LSM pasca-Tsunami di Aceh, sejarah perkembangan LSM dan masyarakat sipil di Indonesia maupun latar belakang gerakan sosial di Aceh, khususnya setelah turunnya Suharto, diungkapkan secara agak mendalam dalam studi ini. Dalam kesimpulannya, studi ini menunjukkan kegagalan maupun keberhasilan dalam berbagai program rekonstruksi masyarakat Aceh dari kedua LSM dan menunjukkan “lesson learned” apa yang dapat dipetik dari studi ini, serta tidak kalah pentingnya hal-hal apa yang perlu diteliti selanjutnya.

Kata Kunci: Aceh, NGOs, tsunami, rekonstruksi sosial.

¹This paper is originally a research report prepared for the second IDRC workshop in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, 8-9 December 2007. The author would like to thank to the workshop participants for their comments, especially from the paper discussant, Dr. Sunil Bastian. This report is based on the fieldwork in Banda Aceh and Meulaboh in which the support and contribution of Wardah Hafids and Irwansyah as well as their NGOs staff to the accomplishment of the study are highly appreciated.

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Framing the Study

The non-state actors, representing in the various forms of Non-Government Organizations or NGOs, constitutes important components of civil society movements in the increasing process of political democratization in many parts of the world (Hedman, 2006). In the aftermath of deadly tsunami attack in Aceh, NGOs emerges as indispensable private authorities as they deeply involved in the process of post-tsunami physical and social reconstruction. Yet, more than two years after the disastrous event, a number of surveys generally reported that NGOs are failed in acting in the interest of tsunami's victims and criticized as mostly representing their own interests in the current humanitarian aid industries (Pandya, 2000). Against such a general background on the perceived unfavorable picture of the role of NGOs in the post-tsunami reconstruction, this study aims to look more closely on the ground concerning the activities of NGOs in Aceh. This study selected two examples of presumably different type of NGOs, one in Banda Aceh and the other one in Meulaboh. The selection of these two particular NGOs was based on the observation and interviews to a number of NGOs in Banda Aceh and Meulaboh during a brief visit in those two areas in March 2005, three months after the deadly tsunami attack in Aceh. These two NGOs are considered by many informants from both local NGOs activists and donor communities, as capable, respected and successful in delivering their assistance to the tsunami's victims. These two NGOs also perceived as being able to play as mediator between the donor agencies and the peoples that deserve assistance in recovering their devastated livelihoods.

The study assumes that these two selected NGOs have been successful in their mission in assisting the tsunami's victim because they treated the tsunami's victim not merely as helpless people but more importantly as social actors that are able to mobilize their human and social resources if a conducive social space are provided for them to articulate their interests.³ Apart from their similarities as non-state

³Tsunami's victim's response to external assistance shows striking differences, ranging from dependency to assertive and fully active in gaining the benefits of the humanitarian aids, see research reports by Malathi de Alwis on "A Community of Dependents? Political Activism in Post-Tsunami Sri Lanka", Pradeep Jeganathan on "Philanthropic Aid and Petty Capital in the Wake of the

actors, these two selected NGOs show striking differences in their leadership and organizational characters that presumably resulted in two different responses to the challenging social and political circumstances in the post-tsunami reconstruction in Aceh. In the following table, the leadership features and structural characteristics of the two selected NGOs is presented to show their major institutional contrast.

YPK Meulaboh and Uplink Banda Aceh Compared

YPK Meulaboh	Uplink Banda Aceh
Low profile male leader	High profile female leader
Locally based organization	Jakarta based non-state actor
Accommodating to the state needs	Confrontational, rivaling the state authority
Active before the tsunami	Active in Aceh after the tsunami
Economic, development projects	Social and political engagement
Close to local community networks	Organizing poor and marginalized groups
Consensual in conflict environments	Taking stands in conflict situation

In term of the methodology of collecting information, apart from direct observation, FGD and attending their meetings, the study employed semi structured interview guides to collect the necessary information, from the key informants and resource persons, on the following issues: what kind of assistance to tsunami's victims have been provided in the last two years, and what are the perceived results?; how extensive is the coverage areas?; the organization's profile: divisions, the staff and personnel; how the existing relationships, mechanism and networks with the tsunami's victim have been built?; how the tsunami's victims perceived the respected NGO?; how the existing relationship, mechanism and networks with the local government and its apparatuses have been developed?; how the local government and its apparatuses perceived the respected NGO?; how the existing relationship, mechanism and networks with other NGOs (local, national and international) have been developed?; how other NGOs perceived the respected NGO?; what are the constraints in developing the above

Asian Tsunami: Examples from Sri Lanka's deep South East", and Saiful Mahdi on "The Social Capital and the Reconstruction of Gampong in Aceh".

mentioned relationships?; what are the future prospects of the above mentioned relationships?⁴

This study is expected to contribute into the debate of the current discourse of civil society movements and democratization in the post-Soeharto's Indonesia by looking at the role of NGOs in Aceh. The two case studies also expected to provide more detail assessment on NGOs that are generally failed in representing the interest of the people and societies in which they are operating and often claimed.⁵ The structure of the report is straightforward. The paper consists of three main parts. It begins with a brief overview of existing debate on the discourse on NGOs and civil society movements and locating the debate into the Indonesian context. The problem of translating concepts and terms originating from foreign languages (mainly English) to Indonesian is discussed to understand the contestation in the process localizing global vocabularies. The second part of the paper looks at the development of NGOs and civil society movements both in Indonesia and Aceh, before and after the tsunami. The third part which is resulted from the fieldwork provides the local level pictures of two selected NGOs in the context of post-tsunami social reconstruction process in Aceh. The paper finally links the local processes into the wider national context and hopefully could propose some research implications, both theoretically and practically.

NGOs and Civil Society in Indonesia: Contested Translation

One of the problematic issue in the field of social sciences and humanities in Indonesia concerns with the translation of concept or terminologies from foreign languages into Indonesian language or Bahasa Indonesia. All concept, terminologies and categories used in social sciences and humanities have their own intellectual history and social contexts that should be considered when Indonesian scholars make translation into bahasa Indonesia. As all concepts are embedded in the social and political processes they are always contested in their

⁴These research questions were suggested during the first IDRC funded research planning workshop in Penang, Malaysia, December 2006.

