



PARTNERS *International*

Update – May 30, 2006

Our Indonesia Area Director shares, “It has been nearly a year and a half since we began work in Aceh. Many people from around the world have given so much to make the relief projects a reality. Our hearts are filled with great joy and thanksgiving to God for the way He has worked.”

“We are in the midst of completing an important transition. As our tsunami rehabilitation projects wind down, our focus moves to the reason that we are there—to make Christ known among the Acehnese. This is a very different ministry from what we have been doing. Instead of building physical houses, we are now building the spiritual house with Jesus as the foundation (I Cor. 3:9-11). Boats have been provided to fishermen. Our prayer is that the gospel will now be provided to those who will in turn become fishers of men.

“I cannot say enough about how wonderfully our Indonesian brothers and sisters have served and sacrificed through very difficult situations. Your prayers for them have enabled them to be an extension of the Body of Christ in Aceh.

“We have 5 church planting teams set up and working in different regions. These teams consisting of 4-5 people each will leverage the credibility that they have earned over the past 18 months to proclaim the Good News. Seeds have been sown broadly. Now is the time to water and nurture them.”

The following is an edited report about the work of partner ministry Cahaya Suku from our Area Director:

Shrimp Ponds

Cahaya Suku completed the rehabilitation of around 92 acres of shrimp ponds in Bethel, Aceh province. Churches in America funded the reconstruction and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UN-FAO) provided the inputs such as fertilizer, lime, feed, and shrimp for a period of one harvest.

At this point, 80 percent of the ponds are now back in operation. The other 20 percent of the farmers decided they did not want to continue farming the ponds and preferred to grow mangrove seedlings instead.

The villagers were very happy to receive the aid, especially the poorer people because they do not have to pay back the aid from the UN-FAO. After the first harvest, the pond owners will need to finance the operations by themselves. Cahaya Suku’s role from this point will be to monitor the ponds and manage its own demonstration ponds.

In Samaria, we are still in the phase of repairing the ponds. With five backhoes working at the same time, we hope the reconstruction will be completed within three or four months. The pond owners remain enthusiastic about this project.

The villagers' enthusiasm for the rebuilding can be seen in their plan to design a road from the village all the way to the ponds along the coast for easier access to their ponds. This will enable them to use motorcycles to carry the fertilizer, shrimp feed, etc. to the ponds, as well as transport the harvest out to the markets directly from the ponds.

The leaders among the pond's farmers are enthusiastic and have given their full support and cooperation. This is invaluable as it makes working with the community much easier.

Education

After a two-week break due to a recent staff retreat, the education program has started up again in Bethel with children's activities, women's programs, and the community library outreach.

We are still looking for a location to build a permanent library for the city. After months of searching we still have not found the right place.

In Bethel, we find more children joining our programs and activities. They come from different Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps. Some of the kids are making great strides in their ability to read. Two children, Heru and Isma, around five years old, are now able to count from 1 to 10.

Putri

Putri, a three year old girl, has benefited from our Education Program. Her mother said, "After the tsunami, Putri was afraid of anyone who was not part of her family. She only trusted her father and mother. Putri's brother died in the tsunami. Because of the trauma, Putri withdrew from others, and did not want anybody close to her." When the Education Program in Bethel started last July, her parents brought her and let her join the activities. In this program, she watched other children singing, laughing, and playing games, which was good therapy for a child like Putri.

In addition, Putri's father is a barrack coordinator. Our staff needs to secure permission from her father for the Education Programs. This provides the staff with additional interaction with Putri. Whenever our staff members go to meet her father, she runs to greet them and walks back to the building holding their hands.

Her parents are very happy to see their daughter returning to her normal self. Her mother no longer needs to accompany Putri to the program since she is willing to go by herself. Now after the tenth month of her involvement in the program, she has become more cheerful, happy, and enjoys the program very much.

A Change Of Heart

A Cahaya Suku church planter who works with the relief effort gives insights into the Aceh of yesterday and today:

Aceh is not the place of my birth. Aceh is the province next door. I only knew Aceh from what I heard in the media. They always told of how Aceh was a terrible place. I was horrified by the bloodshed that often happened there. Certainly they did not value life.

I also heard many stories from people who stayed in Aceh but eventually left. They said that they could no longer stay there because everyday they were filled with worry and fear. "In Aceh," they said, "one does not know who are friends or who are enemies. Anything can happen – kidnapping, killing and even butchery. These are not rare occurrences." Yet this is so different from the Aceh I see today.

Since the tsunami, I have been living in Aceh helping in the relief effort. Now, I can see for myself what Aceh is like.

Since the tsunami, a new feeling has filled my heart. While I lived outside of Aceh, my soul was restless not knowing what I was to do with my life. Now I realize that my soul and my dreams are in Aceh. The tsunami has changed how I view Aceh.