**Model Name: Post-Conflict Reintegration in Aceh**

**Region: Aceh, Indonesia**

**Time Period: 2005 to Present**

**Introduction**

The Free Aceh Movement and Boko Haram share similar underlying grievances, but the circumstances for these two post-conflict reintegrations are incomparable. While program efficacy may not be transferrable, Aceh’s programmatic challenges and lessons learned should inform the logistics of any reintegration program for Boko Haram in Nigeria.

**Insurgency Description: Free Aceh Movement (GAM)**

The Free Aceh Movement (GAM) was formed in 1976 with the objective of self-determination and implementation of Shari’a law for the Aceh region. Since then, GAM-related violence and corresponding violence by the Indonesian military has come in waves. Military campaigns launched in response to GAM activity killed thousands and resulted in human rights violations. Following the 2004 hurricane that killed 167,000 in Aceh, the GAM and Government of Indonesia (GoI) reached a peace agreement, the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), signed in 2005.[[1]](#footnote-0)

**Causal Elements: Autonomy, Economics, Military Abuses**

GAM’s grievances included economic marginalization, especially with consideration of Aceh’s oil and gas resources, lack of cultural and political autonomy, especially with consideration of the practice of a more conservative Islam, and human rights abuses by the military.[[2]](#footnote-1) These expressed grievances are reflected in the Acehnese people’s perception of the conflict’s causes.[[3]](#footnote-2)

**Civilian Agency Involvement: Yes**

In accordance with the MoU, the Aceh Reintegration Agency (BRA) was formed under the Governor of Aceh.[[4]](#footnote-3) Since 2005, BRA itself has seen variations in structure, form and activities.[[5]](#footnote-4)

**Military Involvement: No**

**International Agency/Expert Involvement: Yes**

International agency support flooded Aceh following the destructive 2004 tsunami.[[6]](#footnote-5) The international agencies involved in reintegration included the International Organization of Migration (IOM), European Union (EU), World Bank, and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The participation of these organizations in reintegration efforts varied from funding to monitoring to technical assistance to establishing and running programs. IOM was invited by the Government of Indonesia (GoI) to oversee the release of political prisoners and provide for the reintegration of former combatants. IOM also facilitated critical public information sharing by printing and distributing copies of the Helsinki MoU to the public. IOM also managed the Village Prosperity Through Peace Program (*Makmu Gampong Kareuna Damē)* for quick-impact projects and traditional reconciliation activities for communities.[[7]](#footnote-6)

The World Bank began the Kecamatan Development Project in October 2006, which was transformed into the Kecamatan-Based Reconstruction and Reintegration Program (KDP) in order to aid BRA with their economic empowerment efforts.[[8]](#footnote-7)

The UNDP’s Strengthening Sustainable Peace and Development in Aceh (SSDPA) Program provided technical assistance to BRA, as well as programs for livelihood improvement of ex-combatants and victims of conflict.[[9]](#footnote-8) The UNDP, in conjunction with the EU, also created the Strengthening Access to Justice for Peace and Development project, which aimed to clarify legal framework for customary law, support transitional justice, and increase awareness and access to legal counsel.[[10]](#footnote-9)

**NGO Involvement: Yes**

Civil society representatives were given initial seats at the BRA table, although their roles and continued representation remain unclear.[[11]](#footnote-10) International aid organizations often funded civil society organizations to provide services, such as the UNDP’s Gender-Responsive Approach for Reintegration and Peace Stabilization, which provided funds to support the reintegration of female ex-combatants and women left out of the official DDR process.[[12]](#footnote-11)

**Impetus for Reintegration: Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)**

**Criteria for Reintegration:**

The three populations for reintegration identified in the MoU were former combatants, political prisoners, and affected civilians.[[13]](#footnote-12) Through political negotiations, BRA’s Economic Empowerment program also came to include GAM non-combatants and Pembela Tanah Air (PETA) pro-Indonesian militants.[[14]](#footnote-13) Beyond individual programs, community-based programs broadened the addressed populations.

It was expected that GAM would provide a list of 3,000 combatants to be served by BRA’s ex-combatant reintegration efforts. The creation of such a list did not occur. First, the number of GAM combatants was far greater than 3,000; Second, GAM feared that the peace process would collapse and former combatants would be punished; Third, GAM’s desire to control the reintegration process. Instead, BRA provided allowances to GAM that were spread more widely among its network.[[15]](#footnote-14)

GAM, BRA, and Acehnese civil society agreed on a 10-point criteria for “affected civilians.” The criteria included loss of life, physical damage, loss of wealth, displacement, injury, illness, and loss of employment.[[16]](#footnote-15) Unfortunately, these criteria had little effect on the actual distribution of assistance.[[17]](#footnote-16)