⁵The fieldwork in Aceh divided into two stages. The first stage, about a week, in mid-February 2007, to resume contact and to narrow down the relevant issues to be explore further. The second stage, about three weeks, in April 2007, to collect the necessary and relevant information.

original languages or when translated into the foreign languages. That is what happened when the Indonesian academics and intellectuals debating about “civil society”, “social movements” or “Non-Government Organization”. With regard to the discourse on civil society in Indonesia, Culla (2006) traces the development of the concept and looking at the different interpretation by the different group of intellectuals and activist that engaged in the discourse on civil society movement (Culla, 2006). In his book “Reconstruction of civil society: Discourse and Practice of NGOs in Indonesia”, he comprehensively elaborates the concept of civil society that is become very popular in the late 1980s in Eastern Europe at the end of the cold war. The concept represents social movement that is striving for new political freedom under the repressive communist governments in countries such as Yugoslavia, Hungary and Poland.

The nature of confrontation between society and state is actually very contextual that gives a special character of the civil society movement that might not easily replicate in different political contexts. The civil society movement is born as an antithesis of the state. The uses of the civil society concept in countries like Indonesia therefore need translation given the different political context. In the process of adopting the concept of civil society Indonesian intellectuals and activist, according to Culla (2006: 34-43), show different interpretations according to their intellectual and political tendencies. There are three different tendencies that produce three different civil society reconstructions. The first group, mostly modern “political” Islamic intellectuals, introduced the term “masyarakat madani” as the synonym of the term civil society. “Masyarakat Madani” is coined after the name of the harmonious society of Medinah in the time of prophet Muhammad in which people from all religious backgrounds lived in peace and tolerance. The second group of Islamic intellectuals who perceived themselves as more cultural rather than political prefer to simply translate the term “civil society” into Indonesian term of “masyarakat sipil”.⁶ The third group that is considered as more secular, many of them are lecturers or researchers, prefer to use the original concept in English without translation. A fourth group that is belong to

⁶In the Indonesian context some people often think that “masyarakat sipil” is introduced because what they oppose is the military as the dominant group in Indonesia..

the Indonesian Political Science Association (APII) as well a group from Catholic University in Jakarta proposed the term “masyarakat warga” as the synonym of civil society.

What is experiencing in Indonesia with the translation and reconstruction of the civil society concept is not unique as a UNDP study has shown. “The literature on civil society produced by scholars, development practitioners, activists, and government observers has generated a whole range of definitions” (UNDP Consultations Source Book [http://inweb18.worldbank.org/ESSD/sdvext.nsf/66ByDocName/Consultations.Sourcebook/\\$FILE/ConsultationsSourcebook.pdf](http://inweb18.worldbank.org/ESSD/sdvext.nsf/66ByDocName/Consultations.Sourcebook/$FILE/ConsultationsSourcebook.pdf)). According to UNDP “Civil society encompasses many disparate actors”, and “civil society organizations” or CSOs, “are made up of freely and formally associating individuals pursuing nonprofit purposes in religious bodies, recreation clubs, professional associations, action committees, unions, social movements and so on”. Social movement’s referring to UNDP is therefore a part of “civil society organizations”. “CSOs are part of the self-initiated, voluntary sector and include: Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) formed for mutual benefit or around a common interest; Indigenous Peoples’ Organizations (IPOs) formed for mutual or public benefit, according to shared ethnicity, language, culture or history; Public and Mass Organizations (POs/MOs) formed as federations or networks and usually formally registered; and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), also formally registered”. Following the UNDP definition NGOs is therefore representing the variant of CSOs and is part of “civil society”.

Although social movement according to UNDP is included in CSOs and NGOs is one kind of CSOs, however it should be clear from the outset how actually the relation between social movements and NGOs, as apparently not every NGO represents a social movement. Social movements are mostly studied by sociologists and political scientists. Pakulski (1991) in his book “Social Movements: The Politics of Moral Protest”, for example, began his explanation by the following words: “Social movements are ubiquitous (Jan, 1991). They persist, with varying intensity, in all societies, including the most orderly democratic and totalitarian”. Pakulski further argued that: “While most of such fully institutionalized social forms such as family, formal organization, and occupation are relatively clearly defined, the term ‘social movement’ has been used in a rather loose way with a broad variety of

significations. In everyday language it serves as a description for a range of spontaneous activities including local vigils as well as international revolutions. In the vocabulary of social science it is also vaguely defined as embracing 'a bewildering variety of different groups' and 'various forms of collective action aimed at social re-organization' (Abercombie et al. 1988, p. 227). Blumer (1946, p. 3), for example, defines social movements as a 'collective enterprise to establish a new order of life'; Smelser (1962, p. 313) refers to 'collective attempts to restore, protect or create values (or norms) in the name of generalized belief'; Wilson (1973, p. 8) sees it as an attempt 'to bring about or resist large scale change in the social order by non-institutionalized means'. As social movement carries very broad meanings, according to Pakulski, it become very difficult to define what are actually in it, as he quoted Melucci (1983) who said 'anything that moves is considered as social movements'.

Pakulski however try to narrow down the meaning of social movement, as he argued the following: "recurrent patterns of collective activities which are partially institutionalized, value oriented and anti systemic in their form and symbolism". In his definition Pakulski still include the meaning of social movements as social protest that occurs spontaneously and excluding other issues such as formal organizations, mass political parties, and social clubs as well other social processes such as revolutions, rebellions and mass disobediences. Other social phenomena such as fascist movements in Europe, anti nuclear movements, environmental movements, feminist movements and civil right movements in the West, land and gay right movements are also included in his definition of social movements. Ayerman and Jamison (1991), in what they call the cognitive approach argue that what are important are the cognitive dimensions of the actors that are involved in the social movements (Ayerman and Jamison, 1991). These two sociologists perceived social movements as processes in formation. The study of social movements as a form of activities in which the individuals involve is the process of creating new social identities. Cognitive praxis was used as the term that transformed the individual groupings into social movements that in turn giving a meaning and consciousness.

In Indonesia study on social movements are not as advanced as in the west and confined in limited social science disciplines particularly history and political science. A famous study for example conducted by

Kartodirdjo, a historian, on peasants protest movements in Banten in the late 19th centuries. Recently, social movements are becoming fashionable with the increasing discourse on democratization and civil society in the beginning of 1990s. The increasing discussions among social scientists and intellectuals are related to the expansion of the term from Eastern Europe following the end of the cold war and the flourishing of civil society movements in the former socialist-communist countries. In the foreword of a book entitled “Social Movements: Civil Society Discourses for Democracy”, Sujatmiko (2006) argues that social movement is fluid and its boundaries overlap with political and economic realms. Social movements at a particular time often shifted from one realm of economic to the realm of economic following the change in the social dynamics. Sudjatmiko also argued the important roles of actors in the social movements where in many cases are mostly NGO’s leaders in the particular field. As a social movement, according to Sudjatmiko, NGOs do not possess the mass elements (Sujatmiko, 2006). Sudjatmiko is apparently concurred with Ayerman and Jamison on the idea of New Social Movements that emphasized the important of ideas and goals or as proposed by Ayerman and Jamison as cognitive praxis. According to Sudjatmiko, in the Indonesian contexts, as its fluid characters, the social movement could have the opportunity to play critical roles in democratization as the formal political institutions such as political parties have lost its appeal as the agent of social changes.

