

MANAGING EDUCATION IN EMERGENCY

I. INTRODUCTION

Aceh has a long history of education in emergency. It started when Aceh was conquered by the Dutch Colonial Government in 1873. The war ended in 1942 when Japanese arm forces landed in Aceh in 1942. Japan's invasion worsened the situation. As soon as Aceh became a province of Indonesia, education started to take a good shape. However, 8 years after being a part of Indonesia (1953), Aceh was dissolved as a part of North Sumatera Province. Acehnese were angry and demanded that Aceh be authorized or granted an autonomy status. The central government responded the demand by sending troops. Another war started again with Central Government and ended in 1961 when the Central Government gave autonomy for Aceh.

Soon after natural wealth (liquefied natural gas) was found in Aceh by an American company in 1976 and almost 70% of its forest was centrally managed and rain forest was plainly cut, some Acehnese demanded that Aceh be given an equal share from the natural resources taken from the province. The demand was again responded by sending troops. Another political conflict began and many had lost their lives as the results of the conflict. The tsunami that devastated Aceh on December 26th, 2004 caused a huge devastation modern human being has ever experienced. This natural disaster ended the war between the Aceh freedom fighters (GAM) by signing MoU between the Central Government and GAM fighters on August 15th, 2005 in Helsinki, Finland.

Though not well-documented, we have had some experiences that we may share with other colleagues from other parts of the world, especially during the arm-conflict between Aceh Freedom Fighters (GAM) and Central Government. The province was politically and geographically isolated to foreigners and many were not aware on how we operated education in the province, especially when more than 1,200 schools were burned down to ashes. We also have experience in managing education with other friends of the world when coping with 9.1 earthquake and high wave tsunami on December 26th, 2004

II. MANAGING EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES

During political conflicts, many teachers fled away from the province, either the Acehnese themselves or the non-Acehnese administratively and officially assigned to teach in the province. Teachers and government employees started fleeing Aceh silently in 1995 and the peak was in between 1998-2003. More than 2,000 teachers had to flee away from the province and left their schools and students unattended.

Some of university lecturers were invited by the MoNE and the Department of Education of the Province to assist, including the writer, in coping with the situation. One of the tasks was to assist the department in managing education during the emergency phases. The following are our brief experiences in managing education emergencies:

2.1 Education During Political and Arm-Conflicts

2.1.1 Political Conflict

Teachers started leaving Aceh during political conflicts. Several teachers felt that it was unsafe to live and work in the province. They started applying for transfer from the province to other provinces in Indonesia. The central and the provincial government could not stop them from moving due to humanitarian reasons. The number of teachers who fled the province was not high at that time but started to disturb education process.

The remote areas were the worst, especially when the teachers were not native to the local areas. This was really the problem. The non-native was fleeing away and the local Acehnese were also not willing to be assigned to the remote areas and many of the locals who were born and raised in the area were not qualified to teach. Many were high school graduates and high school leavers. The department of education had to tackle the situation by appointing temporarily some of the native locals by providing special short term training for them though they are not qualified. It was the only solution at that time.

2.1.2 Multiple shifts and Multi-grade Schools.

After being in political conflicts for a period of 20 years (1977 – 1996), the situation in Aceh became worst. The conflicts turned into an opened war in which peoples and pupils started to be displaced. The peoples moved from one sub-district into another and from one district into other districts far away from their own homelands. Many children started dropping from their schools. Some of them have been hard-to-reach learners now.

The schools located in the area where they were internally displaced peoples were not capable of accommodating them. They were too many for limited spaces, either for primary, junior high or senior high school levels. In some districts or sub-districts, there were not having enough teachers and administrators to handle.

1). Two shifts schools

The first alternative that we chose was having two shifted school hours in which the original students from that local school use the buildings in the morning shift and the new displaced pupils coming to the area studied in the afternoon session.

2). Multi graded schools

The second alternative was the multi-graded schools, in which first grade and second grade pupils are grouped and taught by one teacher. This alternative was chosen when there was not having enough teachers in the area.

2.1.3 Temporary Schools

The second problem that we had was when we did not have enough for both; not having enough teachers and not having enough spaces for educating our displaced pupils. To cope with the problems, we have to hire temporary teachers for the areas and find out public premises for educating the displaced pupils. In some areas, even the Indonesian military officers stationed in Aceh donated and volunteered their time to teach at certain levels of education. However, in certain occasion such a mission was difficult to carry out due to security reasons, for the military himself or for pupils, principals, administrators and teachers themselves.

