# Government and NGOs Collaboration
# in Disaster Governance:
# The Indonesian Experience

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### *ABSTRACT*

*As the main leader in disaster governance, governments are believed to have bigger role than the others. However, it is hard for governments to solve the disaster problems by themselves. Governments need to be supported by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) because NGOs have abilities which governments don't have. Both of them must make mutual cooperation in disaster governance. But, the Indonesian experience shows that government and NGOs are, in some cases, involved in unnecessary conflict. Government views that the NGOs, mainly international NGOs, are just talking rather than acting and potential to destroy local knowledge. On the other hand, NGOs feel that the government could not respond the disaster quickly and want to restrict their freedom. Therefore, to give the best service for disaster victims, government and NGOs should make norms for collaboration and coordination among them, hold regular training of disaster risk reduction for government officials, and improve capacity building support needed by NGOs.*

***Key Words****: government, NGOs, disaster governance, disaster risk reduction.*

*Sebagai pemimpin utama dalam tata kelola bencana, pemerintah diyakini memiliki peran yang lebih besar dari yang lain. Namun, sulit bagi pemerintah untuk memecahkan masalah bencana sendiri. Pemerintah perlu didukung oleh organisasi non-pemerintah (LSM) karena LSM memiliki kemampuan yang pemerintah tidak memilik. Keduanya harus membuat kerjasama dalam pemerintahan bencana. Namun, pengalaman Indonesia menunjukkan bahwa pemerintah dan LSM, dalam beberapa kasus, terlibat dalam konflik yang tidak perlu. Pemerintah berpandangan bahwa LSM, terutama LSM internasional, hanya berbicara daripada bertindak dan berpotensi untuk menghancurkan pengetahuan lokal. Di sisi lain, LSM merasa bahwa pemerintah tidak bisa merespon bencana dengan cepat dan ingin membatasi kebebasan mereka. Oleh karena itu, untuk memberikan pelayanan yang terbaik bagi korban bencana, pemerintah dan LSM harus membuat norma untuk kerjasama dan koordinasi di antara mereka, menyelenggarakan pelatihan rutin pengurangan risiko bencana untuk pejabat pemerintah, dan meningkatkan daya dukung bangunan yang diperlukan oleh LSM.*

***Kata-Kata Kunci****: pemerintah, LSM, tata kelola bencana, pengurangan resiko bencana.*

Indonesia is a disaster prone country located at the intersection of three crustal plates namely Eurasia Plate, Ancient Australia-Indian continent, and Pacific Ocean Floor in the northeast. The geographical location make Indonesia become subject to a high level seismic activities. Natural disasters are common and frequent phenomena in this country causing so many people are died, infrastructure is destroyed, and environment

is damaged. This country is the home for over 240 million people, across a far stretched archipelago. Most of them are vulnerable to natural and man-made disasters.

**Figure 1.**
**Major Volcanoes of Indonesia**

The types of disasters in Indonesia could be classified into earthquakes, tsunamis, volcano eruptions, floods, landslides, hurricanes, storms, and droughts. Indonesia was frequently shooked by earthquakes and tsunamis. With more than 500 volcanoes, 128 of which are active volcanoes (represents 15% all active volcanoes in the world) occupying the zones of Sunda, Banda, Halmahera and Minahasa, the country was often shaked by volcano eruptions. Figure 1 shows that the volcanoes are located almost in every province of Indonesia. No wonder the archipelago is said to be circumscribed by rings of fire (Figure 2). Many parts of the country are susceptible to drought most recently caused by the El Nino phenomenon resulting in crop failure and uncontrolled bush fires exacerbatting the forest fires from the extensive forest logging. In addition, there are over 5,000 small and big rivers, of which 30% crossed the high density population area posing floods hazards.

Based on the 2010 Asia Pacific Disaster Report, people in the Asia Pacific are four times more likely to be affected by natural disasters than those in Africa and 25 times more likely than those in North America or Europe. The UN reported that over 18 million people were affected by natural disasters in Indonesia for the last three decades. The same report ranks Indonesia fourth highest amongst Asia Pacific countries that have been hit by natural catastrophes. The 2009 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction also placed Indonesia on high level of human exposure to disasters, ranking 1 out of 265 for tsunamis and 3 out of 153 for earthquakes (Kuntjoro & Jamil, 2010).