While the term civil society is a recent entry into the political discourse in Indonesia, the term social movement or “gerakan sosial” is strongly rooted in the history of Indonesia. As social phenomena, social movements were born at the same time with the development of political movement in response to the repressive policies of the Dutch colonial government. As mentioned earlier, Kartodirdjo (1966), studied peasants protest movement at the late 19th century in Banten (West Java). Kartodirdjo’s study has shown that social movement have deeply rooted in the Indonesian society long before the wave of modern nationalist movement began to sweep the educated urban middle class in the beginning of the 20th century. Within the Indonesian political context social movement can not be separately from the nationalist movement and the independent struggle from the Dutch colonialism. It is very interesting that after independence from the Dutch was achieved social movement have become less political and manifested in the

various forms of social movement that aimed to transform the society into more “developed” and “modern” – socially and economically. It is therefore very likely that social movement have become very fit with the recent concept of civil society movements that is less political in nature. NGOs movement that began in the early 1970s and later expanding as social institutions and claimed itself as non-governmental organization undoubtedly also representing the idea of social movement.

A foreign observer (Lonula, 2002), commenting on the rapidly growing phenomena of NGOs in Indonesia said the following: “Wherever one goes in Indonesia, one will come upon non-government organizations (NGOs). They are of all kinds and sizes: one-person offices, young activists working from home, giant offices, and training centers on the beach. NGOs are among a wide range of organizations that stand between the household and the state - they are part of 'civil society'. They do community development, support the rights of minorities like indigenous peoples and women, resist economic globalization, and much more. To make the concerns of citizens heard by state power, NGOs are in front” (Lonula, 2002). Mansour Fakih, a scholar and NGO activist (as quoted by Lounela, 2002) divided NGOs in Indonesia into three broad spectrums. The first group is NGOs that adjusted themselves to the need and demand of the state. This group of NGOs is closely and uncritically participated in the various kinds of state’s development programs and project without having its own vision or agenda. The second groups are NGOs that are making an effort to change the political situation by strengthening the civil society. The second group however also avoids challenging the developmental state’s ideology and its political hegemony. The third, that are minority groups among NGOs, according to Fakih, are NGOs that are striving for political change and resisting the state’s domination. In some instances they are practicing participatory research methodologies.⁷ The relation between the state and civil society in Indonesia is perhaps correctly

⁷This third category of NGOs describes as “Critical NGOs (LSM Kritis)” by Meuthia Ganie-Rochman and Rochman Achwan in their article “Inclusion and Exclusion: NGOs and Critical Social Inquiry (Inklusi dan Eksklusi: LSM dan Pengetahuan Sosial Kritis)”, in Vedi Hadiz and Daniel Dhakidae, eds.(2006) *Social Science and Power in Indonesia*. Jakarta-Singapore: Equinox Publishing. See also Mansour Fakih (2004) *Civil Society for Social Transformation* (Masyarakat Sipil untuk Transformasi Sosial)

proposed by Aspinall (2004: 91) as follows: "...if civil society is to emerge, it also requires a *state*, in the sense of a distinct set of state institutions and political interactions that have separated themselves from the world of political party and associational life. Indonesia's New Order was in few senses civil. It was authoritarian, violent, and manipulative. Yet it was precisely in counterpoint to this state that in Indonesia civil society began to emerge" (Aspinall, 2004).

As discussed briefly earlier, social movements after 1970s are more secular, less political and developmentalistic in character while the previous movements were more political and ideological and in some instances related to the religious and spiritual movements, such as millenary movement found among peasant protest movements studied by Kartodirdjo in Banten (West Java). The new generation of social movement also very limited in its mass followers, and tend to be very elitist, representing a fragmented reaction to the Soeharto's New Order state's political repression. The social movements after 1970s are mostly articulated by the urban-educated-intellectuals and activists that inspired by their counter part in the Western-liberal-industrialized countries, such as in North America and Western Europe. The mushrooming of NGOs movement after 1970s in Indonesia can not be isolated with the growing important role of NGOs in the West. The expansion NGOs political influence have transgress the state borders, as many NGOs in the West have seen the negative impacts of development in the poor countries often resulted from the economic exploitation by western capitalists and industries.

The term NGO for instance is a direct usage from English coinciding with the emerging transnational non-governmental movements (TNA) in liberal democracy in North America and Western Europe (Piper and Uhlin, 2003). The development of NGO in Indonesia have strongly influenced by the interest of NGOs in the west, in some cases related to the political parties closely associated with Christian's religious groups.⁸ The paralelism between NGOs movement in the west and Indonesia clearly shown by the establishment of INGI (Inter-NGO Conference on IGGI Matters) in 1985 that constitutes a coalition of

⁸The creation of one of the oldest NGOs in Indonesia, LP3ES (Lembaga Penelitian, Pendidikan dan Pengembangan Ekonomi dan Sosial), in the early 1970s for example was financially supported by FNS, a German big NGO closely associated with Liberal Democratic Party – FDP.

Indonesian NGOs and International NGOs from Donor Countries (IGGI – The Inter-Governmental Group on Indonesia) that provide development's aid to Indonesia's Soeharto New Order government since the early 1970s. There is a strong concern from the civil society in the donor countries about the way development was carried out in Indonesia that is perceived as often too repressive and neglecting the real need of the people in the grass root level. INGI is aimed to be a development watchdog and to voice the critical monitoring assessment of the development in Indonesia that partly is paid by the tax payer money from the people in the donor countries.

In 1990 IGGI that always lead by the representative of Dutch government was dissolved as President Suharto irritated by Jan Pronk, the Minister of International Development of Dutch government who publicly criticizes the conduct of authoritarian development policies of the Indonesian government. Afterward, a new consortium of donor government was created, under the name of CGI (Consultative Groups on Indonesia). Following the dissolve of IGGI, INGI also dissolve, apparently as the pressure from the Soeharto government was increased and the NGOs activists then created a new body in response to the political situation, called INFID (International NGOs Forum on Indonesia Development). The interconnectedness of civil society movements as representing by NGOs in the south and the north countries should be seen as a natural process as communication technology is rapidly developing that nurtured the common cause and concerns of the global misery that cannot be isolated from the increasing gap of the people's welfare between the north and south countries. In this context we have witnesses the increasing important of various social and political forums, such as the World Social Forum (WSF) as representing the transnational civil society movement in response to the global development problems.

