

COMPLETION REPORT

Using Tsunami-related life history for disaster risk reduction education:
A comparative case study of Banda Aceh, Indonesia and Sendai, Japan

Dr. Agus Suwignyo
Lecturer
Department of History,
Faculty of Humanities
Gadjah Mada University
Indonesia

The aim of the present study was to examine the strategies that the survivors of the Dec. 26, 2004 tsunami in Banda Aceh, Indonesia and of the March 11, 2011 in Sendai, Japan respectively undertook in order to cope with the disaster both during and following the event. Two central questions were explored: (1) How did survivors manage to get survived of the tsunami and of the tsunami-stimulated trauma? (2) What scheme of Japanese-Indonesian cross-cultural mutual understanding can be formulated to promote an educational program of disaster risk reduction based on survivors' life history across nations? For data collection the researcher paid a visit to the city of Banda Aceh in June 2013 and to Sendai as well as Kyoto in May 2014.

In total 25 survivors of the Banda Aceh tsunami participated in sharing their memories on how they had managed to survive both during and after the tsunami events. About half of the interviewees were university students, who were still teenagers when tsunami hit them. Meanwhile, the in-depth literary research at Kyoto University that I conducted prior to my visit to Sendai—thanks to the Center of Southeast Asian Studies for hosting me—made me realize that studies on tsunami and tsunami survivors had been very much immense in Japan. Literatures show that the social aspects of tsunami in Japan have been the topic of extensive studies both by Japanese and international scholars alike. This fact stipulated me to make use of the in-depth existing studies on Japan's experience as sources of (secondary) data. Whereas in Kyoto I managed to collect as many relevant publications as possible, in Sendai I observed the post-disaster reconstruction projects while also talking—with the help of two students of Tokyo University—to one survivor and one NGO activist at the Tsunami Memorial Museum in Sendai.

As regards to the surviving strategies, both the survivor cohorts in Banda Aceh and in Sendai said to have performed various sorts of strategies as to cope with the catastrophic event and its aftermath. However, they all shared a similar retrospective perspective of the tsunami event they had experienced and their life today. When asked how they saw today the tsunami they had experienced, all of them expressed a deep feeling of loss. For the Banda Aceh survivors, however, the negative feelings such as sadness and trauma seemed to have been away as they described their life today was better than it had been before the tsunami, especially economically. An improved economic condition hence helped them survived the post-tsunami trauma and healed the loss they had suffered. For the Sendai survivor, the social loss remained to be considerable because of the missing family members and of the removal from the previous place of living to the present. Removal of the place of living meant the uprooting of one's social establishment in a community. The Banda Aceh survivors said their belief in the help of Allah, Good the Almighty, kept them surrendering to the condition after the tsunami and to accept it as a test

from God on their faith. The Sendai survivor said to rely on the help of the ancestors' spirit and to the government and the neighborhood programs of recovery. All of this was said to help cope with the post-tsunami trauma and sadness.

Scheme of cross-cultural cooperation between Japan and Indonesia can be formulated in the form of exchanges of experiences in the capacity building and preservation of local knowledge of tsunami-related survival strategies that can be used further for the construction of risk-reduction educational programs. In Japan generally, institutional recovery programs had been developed to facilitate people with the survival strategy options. For example, in the ancient time Japanese ancestors erected stone tablets as warning of the tsunami level point (*The New York Times*, 20/4/2011). A study by Tsugio Nakaseko et al. (2008) suggests the implementation of integrated programs of surviving strategies in which local social network of tsunami-related information distribution is a key. The latter was based solely on local community. In Indonesia generally, such institutional programs and identified set of local knowledge of survival strategies did not yet exist. Although some tsunami warning monuments were erected throughout the city of Banda Aceh in commemoration of the 2004 tsunami, the programs that were directed to strengthen the capacity of local social networks and to preserve the local knowledge of survival strategy options seem still to be absent. At this point, a scheme of cooperation may be developed by the Indonesian side learning from the Japanese experience in building the capacity of local community and in preserving the local knowledge of survival strategies.*** Agus Suwignyo

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

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FIB Annual Conference; title of presentation "Collective memories of the survival strategies of the 2004 tsunami victims in Banda Aceh: Preliminary findings"; by Agus Suwignyo with Satrio Dwi Cahyo and Yayum Kumai**

Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)

Book (Publisher and Date of the Book, Title and Author of the Book, etc.)

A journal publication is expected to appear in 2016 (the target journal still to be decided).