



Panel discussion: Rebuilding Women's Lives in the Aftermath of Disaster.

Up-date on gender issues in Aceh, Indonesia

To date, out of around 8000 job seekers, who have registered with the "Employment Services for the People of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam Province" (ESPNAD) at the BLK, about 15% are women. The majority of women, who have registered are between 20 and 30 years old (80%), and are looking for a job either as a teacher/teacher's associate or as office staff (66%).

In Aceh the complimentary gender roles are deeply ingrained into societal structures. Women tend to do mostly unpaid labour, preferably inside their own house, whereas men work in the public as paid labourers. As an example for how difficult the task to open up paid job opportunities for women is, we may look at a traditional female household chore - cleaning: in Banda Aceh, women and men alike have stressed that it would not be an acceptable job for women to clean public buildings such as banks, schools and offices reasoning that in Aceh, this is a job for men only. A lot of work in terms of awareness raising promoting gender equality for both sexes on all levels of society is needed here.

However, a quick assessment (still on-going) conducted in Banda Aceh, has shown that we also need to keep in mind that different attitudes exist between different groups of people. Women coming to the ESPNAD Banda Aceh in general are less willing to participate in the construction sector than women living in the camps. This is because the women, who have the means to come to register, usually live with their relatives and therefore are better off than the ones having to live in a camp because they have lost everything. Not surprisingly, widows, who are currently living in a camp are the ones most willing to accept cash-for-work in rubble clearing, brick making and the like as they are the most desperate to earn some cash. Also differences exist between IDPs coming from urban or rural areas. Seemingly, in rural communities (e.g. fisherfolk) traditionally women have been contributing to the family income in many ways. Now, they are being supported by their men to engage in cash-for-work programmes including traditionally male-dominated labour. Moreover, outside Banda Aceh women naturally work in family businesses producing clay bricks, whereas men and women in Banda Aceh explained that making bricks would not be a suitable job for women in any kind of situation.

ILO initiatives in relation to gender equality in Aceh:

- "Work for Women Week" – special registration week for women in order to further encourage women to register with the ESPNAD (taking place 8-13 March)
- Assessment (still on-going) of cultural attitudes towards women entering male-dominated jobs in particular within the reconstruction effort
- Identification of a group of women willing to clear rubble – role model group to encourage more women to participate in cash-for-work programmes
- Assessment (still on-going) of practicability of combining child-care-services and training of child-minders
- Training undertaken by ESPNAD generally includes female participants (SIYB ToT 1: 6 women out of 15 participants; SIYB ToT 2: 9 women out of 20 participants)