Social Movements in Aceh

Moving from the discussion on social movement in Indonesia and civil society movements at the global level to the situation in Aceh is interesting as Aceh has been historically a place where global connection occurs. The Acehnese are people who always transgress the territorial administrative borders that make the cosmopolitan characters of the Acehnese. The Acehnese, for political and economic reasons, can be found today in various places in the world as Acehnese diasporas –

in Jakarta, Malaysia, Europe, Canada and USA. Discussing the Acehese society from any of its aspect is perhaps impossible without recognizing their cosmopolitan features – that is distinctively different from other cultural groups in Indonesia (Avoinus, 2007). The cosmopolitan features of the Acehese suggest that any analysis on the Acehese society should consider its interconnectedness with the outsidess world. Through their social networks, the Acehese have developed their own significant social structures and systems that in turn provide the basis for their resilience in responding to the external pressures and challenges (Reid, 2004). In the narrow geographic sense the Acehese are people who resided in the province of Aceh Nangroe Darussalam (NAD) without considering their ethnic and collective cultural identities. This is very important as the people in Aceh are very diverse in the ethnic and cultural makeup and far from homogenous as sometimes commonly perceived by the non-Acehnese.⁹

The high incidence of population movement between Aceh and the outside world through the history suggest that the Acehese is a hybrid society as intermarriage has long been a common practice between locals and migrants from other places in Southeast Asia, China, Europe and the Middle East; especially in the coastal areas. The coastal areas of Aceh particularly in the urban centers constitute the melting pot of different cultures and civilization where giving and borrowing through trading and religious teaching is common. Islam interestingly is always the dominant religion for the Acehese. Islam has been embedded within the Acehese society and has become one of the strong characters apart from its cosmopolitanism. The hinterland of Aceh however still predominantly agricultural and less exposed to the

⁹The population of Aceh province is estimated 4 millions divided into different ethnic groups in which the Acehese comprises around 50 per cent and another 50 per cent consist of Javanese (15 per cent), and the rest divided into minority groups (Singkil, Simelue and others). The Acehese mostly resided in the coastal areas of the district of Biereun, Aceh Besar, Aceh Utara, Aceh Barat and Aceh Selatan and two major cities (Banda Aceh and Sabang). The Javanese scatterely inhabited in the district close to North Sumatra Sementara, such as Aceh Tamiang, Aceh Timur, Aceh Tenggara, Gayo-Lues, Aceh Tengah and Bener Meriah. The Singkil concentrated in Kabupaten Singkil, and the Simelue mostly in Simelue Island. The detail information on population of Aceh see Evi Nurvidya Arifin, Aris Ananta and Tiodora Hadumaon Siagian, “Demography and Politics in the New Aceh”, in *Masyarakat Indonesia*, Vol. 33, No. 1, 2007.

outside worlds. The education level also higher in urban areas, particularly Banda Aceh, Lhok Seumawe and Meulaboh, compare to the hinterland and mountainous regions. In the past, social movements always related to the religion and under the patronage of traditional Islamic leaders (ulamas) and reflected among others as reflected in the expansion of Islamic boarding schools (Yunis, 2000). The social movements in Aceh have a strong tendency for populism and widely have mass support based. The traditional social movements have influenced the more recent and modern form of social movements that often more secular in their characters. After independence the Acehnese has become more integrated into the national development in Jakarta and in broadly from Java. The influence of the development of NGOs movement in Jakarta and other big cities in Java after 1970s occurs as many younger generation of the Acehnese attending schools in Java, especially in Jakarta and Yogyakarta.¹⁰

The development of social movements in Indonesia in which NGOs are the main actor have been fluctuated according to the changes in the national political context and development of NGOs in the West. The ideal and issues that are advocated often originated from the West and transferred to Indonesia – of course after adjusted into the Indonesian situation. Issues related to the marginalization process of the people from development project that in many instances conducted in a top down approach and centralistic way often become the top issues in the agenda of the NGOs activists in the West. Vulnerable groups such as the poor, minority and isolated groups, women and children; are become the target of assistance programs although emphasize is given more on economic rather than political dimensions. Various social issues that are more political and ideological only began to get attention and be given important priorities in the early 1990s. Human right violations also one of the emerging issues for the NGOs and an entry to demand from the state for a wider political public space for people at the grass root level that in many cases has become victim of top-down and repressive development policies. The NGOs agenda since the early 1990s no longer to confine only on the development economic issues but expanded further to include organizing and mobilizing people to

¹⁰Hasan Tiro, the famous leader of GAM, for example, was educated from Indonesian Islamic University (Universitas Islam Indonesia) in Yogyakarta in the early 1950s.

articulate their political and civil rights that previously suppressed. The development of more class based NGOs that focusing their activity on the problems of the urban poor for example as represented by UPC (Urban Poor Consortium) should be seen in this light.

The collapsed of the Soeharto's New Order regime in May 1998 open the new political opportunity for social movement in Indonesia as well as in Aceh. NGOs and civil society began to repositioning themselves in this abrupt political shift where follow by the amendment of the constitution, the new law of political parties and the general election. As the political space open political parties are mushrooming and provide wider channels for the people to articulate their political aspirations.¹¹ In this situation what previously become the jurisdiction of NGOs to articulate then shifted into political parties making NGOs lost its traditional political roles. NGOs have to repositioning its political stand and some activist decided to join the political parties or even created new political party. As shown by Hedman (2006) in the case of civil society in the Philippines, the interconnection of civil society and post-Soeharto political changes also complex and generating many queries on its roles in the new political landscapes. Mikaela Nyman (2006), based on her short field research in 2002, however optimistically argued that civil society will likely play more important political roles amidst greater challenges in the future democratization process in Indonesia (Nyman, 2006).¹²

Under Soeharto's New Order social movements in Aceh were severely restricted as Aceh was perceived as a region that content a group of arm secessionist movement. While Aceh have contributed substantial national revenue particularly from its oil the Acehnese was strongly controlled and free movement was curtailed. While the arms conflict between military and resistance movement led by Daud Beureuh in the 1950s principally caused by religious-ideological differences, arms conflict in the New Order period is an outcomes of an

¹¹Prior and after the toppling down of Soeharto from power in 1998, the term civil society and pro-democracy movements (*gerakan pro-demokrasi*) have become identical particularly as shown in their usage in the Indonesian mass-media that widely reported their important roles in the political changes during these tumultuous eras.