**Figure 2.**
**Indonesia's Ring of Fire**
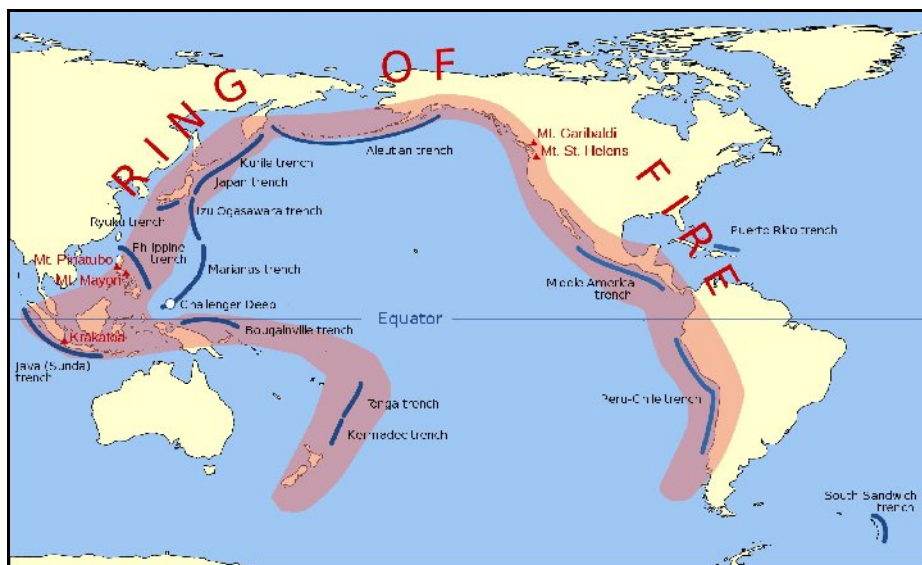


Source: www.geography.org.uk, October 29, 2012.

In response to this fact, Indonesia regulates a national policy in disaster governance and management on the Law No. 24/2007. The purpose of the Law is building a new disaster management system, replacing old system regulated since 1966 when the Advisory Board of Natural Disaster Management was established. The new law posts protection to be a part of people's basic rights and designates the government to be the duty bearer. It provides for disaster management to be an integrated part of development and governance. This is to be accomplished through reducing risks mostly during the time when there is no disaster, managing the system to be better prepared to respond to, and recovering from the impacts of disasters.

Government of Indonesia realizes that it could not be done alone. In some cases, the government has weaknesses to take every single action of disaster risk reduction. Government need to be helped by non-government actors, either national or international non-government organizations (NGOs). They must cooperate to prevent disaster and to minimize the disaster bad impacts. Successful disaster reduction strategies involve careful efforts to combine knowledge, technology, expertise, institutional capacities, management skills, and practical experience for optimum results, which would not be possible without proper collaboration between the two key players, governments and NGOs. The government can effectively link up knowledge, technology, skills, resources, expertise offered by specialist institutions with grassroots experience, organizational capacity, participatory management skills, community based initiatives of NGOs for disaster reduction. NGOs can be innovative, rooted to the ground, and participatory in their approach while government can replicate best practices for larger impact (Behera 2002, 1).

Based on that view, this paper is written to highlight the government-NGOs cooperation with case of Indonesia. The first part discusses disaster management system as a concept, continued to describe the role of governments and NGOs on the next parts. The final part explains cooperation between government and NGOs based

on Indonesian experience with focuses on the problems faced by both of them as well as solutions to tackle these problems.

## What is Disaster Management ?

Hara and Maulidya define disaster management as efforts to reduce, minimize, and alleviate the possible costs of disasters that may occur. It is designed to prepare for the occurences of disaster and to prevent it from becoming major economic and social costs (Hara & Maulydia 2011, 1). Disaster management is important for reducing the natural disasters damage. Based on the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR), disaster management must be systematically integrated into policies, plans, and programs for sustainable development and poverty reduction, and supported through bilateral, regional, and international cooperation, including partnership (UNISDR 2005, 1).

The main theoretical framework of disaster management is the disaster management cycle. This cycle includes sum total of all activities, programs and measures which can be taken up before, during and after a disaster. The purpose of these steps is to avoid a disaster, reduce its impact or recover from its losses. There are three main phases in this cycle including (1) the post-disaster, emergency responses; (2) the post-disaster, recovery; (3) the pre-disaster, risk reduction (Khan 2008, 46-7). Stephenson argued that the emergency responses is the most crucial phase among the others. This phase is the process of determining the impact on a society, the needs and priorities for immediate emergency measures to save and sustain the lives for survivor, the resources available, and the possibilities for facilitating and expediting longer-term recovery and development (Stephenson 1994, 9).