BRA solicited victim applications and was inundated with over 50,000 applications covering 600,000 individuals.[[18]](#footnote-17) As a result, BRA turned to the WB-funded KDP project to facilitate victim assistance. KDP provided community-based assistance to villages, using facilitators to help identify conflict victims and their needs. Villages were required to hold four community meetings in order to identify, propose, and address their needs with a project. These meetings were meant to emphasize community ownership and the last meeting was devoted to accountability reports after project completion. Allocation size was based on a village’s level of conflict, history of successful KDP grants, exposure to violence, village size, and conflict victims’ needs. Following the first round of village funding, KDP reverted their program to individual allocations.[[19]](#footnote-18)

**Prosecution/Punitive Component: No (Not yet)**

In accordance with the MoU, GAM combatants were given amnesty and political prisoners were released with the exception of “disputed cases” and continued violence. Article 2.2 and 2.3 of the MoU mandated the creation of a human rights court (HRC) and a truth and reconciliation commission (TRC). Article 1.4.5 held that military personnel who had committed civilian crimes would be tried in Aceh civilian court.[[20]](#footnote-19)

The implementation of the human rights court and truth and reconciliation commission outlined in the MoU stalled. For ten years, victims and activists sought the creation of HRC and TRC institutions for justice, in addition to the public release of official government reports on human rights abuses by security forces.[[21]](#footnote-20) In November 2015, the Aceh provincial parliament announced the selection of a team for the TRC to operate between 2016 and 2021.[[22]](#footnote-21) There have been no reports of the commission’s commencement.

**Community Engagement: Yes**

Prior to reintegration the community acceptance level of former combatants was approximately 90 percent.[[23]](#footnote-22) Through KDP, communities were engaged in discussions to determine funding for community-based projects.

**Reconciliation, Social & Political Elements: No, No & Yes, Respectively**

Official BRA funds focused on economic development and did not include allocations for social reintegration.[[24]](#footnote-23) International aid organizations like IOM facilitated some traditional reconciliation ceremonies, although the extent and effect of such ceremonies is unclear.[[25]](#footnote-24)

The MoU provided Aceh with special autonomy and the formation of local political parties. Since then, two GAM-affiliated Aceh governors have been elected.

**Psychological Elements: No**

**Education, skills, and job training**

BRA provided economic assistance and capital to former combatants, political prisoners, and affected civilians without much training for the use of such capital. Given this criticism, in 2009, BRA began providing limited vocational training in certain districts. Aside from BRA, IOM has provided vocational assistance to amnestied former prisoners and combatants.[[26]](#footnote-25)

**Incentives: Yes**

The allocation of cash to former combatants, political prisoners, and affected civilians provided incentives for participation, inundating BRA beyond its capacity.

**Follow-up: No**

**Cost Estimate**

Cost numbers vary widely, based on program, agency, and timeframe inclusion. BRA’s pool for allocation totaled to $150 million.[[27]](#footnote-26) Another report from the Asia Foundation estimated that $365 million was spent between 2005 and 2009 by GoI and international donors on peacebuilding.[[28]](#footnote-27)

**Financing: GoI, Foreign Governments, and International Organizations**

**Results/Metrics: Yes**

Data on Aceh includes household perception surveys, case studies, aid and donor reviews, economic surveys, violence incident reports, and more.[[29]](#footnote-28)

**Challenges**

*Defining the Target Population:* The MoU was seen as pioneering in acknowledging victims as a target population for reintegration. Between former combatants, political prisoners, and “affected civilians,” however, the line between the target population and community for reintegration into was difficult to define. Damages could be calculated as lives lost, monetary losses, unemployment, physical destruction, and psychological harm. Approximately 15,000 individuals lost their lives and damages exceeded $10.7 trillion.[[30]](#footnote-29) A Harvard University medical team found that 33 percent of Acehnese suffered from depression and 48 percent from anxiety.[[31]](#footnote-30) Forty-nine percent of the Acehnese population considers themselves to be a victim of the conflict.[[32]](#footnote-31) This made the task of verifying individual allocation targets challenging and even impossible.

*Individual Allocations vs. Community-Based Projects:* BRA-KDP experimented with both individual allocations and funding community-based projects. Individual allocations were challenging because of verification and coordination between different allocation programs. The Multi-Stakeholder Review of Post-Conflict Programming in Aceh (MSR) results suggested that individual allocations did not have a significant effect on economic welfare.[[33]](#footnote-32)

Community-based projects, on the other hand, had more widespread and measurable impacts on perceptions of welfare. Communities that received KDP saw an 11-point decrease in “poor” populations perceived by village heads. The community-based programs were more likely to include marginalized and minority groups, although there was no evidence of stronger social cohesion or government relations as a result.[[34]](#footnote-33)

*Holding Government Forces Accountable for Human Rights Abuses:* The Acehenese NGO Coalition for Human Rights registered over ten thousand cases of human rights abuses during the conflict.[[35]](#footnote-34) Despite mandates in the MoU for a HRC and TRC, neither transitional justice system has been created.

**Successes: No Violence, Program Impact (albeit small)**

*Program Impact (albeit small):* Community-funded projects had a greater measurable effect on economic welfare than individual allocations.