¹²See Mikaela Nyman, 2006, *Democratizing Indonesia: The Challenges of Civil Society in the Era of Reformasi*. Copenhagen: The NIAS Press.

economic exploitation by the central government that perceived as depriving the Acehnese. Hasan Tiro that established Free Aceh Movement (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* or *GAM*) in 1976 taking arms against the central government as in his view Aceh should be independent state from what he perceived as the Indonesian-Javanese colonialism that like the Dutch only interested in exploiting the rich natural resources and neglected the Acehnese.¹³ The existence of arms rebellion group in Aceh precipitated the central government to unofficially declared Aceh as the military operation region (*Daerah Operasi Militer* or *DOM*). Under this military doctrine Aceh have been practically cut from the outside world and civil society movement have been strongly suppressed.

The flourishing of NGOs networks after the fall of Soeharto

Under the repressive Soeharto's government civil society groups that intended to articulate the voice of the people have acted very carefully and often clandestine. The interconnections of underground and cautious civil society group activities with the GAM activities easily instigated the military to perceive civil society movements as part of or an organ of the GAM. The harsh persecution from the military to the NGOs activist that is perceived as critical to the state's policy strongly influences the nature of civil society movement in Aceh. The clandestine and underground network of NGOs not only operated within Aceh but become widely extended throughout Indonesia and the outside world. The collapsed of Soeharto from power in May 1998 provides the momentum for the civil society movements in Aceh to begin their new episode in history of Aceh. The previously clandestine activity now coming to the surface and more open communications between NGOs in Aceh and the national NGOs flourished and vibrant. The student movement and campus based organization that play critical roles in toppling Soeharto has become also important component of civil society movement in Aceh.

In the following episode after the collapsed of the Soeharto student organization show their resilience and wide networking with their fellow student in other cities in Indonesia. SMUR (*Solidaritas*

¹³For a comparison, in Sri Lanka, Tamil Tiger leader Velupillai Prabhakaran formed the Tamil New Tigers (TNT) in 1972 which four years later (1976) becomes the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

Mahasiswa Untuk Rakyat or Student Solidarity for the People) is perhaps one of the campus based organization that has been very active before and after Soeharto was collapsed. Another campus based organization that also play important role as representing the civil society moment in Aceh was SIRA (Sentral Informasi Referendum Aceh or Central Information for Aceh Referendum) that become more prominent after the collapsed of Soeharto. As a public space is opening in Aceh, the long undercurrent social movements that link local activist to the Acehnese diasporas further shaping an agenda for Aceh. These NGOs that have been very active under the surface during the Soeharto's period mostly focus their activities on issues related to human right violations and conflicts. The arms conflict that rampant in Aceh become the source of humanitarian concerns as many civilians become the victims of conflict and experiencing human right abuse and violations, both by the Indonesian military and the GAM military wing. The Acehnese exiles most notably Hasan Tiro and its close followers play important role in bringing the intention of the outside world to the humanitarian situation in Aceh.

Many NGOs that work in the human right and conflict issues created and grown in relation to the active role of international humanitarian NGOs, such as IOM, UNHCR, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) and CARDI, that operate in Aceh long before the collapse of Soeharto. These three international NGOs are allowed to operate by the military authority in Aceh to carry their humanitarian missions among others in providing humanitarian aids and trauma counseling activities for the conflict victims. As the activity is related with the victim of conflicts NGOs are easily perceived by the military as sympathetic to GAM. Apart from these human right oriented NGOs more developmental oriented NGOs is however always become important part of the civil society movements in Aceh. This development oriented NGOs are perceived as more accommodated to the various state's development programs in Aceh. The traditional and religious oriented NGOs are also always an important part of the civil society movements in Aceh.

Following the step down of Soeharto, the short transitional government of President B.J. Habibie (May 1998-July 1999) have perceived as a remarkably success in implementing political reforms. It is during his presidency that new laws on political system, general election and decentralization have been drafted and implemented. The

rising of Abdurrahman Wahid as parliamentary elected president show further development as Wahid has strongly pushed the military out of politics. Abdurrahman Wahid has begun to make a breakthrough by approaching directly GAM leaders. It is also during Abdurrahman Wahid presidency that civil society movements have strongly mobilized to find solution for the long suppressed demand for more political freedom. In 10-11 November 2000 under the leadership of SIRA a mass rally was organized in Banda Aceh to demand a referendum for the future of Aceh. Surprisingly though the central government under Abdurrahman Wahid unprepared to accommodate the demand of the Acehnese for having a referendum as following the rally the head of SIRA, Muhamad Nazar was persecuted and jailed after brought to court. The fall of Abdurrahman Wahid from his presidency after the parliament impeached him, open the door for Megawati as the president. It was during Megawati presidency that the military have reasserted and resuming its control in Aceh and immediately pushed back the civil society movements (Aguswandi, 2004). The return of repressing climate under Megawati presidency once again forced the civil society in Aceh to rely their outside networks. A substantial number of civil society movements abroad, mostly student organizations have been grown rapidly during this period.

A worldwide NGOs network for Aceh developed and once again show the cosmopolitan characters of the Acehnese people. The following are the worldwide Aceh NGOs network: International Forum for Aceh – IFA (New York, USA), Aceh Australia Association (Australia), *Keluarga Mahasiswa Aceh Cairo* – Aceh Student Organization in Cairo (Egypt), Aceh Solidarity in Europe (Germany), *Pelajar Mahasiswa Kekeluargaan Tanah Rencong* – Tanah Rencong Student Organization (Japan), Support Committee for Human Rights in Aceh (SCHRA) and Tanah Rincong Student Association (TARSA) – both in Malaysia. Inside Aceh a number of NGOs coalition also created: *Koalisi NGO HAM Aceh* (Human Right NGOs Coalition), *Forum Lembaga Swadaya Masyarakat Aceh* (Aceh NGOs Forum). In Jakarta, solidarity organization for Aceh also widely flourished: *Front Aksi Reformasi Mahasiswa Islam Daerah Istimewa Aceh (FARMIDIA)* – Aceh Islamic Student Action Reform Front, *Forum Solidaritas Untuk Aceh (FORSOLA)* – Solidarity Forum for Aceh, *Solidaritas Mahasiswa Untuk Kasus Aceh (SOMAKA)* – Student Solidarity for Aceh. The flourishing of Aceh civil society movements under the repressive and authoritarian state seemingly

resembled the vibrant development of civil society movements in the former totalitarian state of Eastern European countries following the end of the cold war in the late 1980s.