During the first phase, disaster management officers are required to confirm and report emergency and estimate the overall magnitude of the damage; identify, characterize, and quantify 'population at risk' in the disaster; help to define and prioritize the actions and resources. When the situation is under control, governments, international aids and relief, and international organizations are coming inside the disaster area to do recovery actions. They calculate the loss of lives and damages of the properties. Mitigation and prevention actions are taken in the risk reduction phase then (Hara & Maulydia 2011, 3-4). Disaster management does not only involve local actors, but also international actors. Beside the government, humanitarian community such as local and international NGOs are also involved. In interactions among them, some conflicts and different opinions might happen. The humanitarian community, for example, often assumes that the government is too bureaucratic, too slow and incapable of handling disaster issues  (Hara & Maulydia 2011, 5). Whatever the dispute, it should be noted that since disaster can't be solved by the government itself or by the NGOs themselves, so government and NGOs must cooperate, collaborate and coordinate each other. Disaster relief could create its own disaster if not coordinated.

## The Role of Indonesian Government

It is undeniable that states are responsible to ensure the safety and security of their citizens. The protection of civilians, whether understood primarily in physical or legal terms, remains first and foremost the duty of governments, a reflection of their sovereign authority over, and responsibility for, all those living within their territory (O'Callaghan & Pantualiano 2007). The state governments' primary responsibility in

response to disasters is clearly recognized both in law and in statements of principle. For example UN Resolution 46/182 states,

> *The sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of States must be fully respected in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. In this context, humanitarian assistance should be provided with the consent of the affected country and in principle on the basis of an appeal by the affected country. Each State has the responsibility first and foremost to take care of the victims of natural disasters and other emergencies occurring on its territory. Hence, the affected State has the primary role in the initiation, organization, coordination, and implementation of humanitarian assistance within its territory.*

The UN statement reflects how important the role of government is. Government should be the first party who goes to the disaster area and makes coordination among agencies there. Based on the report of International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC), governments have four main roles and responsibilities regarding humanitarian aid for disasters (ALNAP 2012, 2). First, they are responsible for calling a crisis and inviting international aid. Second, they provide assistance and protection. Third, they are responsible for monitoring and coordinating external assistance. Fourth, they set the regulatory and legal frameworks governing relief assistance. National governments also set the laws and regulations governing how aid agencies may operate within their territory. Wherever they work, NGOs are obliged to register with the government and are generally required to report on their activities (IFRC 2007a). Governments have a clear role in coordinating and monitoring the quality and effectiveness of external assistance. According to the IFRC's 'Guidelines for the domestic facilitation and regulation of international disaster relief and initial recovery assistance' (IDRL), "affected states have the sovereign right to coordinate, regulate and monitor, disaster relief and recovery assistance provided by assisting actors on their territory, consistent with international law" (IFRC 2007b).

The kind of role has been performed by Indonesia's Government. Based on Disaster Management Law No. 24/2007, the leader for disaster management is National Agency for Disaster Management (BNPB). With five strategies to overcome disaster, (1) building disaster management system, (2) promoting risk reduction, (3) increasing public awareness, (4) strengthening local capacity, and (5) building international cooperation; BNPB works for preparedness, response, rehabilitation, and reconstruction. However, the body could not work alone. It must be supported by local disaster management agencies. Therefore, in order to do the works effectively, the law calls for the establishment of disaster management agencies at different levels to be equipped with a robust mandate, authorities and resources. At the time when a state of calamity is declared, these agencies are to be provided with special access to wide-ranging special authorities including mobilization of response assets, influencing customs, immigration and quarantine and, when necessary, exerting command over sectors and locales.

Together with the National Action Plan on Disaster Risk Reduction (NAP-DRR) launched on February 24, 2007, the new law embodies political statement and a framework for the implementation of the Hyogo Framework of Action (HFA) that was adopted by the international community to significantly reduce the impact of disasters by 2015. Indeed, following the Aceh tsunami (2004), paradigm of disaster management has switched from disaster response to disaster risk reduction  The disaster risk reduction agenda also stresses the importance of host government involvement, domestic resilience and governance reform (ALNAP 2012, 1). The HFA 2005-2015 also

notes that each state has primary responsibility for taking effective disaster risk reduction measures and commits governments to ensuring, "that disaster risk reduction is a national and local priority" (UNISDR 2005).