During the DOM (Provincial Military Operation – Daerah Operasi Militer), several schools were burned down by irresponsible personnel. It was not many during DOM

phases. However, right during and after the reformation era in 1998, almost 700 schools were burned down and the armed conflict started to escalate. This was the time when the department had the worst difficult time. The lost of 700 schools within a week was a shocking history of education in our time. It was a chaos in our province.

Many teachers fled away and left their beloved pupils unattended. The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and the Department of Education of Aceh had to find other buildings and premises as soon as possible. The longer we wait the worst it could be for our pupils. Should they be out of school for more than a month, laziness for attending school will be attached to their lives and pupils will dropouts and they will be “hard-to-reach” learners. We had to find out the fastest solutions for the matters. Parents, religious and community leaders, educators, teachers and all responsible share holders of education in the province and districts were mobilized to campaign that education should never be stopped and forgotten. It should be continued with whatever resources that we had

1). Mosques of Mukim

The first alternative was mosque. The departments worked cooperatively with the imams of the mosque and used the mosque for education and religious activities. Since mosques are mostly coordinated under the level of Imum Mukim (leader of sub-county), the leaders under this sub-county were assigned to coordinate.

2). Village Mosque

In addition to mosque under the Imum Mukim, the lower level of mosque is the mosque operated under the leadership of village chief, called “Keusyik”. This keusyik was given responsible to mobilize all resources to have our pupils educated.

3). Meunasah

Meunasah is a smaller unit of a praying and gathering hall in Aceh. One village might have one up to three meunasahs. Imum is the one who led the meunasah. He is given responsible to mobilize education for our pupils.

4). Dayah

Dayah is the oldest education institution in Aceh. They are built by the community and it is a free education institution for all levels of religious education in the province. Any parent who is not able to provide education for their children, they can just send their children to this institution and this institution will provide free food, free accommodation, free tuition and free consultation for their children. The only problem is that this institution provides only religious subjects. The number of dayah that can accommodate more than 300 students in Aceh is more than 700 dayahs.

During political conflicts, this education institution played a major role in providing education to our students to avoid drop out and not having education for our children, at least they would have moral education for our drop outs due to political conflicts. During that time, some moderate ulamas (religious leaders) accepted or allowed the department to carry out formal education with national curricula within their institution and many continued to implement dual systems within their campus; religious and formal-general education after emergency phases.

2.2 Managing Education During Martial Laws

In addition to having experiences in managing education during political and armed conflicts, we were also forced to find our ways in managing education during martial laws. The martial law was imposed in our province from 2001 – 2005. During the first week of martial law, 652 schools were burned down again when we were in the process of rebuilding only half of what had been burned down in 1998. We proceeded in similar processes as we did during DOM era. It was a tiring moment. The worst was in remote areas.

2.3 Earthquake and Tsunami

An earth-quake of 9.1 SR stroke our province on a calm and bright morning of December 26th, 2004. Moments after the stroke, the beaches of Aceh were dried and all waters were sucked into the ocean. Moments later, the three big waves up to 30 meters high washed the beaches of Aceh up to 15 kilometers into the low lands of the coastal lines. The second wave, however, the most deadly. It destroyed more than 4,000 kilometers of roads, thousands of bridges, more than 150,000 houses, 17 hospitals, more than 200 community health centers, 1,237 schools, 14 campuses of traditional boarding schools, 5 public and private university campuses, and thousands of government offices. The speed of the waves was more than 600 kilometers an hour.

The earthquake and tsunami were also responsible for the loss and missing of 2,876 teachers, 201 active and retired medical doctors, 711 nurses, 700 university professors and associate professors, almost 4,000 government employees, 2,500 university students, 52,000 pupils and almost 200,000 peoples of Aceh. The province was totally isolated and chaos. There no power supplies, no communication networks, no TV, no radios and other communication systems for the first three days. The whole systems were collapsed.

The number of displaced peoples and pupils were hard to control, monitor and manage. It was the hardest moment. The costs of all commercial items were sky rocketing and disappeared in just hours for profit reasons. We can see the real human in deeds in such a situation. Some would come to you and offered helps with money, consumable goods and usable goods. Some would come with solutions and others who try to degrade you.

The mobilization of peoples were in massed and moved or mobilized without any controls. Many moved to other safer districts and others even moved to other provinces and nearby countries in South East Asian nations. In all cities located along the coastal lines, all offices and institutions saving data of populations (students and pupils) were washed out. It was the worst situation modern human being had ever witnessed.