The situation in Aceh suddenly change following earthquake and tsunami on 26 December 2004 that widely destroyed the settlement in the coastal areas from the city of Singkil in the south to Sigli in north coasts. The tsunami also wipes out Nias Island, Phuket in the southwest coast of Thailand, the coast of Sri Langka, Andaman Islands and east coast of Africa. In Aceh, Banda Aceh, Meulaboh and Calang are among the highest casualties, 127 thousands people were estimated killed and more than 30 thousands are missing, Half a million people are forced to leave their settlement as refugees (Internally Displaced Persons or IDPs) (Hedman, 2005). The magnitude of the Aceh casualties has prompted President Yudhoyono who just only three months in office to declare Aceh disaster is open to the outside humanitarian helps. The president decision to open Aceh for the world humanitarian assistance marks the beginning of new episode in Aceh history and cracked the Megawati policy closure of Aceh. In 18th of May 2005 president Yudhoyono change the emergency status of Aceh from the military to civil emergency.

It was estimated that more than 300 international NGOs alone began to engage in various rehabilitation and reconstruction projects. Besides through the formal governmental channels, both military and civilians, informal and unofficial networks of NGOs have profoundly important. The involvement of international NGOs in the post-tsunami social reconstruction activities creates an open public space for the local and national NGOs to interact and collaborate with their global partners. It is already known that to be able to work in Aceh international NGOs need social networks and the local counterparts as language and cultural barriers could be hampered even if they only want to carry out very technical humanitarian assistances in nature. The various form of NGOs coalition constitutes the available local counterparts for the international NGOs that urgently needed institutional channels for their humanitarian emergency aids.¹⁴

¹⁴A good example of overview on the problem of coordination between local and international NGOs in post-tsunami Aceh, see Irine Gayatri "Post-Disaster Relief: The Experience of Aceh", in *Masyarakat Indonesia*, Vol 33., No. 1, 2007

Two Examples: Uplink in Banda Aceh and YPK in Meulaboh

Under the assumption that NGOs represents the civil society movement, two NGOs are selected as examples to describe of how social movements in Indonesia interconnected into the post-tsunami social reconstruction process. In this rather speculative undertaking, the linkage between what is happening in such a limited and locally based activity of NGOs with a broader political and social changes in Indonesia, are preliminary explored. In this study, the two selected NGOs interestingly born almost at the same time, created by concerned Indonesian activists and intellectuals during the peak seasons of pro-democratic movements around the collapsed of Soeharto in 1998. The selection of the two particular NGOs was conducted after an observation has been done to a reasonable number of NGOs in Aceh and Meulaboh. An extension of Jakarta-National NGOs in Banda-Aceh was selected, while in Meulaboh local NGOs was selected. Uplink in Banda Aceh an NGO that is an extension or branch of UPC (Urban Poor Consortium), a national umbrella organization in Jakarta, is selected as this NGO primary concern is on the livelihood of the urban poor. In Meulaboh, YPK (*Yayasan Pengembangan Kawasan*) was selected, after considering that this NGO have a relatively long record on the economic empowerment of the local people in the coastal areas of Meulaboh. Both Uplink and YPK have been very active during the emergency, rehabilitation and the post-tsunami reconstruction periods as well as after the successful signing of MOU Helsinki peace agreement between Indonesian Government and GAM.

Uplink as an extension of UPC in Jakarta established its existence in Banda Aceh two weeks after tsunami destroyed the coastal areas of Aceh. In contrast with other more developmentalistic NGOs that focusing their assistance in the physical reconstruction, Uplink strategically targeted the social and non physical reconstruction. In their activities to assist the urgent need of the tsunami victims on food and medicines – Uplink began to give attention to the social aspects of the tsunami victims, particularly on the social organization as the important social response of the tsunami victims to the various external assistance and political environment in general. After considering the need to organize the tsunami victim, Uplink staffs that are capable of organizing the community was pulled to strengthen the rehabilitation project in Banda Aceh. They are selected from several major of UPC particularly from Jakarta, Surabaya, Makasar and Yogyakarta. Uplink arrived in

Banda Aceh few days after tsunami devastating the coastal cities in Aceh.

An unprecedented political momentum occurs for Uplink when the local authority announcing the policy on the buffer zones on January 5th 2005. The local government wants the two kilometer from the coastlines should be emptied for settlement and any other activities as the buffer zones in anticipating the future tsunami attacks. The local government announcement on their policy to vacant the coastal areas for the buffer zones have created a panic as most of the tsunami victims want to return to their villages that mostly located in the coastal areas of proposed buffer zones. It was during this confusing time as the tsunami victims feel abandoned by the local authority that Uplink takes a decisive action to assist the local people in organizing their responses to organize to the local authority policy on the buffer zones.

The government plan to evict people from their coastal villages is become the critical moment for Uplink as people began to resist to the plan and need outside support to organize their struggle to stop the government's eviction plan. In the meantime Uplink also began to design the alternative way to the government seemingly unworkable reconstruction plan. Uplink has been successful in mediating between the people that need to be empowered and the government and the donor's agencies that need a mediator to start the reconstruction of the coastal villages.¹⁵ After several meetings with the leaders of the local people with assistance of Uplink a tsunami victim's organization was established. The name of the organization is *Jaringan Udee Beusaree*

¹⁵The actual fieldwork slightly changed from the original plan due to my conflicting schedule in 2007. The main field work was completed in April 2007, one week long, both in Meulaboh and in Banda Aceh. This visit constitutes the first fieldwork to resume contact to YPK in Meulaboh and Uplink in Banda Aceh. The timing of the fieldwork coincidentally occurs at the same time to the completion of housing construction stage in the respected communities. In Banda Aceh, I also able to talk with Wardah Hafids and her staff and visited some villages in Lam Teh and Lam Tengoh that receive assistance in reconstructing their houses. In Meulaboh, during the visit I have the opportunity to talk with Irwansyah and his staff in YPK office and visiting one of YPK community in Lhok Bubon, about one hour drive from Meulaboh. Lhok Bubon is a fishery community that already returns home as the houses has been built for them by various NGOs and foreign agencies. I also collecting many YPK activity reports and making interviews to the member of village communities in Lhok Bubon.

(*JUB*), a local language meaning Living Together Network. The JUB was formally declared on 7 March 2005 where 14 villages decided to be the members of this social organizational network. Uplink has three strategies in assisting the tsunami victims through JUB, namely organizing, advocating and networking strategies. Within two years the member of JUB has reached 23 villages with around 5507 individuals as members.