Disaster must be understood as problem for everybody, either local, national or global community with focus on the local regions because disaster is actually occured in local areas. In Indonesia, Jakarta as capital city is not categorized as a prone area. Except flood, the biggest city in Indonesia never experienced big natural disasters like Aceh (2004 earthquake and tsunami), Central Java (2006 earthquake and 2010 Merapi eruption), and West Sumatra (2009 earthquake). When a disaster shook an area which is far away from the capital city, so the role of local government need to be improved. This is important for building local resilience to disasters.

It is found that government is not the only central actor as there are many central actors. Involvement of actors and stakeholders (from local to the global level) was ranged from international and local NGOs, national and local governments, international financial institutions, the UN, universities, private firms, bilateral aid and so on. In cooperation with government, this paper focuses on the NGOs as non-state actors which are acknowledged as having a big contribution.

## The Role of NGOs

Big disasters always invite either internal or external organizations to come and help the survivors. As the disaster prone country, Indonesia draws attention thousands organizations which deliver their post disaster intervention in some areas. Of all organizations involved, NGOs are viewed as the important one. Moreover, large scale disasters and the presence of INGOs/IOs stimulate the births of hundreds to thousands of local NGOs (Stumpenhorst et al. 2011).

According to Chu, NGO is defined as any non-profit citizens' voluntary entity organized locally, nationally or internationally, whose activities are determined by the collective will of its members (Chu 2002, 8). On the other hand, Topal defines NGOs as self-governing, independent, and non-profit organizations that are geared to improve the quality of life of disadvantaged people. They work to assist, advocate and improve the quality of life in relation with many situations in almost all sectors of life. As non-profit organizations, most NGOs fund their activities from the external donors which can be from the UN, the government, commercial company or individual (Topal 2008).

NGOs do not only play a critical role in all aspects of humanitarian assistance work, but also play an important role in disaster response and mitigation in different regions. The activities NGOs done include raising funds for the relief of victims, rushing emergency relief by providing food, clothing and health care and helping to build local capacity to withstand future disasters. Using their grassroots network, they can play a significant role in disaster risk prevention and reduction. Sometimes, NGOs have the ability to respond more quickly than government can. With local knowledge and expertise, they have the advantage in being able to carry out disaster reduction and relief projects that fit the needs of the people and often with far more reaching and sustainable impact (Chu 2001, 9-10).

In Indonesia, there are more than 200 NGOs registered for operating in disaster risk reduction such as Oxfam, Helen Keller International, International Relief Development, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Society, Muslim

Aid Indonesia, World Relief, red cross organizations from many countries, etc. They all have different contribution in Indonesian disaster management. Oxfam, for example, works not only after the disasters occur (rehabilitation), but also pre-disaster (response) and during disaster (recovery). This organization has five priorities of action. First, ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and a local priority with strong institutional basis for implementation. Second, identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning. Third, use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels. Fourth, reduce the underlying risk factors. Five, strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels.

Oxfam is just an example of the NGOs' activities in Indonesia. Beside Oxfam, there are hundreds NGOs working in the post-disaster reconstruction. Since most of them have different agenda, it is inevitable that some problems involving either the NGOs or government official emerge. It is not easy to coordinate all NGOs with different profile. This is one of the biggest challenges Indonesia faces in disaster management.

## Problems on Indonesian Government and NGOs Cooperation

Aceh tsunami (2004) was noted as the first experience Indonesia organized hundreds NGOs participating in post-disaster reconstruction. NGOs' help is viewed as a valuable contribution because Indonesian government hasn't had a strong infrastructure in the grassroot. At the time of Aceh reconstruction, Indonesia didn't have a formal agency in managing disaster. The country only had an ad hoc body named Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Agency (BRR) which worked for rebuilding Aceh after tsunami.

The urgency of having a formal permanent body started to be considered by Indonesia's decision makers three years after Aceh tsunami. In 2007, based on Disaster Management Law, Indonesia created a new high-level agency for disaster management, the BNPB. At the time of the West Sumatra earthquake in 2009, the BNPB had been established at the national level but not completely at the provincial and district levels. The decentralization process underway in Indonesia devolves significant power to around 30 provinces and 450 districts. Two important challenges are the different capacities of the provincial governments and ensuring consistency of new structures. The operational capacity at provincial level is generally quite limited. Although there are variations, the capacity to respond tends to be located at district levels (ALNAP 2012, 14). Thus, Indonesian government needs a help from NGOs which are believed to have strong local networking. However, the presence of NGOs do not always make a better condition. Some times, following problems appear while government and NGOs work together in disaster management.