Due to severe devastation, even the army and police forces were collapsed. Most of police, armies, and marine dormitories were devastated and parts of military installation were totally washed. However, even with small portions of equipment and vehicles that they had, they had shown their best to help. They mobilized local red-cross and red-crescent societies to help evacuate many victims.

Having bad experiences in the previous calamities help us cope part of the problems, though not maximum, with very limited resources that we had. In coping with such a huge devastation, the followings were our experiences in facing the situation the first few months after tsunami.

- 1). Don't be too panic. Every one will, of course, be panic in such complicated situation.
- 2). Don't find ways to blame others, our own staff or staff from other institutions or related institutions for any problems.
- 3). Though it would be risky and be blamed later even for small mistakes, don't be too annoying with and by media. Work and proceed with patient. *Media will try to find who to be blamed and rarely proposed ways to solve. However, media also plays important role in finding hard to reach cases and they bring attention to many donating countries, government institutions, NGOs and individual donator. Just be patient. They will respect you when you cooperate and show that you care and listen.*
- 4). Don't try to collect the most appropriate data to act, act with whatever data and means that you can and with whatever achievement you might be able to reach.
- 5). Whenever possible, assign a key staff to coordinate with other institutions in handling education.
- 6). Remember, education should never be stopped. Once you stop, the dropouts will be just in front of us. It should be proceed with whatever means and in whatever situation it might be.
- 7). Use whatever sources that we might have.
- 8). Many who come would like to be served even prior to arriving to the hardest place to reach, a place to stay and where to find foods to stay strong prior to helping those in severe need. Blames might be towards you. Be ready and be patient.
- 9). Mobilize any human capacities that you might be able to. Do not ignore the capacity. Even a small capacity should ne counted. When they gathered, it works and helps.
- 10). Organize a room where all agencies meet and use it as information center. Give routine information as they are coming in minutes and days. Inform the latest by e-mailing them using a mailing list or any other forms of faster communication. Correct information will help every one in acting and assisting properly. Assign person(s) who can communicate effectively and efficiently. He or she must be able to tolerate any differences. He or she must be able to accommodate diversity. In any emergency such as in Aceh, having a person who is tolerable in terms of culture, race, religion and political orientations is a must.
- 11). Remember, when a calamity and devastation occurs, the location becomes an international area. However, it depends on the central authority. They are the one who decides to close it or opens it to international helps.
- 12). Don not over control. Share responsibilities. Find world organizations first and then discuss with them whos and whos and taking responsibilities for sectors in education.
- 13). Discuss whos and whos for locations. Those who have higher capacity and sources should be asked responsibilities in both at the center and also in districts far away from central command room.
- 14). Reports data regularly to higher authorities since data is important to taking decisions.
- 15). Should it need, take initiative to decide and report any decisions taken to higher ranks as soon as possible in order not to double actions to similar case. However, cultural aspects should be considered.
- 16). Establish a professional group to write or provide brief information regarding the devastation to incoming agencies; international bodies, donating countries, NGOs and private institutions. They need accurate information to inform their government

or central agencies to decide on types of assistance to be provided, times and places.

17). Propose and agree on timing set together.

In regards to actions taken for education, we proceeded the ways we did in previous emergencies during military operations and martial laws. However, the situation was very much different during emergency phases after tsunami. We were assisted by international communities and national brotherhoods. It was, may be, the first location on earth where thousands of international bodies gathered; no matter what races, cultures, religions, interests, perspectives and politics were.

III. CONCLUSIONS

Having a forum to share information will enrich our experiences on how to cope with problems that we face in emergency. This paper is a brief of experiences that we had preceded in our last decade of dark history of our education. It should be noted here, whatever capacity that we have, once an education phase is falling into stagnancy, there will always be dropouts who will proceed their lives into a darker situation in their lives. One they are in such a situation, they will be hard-to-reach learners. It will take more fund, energy and time to bring them in the right tracks.

Having no education or dropouts during their early childhood and young adults will lead our generations into the wrong tracks of their lives. They might proceed to crimes and their actions will cost the next generations to reeducate them. As literacy educators said, an illiterate will produce more illiterates. Therefore, we need to share experiences from one location to those of other locations as the earth is shaping herself naturally and show us her angriness with the changes of her atmosphere daily as the results of her rotations and human acts towards her.

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