YPK is a local NGO that is established on 22 February 2001 by a number of local academics and activists who are concerned with the improvement of local economic welfare and environment in Meulaboh. YPK was created with the principle of independent and not based on any religious, gender, race or political ideology. The principle that is adopted reflect the awareness of its founders on the need to develop a clear strategy of social, economic and cultural development in order to avoid uncertainties following the abrupt demise of the Soeharto's New Order regime. The founders of YPK believe that local people should be assisted to articulate their economic and political interest in order to create a more accountable development. They realized that the low level of participation is partly caused by the limited information and the managerial skill that could be gathered by the local people. YPK is therefore established to assist the local social institutions that could eventually strengthened the local articulation in the area of social and economic development. The task that PK is taken is long-term strategy to empower the local social institutions in order to play a role as agent of social changes and economic development.

Very different circumstances with YPK that is a locally based and already in Meulaboh before the tsunami, Uplink arrived in Banda Aceh as an outsider that is attracted by the humanitarian call to assist the tsunami victims. Although the villages in which YPK operated was not free from arms conflict between GAM and the Indonesian military the village institutions (gampongs) are generally still intact and functioning. Such a situation obviously provides YPK a conducive social environment to conduct their activities before the tsunami. The intimate social relationships of YPK and the local community they assisted is a very important strategic position in comparison to many other NGOs that established after the tsunami. The other NGOs in many instances have to start from the scratch as also experienced by Uplink in Banda Aceh. Uplink, recognizing this constraint decided to pull their experienced CO (Community Organizers) Staff to Banda Aceh in order

to quickly making a rapport with the tsunami victims. It was very clear here then that Uplink relies and depend its operation to their CO staffs and YPK on the CD (Community Development) staffs. Another different between Uplink and YPK are on their relationship to the state and particularly to the local authorities. YPK is generally positioning itself as partners of the state while Uplink tends to positioning itself as rival. Uplink often took the risk in confronting the authority by mobilizing mass protest to pressure the state and in articulating their demands.

At its final stage, Uplink that involved in the housing construction project has officially handing over 3,331 houses to the communities. A big ceremony was organized by Uplink and JUB (*Jaringan Udeep Beusaree*) to mark the event in which hundreds of people in the respected villages were attending. Interestingly, Banda Aceh dignitaries such as the Head of BRR (Badan Rekonstruksi dan Rehabilitasi or Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Board), Kuntoro Mangkusubroto, and the newly elected Aceh Governor, Irwandi Yusuf also present. The ceremony also attended by the two main donors for Uplink, namely Development and Peace (Canada) and Misereor (Germany). The event proves the respectable position of Uplink and its achievement in the post-tsunami recovery, nationally and internationally.

Uplink basically adopted three strategies in its activity in the post-reconstruction processes in Banda Aceh: organizing, advocacy and networking. Organizing strategy is aimed to mobilizing and increasing political awareness of people at the grassroots level to actively involve in any public decision making in their village and the society. Advocacy strategy is aimed to strengthen and empowered the people's sovereign right to stay in their village and to protect their land and cultural rights. Networking strategy will provide the people at the grassroots level with access to other actors in different villages in order to develop inter village communication and organization. In the words of Wardah Hafids the approach is "a people's driven reconstruction". Uplink perceives the process of reconstruction in Aceh not only in the form of physical but social and cultural. The Uplink reconstruction plan is design to revive the village as a social and cultural organization.

Uplink labels their reconstruction project as people's driven reconstruction. What is reconstructed according to Wardah Hafids, the

Uplink director, is the whole aspect of the people's livelihood (*kehidupan*) – the economy, the society, the environment as well the spirituality - aiming ultimately to create eco-villages or *gampoeng loen sayang*. In this efforts emphasis is given to reviving (*menenun kembali*) the social fabrics (social cohesion and social relation) of the Acehnese. The three standard steps of reconstruction were also followed by Uplink: (1) Emergency (*Tanggap Darurat*) in which emphasis is given to provide basic logistics (medicine, food, genset for electricity) from January 2005 to March 2005; (2) Building temporary shelters (*rumah sementara*); (3) Building the permanent settlements (houses, public infrastructures, clean water, *meunasah* – small mosque, and dyke).

The principle different of the Uplink reconstruction approach is it's emphasizing on the people's human resources strengths. Uplink, apart from strengthening the people organizational capacity through *JUB* also created "Tim Pembangunan Kampung or Village Development Team and "Kontraktor Kampung" or Village Contractors. These two people's managerial and technical mechanisms are given the authority to conduct the actual physical reconstruction. Uplink also able to obtain technical assistance from a group of architect from Gujarat, India, who have successfully develop a particular approach in working together with the people in designing and constructing housing that is not only technically resistance to earthquake but also very much participatory in the processes. The Gujarat Architects with the financial assistance of Misereore from Germany to work in the housing reconstruction in the aftermath of 2001 earthquake in Gujarat. In Banda Aceh, the people who want to rebuild their houses since the beginning are consulted by the Uplink staff with regard to expenses and the design of the house. In the constructing process the owner could be the developer themselves.

As mentioned earlier on 7 March 2005 Uplink has successfully supported the previously scattered people to form an organization which is called "Jaringan Udeep Beusaree" meaning "Living Together Network". The organization later calls "Jaringan Udeep Beusaree" or "Udeep Beusaree Networks". At the end Uplink is able to work with 23 coastal adjacent villages in Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar districts. The establishment of "Jaringan Udeep Beusaree" or *JUB* marked the beginning of the process of reconstruction of houses principally by the people themselves. Uplink provides the technical assistance for the people in reconstructing their houses. Another important factor that

makes Uplink is able to maneuver is the relative freedom they enjoy as Uplink have become the major recipients for two international “Catholic” donor agencies: Misereor from Germany and Development and Peace (D and P) from Canada. The role of Wiladi Budiharga, Wardah Hafids husband, with his long experience as Indonesian liaisons for many major foreign Catholic donor agencies is very crucial in supporting Uplink activities in their projects in Banda Aceh. With the trust from these two major donors Uplink have been able to concentrate on its reconstruction project without much difficulty as experience by other NGOs that every times have to beg and to compete with the other NGOs to get funds from the donor agencies.

