

Summary

The combined earthquake and tsunami that occurred on the 26 December 2004, was the worst natural disaster in Indonesia's history. Aceh and North Sumatra suffered the most. On 11th March 2011 in the Tohoku Region of Japan, another terrible earthquake and tsunami occurred.

In both areas, coastal communities sustained extensive damage. In an instant some people lost their families, houses, fishing boats, farm land, their happiness and self-confidence.

While much support has been supplied from numerous donors, the affected people have been gradually recovering. In Indonesia nine years after the earthquake and tsunami, their infrastructures have almost recovered in tsunami-affected areas, but serious socio-economical and mental problems remain. And in Japan's Tohoku region, recovery is still ongoing.

With this background, the purpose of this study was to compare the resulting situations in the Aceh Province of Indonesia and the Tohoku Region (especially Iwate prefecture) of Japan, and to understand how the people are rebuilding their livelihood investigating both social and mental aspects.

This study focuses on the women's roles in the rebuilding process. In particular focusing on their roles in income generating activities, such as fisheries processing, store business and selling snacks etc. This report examines their healing processes, how they developed social relations, how they were encouraged and developed self-confidence and independence.

The analysis is based on data and information collected during fieldwork. The fieldwork consisted of interviews with key members of affected local communities.

The result of this study showed, among the victims, the most important factors in their recovery, were; firstly, a strong relationship with family and relatives, secondly, a strong sense of friendship (including women's group activities). In most cases in Aceh, a strong relationship between family and relatives existed.

In Iwate prefecture before tsunami women's groups carried out intensive rural life improvement activities based on a problem-solving approach. After tsunami their group activities has continued at grass roots level. As a result, the women's self-confidence improved gradually. The experience of Japanese women will be one of the positive models which could be implemented in Aceh.

Though their patterns of each strong relationship are different, their mutual support and emotional relations developed after the disasters served to empower the women. What's more, they have a gradually increasing feeling of self-confidence and independence. These changes in the women have in turn, affected the relationships with their family, relatives, neighbors, friends and community after the tsunami. The women developed important roles in the recovery of tsunami.

However, it is still necessary for them to receive suitable aid, taking into account the people's various different situations.