First, there are misperceptions between government and NGOs which can not be compromised. NGOs feel that the government wants to restrict their freedoms through exerting authoritative control, and the government views NGOs as talking rather than acting, opposed to any move to ensure transparency and accountability, donor driven, obsessed with sectoral issues and overcritical of government policies (Behera 2002, 10). Second, incapability of the local governments to respond the disaster quickly. It must be acknowledged that most of Indonesia's local government officials are unskilled apparatus. This condition creates a gap between local and national government as well as NGOs. Whereas, Indonesian law requires provincial and district administrations to be at the forefront of disaster management with backup from the BNPB. However, nationally-formulated policies have not created systemic changes at local levels.

Regional agencies for disaster management only established in 18 of 33 provinces so far. In addition, there seems to be a strong sense of dependency on the national government to provide the necessary support, where the local governments lack capacity and resources (Kuntjoro & Jamil 2010).

Apparently many local governments are reluctant to use their budgets for disaster management. This may place a strain on resources at the national level, especially for responses when multiple disasters in different provinces occur simultaneously. Coordination also becomes harder when the area is remote. For example, relief assistance to Mentawai itself takes half a day's boat ride from the port of Padang (Kuntjoro & Jamil 2010).

Third, INGOs staffs don't understand local knowledge of disaster area. Understanding affected people's habit, tradition, culture and activities is important to solve the problems after disaster quickly. The attendance of INGOs staffs to a disaster area is not often followed by deep knowledge about people inhabiting the area. Consequently, misunderstanding between the INGOs staffs and the affected people is likely occur so that aids can not be given effectively. Beside, INGOs staffs also often clash with the government officials. For example, the rapid turnover of INGOs staffs inhibits the development of local knowledge and the personal relationships needed to work effectively with government counterparts. As McRae (2008) found in the international response to the Jogjakarta earthquake in Indonesia, "staff turnover was astonishingly high" and "it seemed that anybody who built up any local knowledge left before they were able to use it". He argues that the almost total lack of local knowledge, language skills or experience among the international aid workers seriously inhibited their ability to understand anything more than the material dimensions of the local situation or to communicate with government officials or local people.

In Indonesia, government officials were shocked at the way some international agencies ignored local capacities and authority structures (Willitts-King 2009). In Aceh reconstruction after 2004 tsunami, most of NGOs that operated in this province have their own system which sometimes contradict with the others (Susilo 2009). Government officials are not systematically invited to coordination meetings. Furthermore, all key documents are written in English which is not always understood by local government if it is not translated into Indonesian language. As Bennett et al. (2006, 11) found in relation to the response to the Asian tsunami "where coordination meetings are dominated by international agencies, English becomes the medium of communication at the expense of already marginalised local participants". Language was a real barrier to greater government engagement in responding to the West Sumatra earthquake (Harvey et al. 2010).

## Conclusion

Based on the description above, it could be known that government and NGOs have different roles in disaster management which are expected to complement each other. However, in several occasions, there is misunderstanding between both of them causing the disaster victims could not get an adequate aid. This is a problem Indonesia's government recently faces in collaboration with NGOs for giving the best aid for the disaster affected people. Therefore, a number of steps need to be taken to strengthen government-NGOs cooperation, focusing on issues such as, 1) norms for cooperation and coordination; (2) regular training of disaster risk reduction for local

government officials; and (3) capacity building support needed by NGOs for disaster management.

First, government and NGOs should make a deal about code of conduct on their collaboration to overcome their differences. They must see their respective roles as mutually supplementary and not as competing alternatives. It is also urgent for both of them to make information sharing and social audit to strengthen transparency and accountability, which would raise their credibility and prepare ground for mutual respect and collaboration. As the leader of disaster management, government needs to give basic support for the NGOs. On the other hand, NGOs need to coordinate their all activities and report them to the government.

Second, local government officials need to be trained regularly in order not to highly depend on national government. The main pupose of the training is building local capacity to ensure more effective responses to disasters. Since Indonesia's risk to multi-hazard disasters is increasing, the country must improve its capacity for recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction from current disasters in order to mitigate future risks. More importantly, before building local capacity, disaster management agencies in local administrations have to be set up in all 33 provinces.

Third, beside the local government officials, NGOs staffs also need to build their capacity to increase their skills based on the local knowledge of disaster area. This is mainly for INGOs staffs who have never lived with Indonesian people. Before coming to Indonesia, they should prepare adequate data base on the basic profile of the disaster affected people. It would be better if INGOs staffs sent to Indonesia are those who could speak Indonesian language and understand traditions and cultures practiced by people in the disaster area.

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