YPK as a non-profit organization working in the area of people’s empowerment and environment issues. YPK will assist the community without considering the people’s race, gender, religion and political background. The founder and current leader Teuku Irwansyah, born in Meulaboh in 1969 is an agriculture engineer. Although become full NGO activist he still employed as public servant in the Agriculture District Office in Meulaboh. The creation of YPK, like other post-Soeharto’s NGOs, reflects the rising expectation of civil society organization of the open political space in the demise of Soeharto’s authoritarian regime. The founders of YPK belief that the community needs assistance to revitalize their social institutions heavily suppressed under the old political regime. The local-traditional institutions is therefore become the main target for YPK to empowered the people particularly in Aceh Barat district. The assumption on the important of people’s right to decide what is the best for their life is important especially in the context of Aceh that is for so long has been under military surveillance. Advocacy, strengthening social and economic local capacity, democracy and gender empowerment, have become the focus of YPK programs. The poor people in the district of Aceh Barat and Nagan Raya become the YPK target groups.

YPK is a member of some NGOs national coalition networks, such Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia (WALHI) a coalition of environmental NGOs, Aceh NGO Forum, and Aceh Human Rights NGOs coalition. As a local NGOs YPK has become an important partner for a number of national NGOs who has projects in Meulaboh even before the tsunami. In 2000-2001 YPK for example actively assisted WALHI in issues related to managing natural resources by the local communities. In 2002 YPK work with CARDI (the Consortium

for Assistance and Recovery towards Development in Indonesia) in providing humanitarian assistance for internal refugees (IDPs) as caused by arms conflict in the sub-districts of Kuala and Kaway XVI, Meulaboh. Between 2002-2003 in partnership with ICMC, YPK involved in providing humanitarian assistance for the female household heads, also as the victims of Aceh conflicts. In 2004 YPK actively assisting UNDP for voter education. In the aftermath of the tsunami attack YPK closely working with, among others, Aceh NGO Forum, Aceh Kita Foundation and WALHI on emergency response, recovery and rehabilitation projects for the tsunami victims. YPK also assisting Yappika (Jakarta based NGO coalition) to conduct social mapping in October 2005. Apart from assisting Jakarta and national based NGOs YPK also directly involved with international donor agencies in various post-tsunami reconstruction projects, among others with Asia Foundation, ADF and Heifer on various tsunami's victims recovering and empowerment projects. With GEF/SPG-DEA-SSGF and Oxfam on Livelihood Recovery Projects and currently working with ADF on strengthening local capacity and the improvement of public service delivery in the district of Aceh Barat for a period from March 2007 to October 2008.

The non-confrontational approach and maintain good relationship with the state and the donor agencies and consistently focusing its program activities on issues related to agriculture and rural development, have earned YPK a highly respected and reliable locally based NGOs partner organization for many international donors. In Meulaboh areas YPK has been praised by observers as committed local NGOs which are well known on its integrity, for example, in always rejecting any offer for projects that are not relevance to its focus and competence. While many locally based NGOs in Meulaboh rush to grab any projects on housing construction that widely open after the tsunami, YPK apparently stand alone in persistently not to get involved in any physical reconstruction projects. Teuku Irwansyah, the director of YPK, is very aware that engaging his organization into a more physical construction works will only strain and possibly ruin the YPK main strength and competence in the field of social and economic development.

The two selected NGOs, YPK and Uplink, apart from their differences in their political ideology and in practicing development, shows striking similarities in their strong social commitment in their

mission in assisting the tsunami victims. Their strong social commitment to the tsunami victims constitutes the very basis of their social capital and the gaining public trust both from the people that they served and the donor agencies that financially support their activities.

Some Preliminary Findings and Further Questions

- The concept of civil society in Indonesia came rather late in the early 1990s and become the new vocabulary in the political discourse among the intellectuals and social activist in Indonesia. The concept connotes a broad range of social activities and corroborates various forms of social movements that historically have been part of the political development. The predecessor concept of civil society, NGOs, understandably becomes the main component of civil society movements in Indonesia.
- The development of NGOs in Indonesia can not be isolated from the development of NGOs in the rich liberal democratic countries in the northern hemisphere. As Indonesian government since the early 1970s become the major recipient country for foreign aid from several major industrial countries, particularly Japan, United States and some European countries, development policies in Indonesia also become the attention of the public in the donor countries. The NGOs community in the donor countries also began to put Indonesia in their project agenda. The oldest NGOs in Indonesia, LP3ES, for example, established in the early 1970s by a number Indonesian intellectuals with the strong financial support from several major NGOs in Germany. The creation of INGI, a coalition of international and local NGOs in 1985 also reflects the intimate interconnection between the development of NGOs at the international and local levels.
- In Aceh, traditionally, social movements strongly associated with various forms of Islamic teaching and organization. Islam in Aceh however always part of the international networks that make the cosmopolitan nature of social movement in Aceh. Apart from the strong network of Islamic teaching between the Acehnese and the outer world, most clearly with the Middle Eastern and south Asian countries, transnational trading networks also strongly characterize the Acehnese society, especially in the coastal areas.

- In Aceh the social movements have slowly shifting from a more Islamic orientation toward more secularized social movements particularly during the Soeharto's New Order as NGOs national networks began to influence the urban educated middle class in many places, including Aceh. The NGOs movement in Aceh becoming more politicized as the military strongly repressed the Acehnese as they perceived it as closely linked with the Free Aceh Movement (GAM). The repressive situation and the violation of human rights in Aceh provide the momentum for developing the strong civil society movements with wider international networks. In Aceh, as also occurs in different part of Indonesia, two kinds of NGOs that emerged, political and developmental.
- In the case of NGOs in Aceh, new questions emerged following the tsunami as well the Helsinki Peace Agreement; on how the different orientation between "political and developmental" NGOs and their related adopted strategies in the post-tsunami reconstruction will affect the achievements of their goals? In practice, the "political" NGO will rely more on the CO (community organization) staff, while the "development" NGO will rely more to their CD (community development) staff. A conceptual framework is needed to capture the significant differences between "politically" and "developmentally" oriented NGOs. Uplink is belonging to the "politically" oriented NGO and YPK is belonging to the "developmentally" oriented NGO. Uplink has successfully sponsored the creation of village people's organization *Jaringan Udeep Beusaree* or JUB. The JUB become Uplink partner in the reconstruction and rehabilitation processes in Banda Aceh.
- The study on two different NGOs show success story of tsunami social reconstruction process from below. The study also shows that there is different kind of NGOS in Aceh in which a commitment to people and a strong leadership is the important ingredient for a success. In relation to the different strategy/approach would be very interesting to see how the communities will response and will survive after the housing construction stage is completed. The YPK in Meulaboh that avoid getting involved in the housing construction projects will continue its present in providing assistance to the community. While Uplink will leave Banda Aceh after the completion of building houses and will only provide limited supervision to the JUB from Jakarta.

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