**Similarities to Boko Haram: Religion, Oil & Economic Inequality, Widespread Poverty, Military Atrocities**

*Religion:*Both GAM and Boko Haram espouse literalist Islamic ideals, although the differences in how they use religion to drive their organization and shape their communities are significant.

**Differences to Boko Haram: Tsunami, Community Attitudes, Peace Agreement & Political Representation**

*Tsunami:* The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami Aceh drastically affected the circumstances for post-conflict reintegration. First, the utter devastation caused by the tsunami inflicted widespread injury to fighters and non-fighters alike. Second, the tsunami’s destruction spurred a massive outpouring of international aid to Indonesia. Post-conflict rehabilitation thus coincided with post-tsunami rehabilitation, and it is hard to distinguish between the effects of the two.

Aside from GoI’s official reintegration agency BRA, international aid organizations aprovided a lot of supplemental support to the post-conflict reintegration process. While BRA focused on financial allocations and economic development for the target populations outlined in the MoU, international programs extended aid to psychological elements, traditional reconciliation ceremonies, skills training, and victim populations unacknowledged by the MoU and BRA.

*Community Attitudes:* The majority of Acehenese were ready and willing to welcome GAM fighters back into their communities.

1. Patrick Barron, Erman Rahmant, and Kharisma Nugroho, “The Contested Corners of Asia: Subnational Conflict and International Development Assistance, The Case of Aceh, Indonesia,” The Asia Foundation, PDF, 1, 10-12. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. “Indonesia (Aceh),” Escola de Cultura de Pau, PDF, 1; Barron, Rahmant, and Nugroho, “The Contested Corners of Asia,” 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. Barron, Rahmant, and Nugroho, “The Contested Corners of Asia,” 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. Barron, Rahmant, and Nugroho, “The Contested Corners of Asia,” 69; Leena Avonius, “Reintegration: BRA’s roles in the past and its future visions,” Crisis Management Initiative, PDF, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. Avonius, “Reintegration,” 4-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. Adrian Morel, “Using CDD for Post-conflict reintegration: Lessons from the impact evaluation of the BRA-KDP Program in Aceh,” (presentation, Development Impact Evaluation Initiative Workshop, Dubai, UAE, June 1, 2010), 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
7. Barron, Rahmant, and Nugroho, “The Contested Corners of Asia,” 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
8. “ID-KDP Nias,” World Bank, <http://www.worldbank.org/projects/P100766/id-kdp-nias?lang=en&tab=overview>; Avonius, “Reintegration,” 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
9. Barron, Rahmant, and Nugroho, “The Contested Corners of Asia,” 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
10. Barron, Rahmant, and Nugroho, “The Contested Corners of Asia,” 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
11. Leena Avonius, “Reintegration: BRA’s roles in the past and its future visions,” Crisis Management Initiative, PDF, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
12. Barron, Rahmant, and Nugroho, “The Contested Corners of Asia,” 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
13. “Memorandum of Understanding Between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and Free Aceh Movement,” PDF. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
14. Avonius, “Reintegration,” 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
15. Barron, Rahmant, and Nugroho, “The Contested Corners of Asia,” 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
16. Leena Avonius, “Justice and the Aceh Peace Process,” in From the Ground Up: Perspectives on Post-Conflict and Post-Tsunami Aceh,” ed. Patrick Daly, R. Michael Feener, Anthony Reid (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2012), 238. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
17. Avonius, “Reintegration,” 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
18. Blair Palmer, “The price of peace,” *Inside Indonesia*, July 16, 2007, http://www.insideindonesia.org/the-price-of-peace. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
19. Patrick Barron, Macartan Humphreys, Laura Paler, and Jeremy Weinstein, “Community-Based Reintegration in Aceh: Assessing the Impacts of BRA-KDP,” World Bank, December 2009, PDF, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
20. “Memorandum of Understanding Between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and Free Aceh Movement,” PDF, 2-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
21. “Indonesia: Time to Face the Past: Justice for past abuses in Indonesia's Aceh province,” Amnesty International, April 18, 2013, http://www.amnestyusa.org/research/reports/indonesia-time-to-face-the-past-justice-for-past-abuses-in-indonesia-s-aceh-province. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
22. “Indonesia: Appointment of Aceh truth commission selection team a step closer to truth and reparation for victims,” Amnesty International, November 30, 2015, https://www.amnesty.nl/nieuwsportaal/pers/indonesia-appointment-aceh-truth-commission-selection-team-step-closer-truth-and-. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
23. “Indonesia (Aceh),” Escola de Cultura de Pau, PDF, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
24. Lina Frodin, “The challenges of reintegration in Aceh,” *Accord* 20, PDF, 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
25. Barron, Rahmant, and Nugroho, “The Contested Corners of Asia,” 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
26. Avonius, “Reintegration,” 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
27. Blair Palmer, “The price of peace,” *Inside Indonesia*, July 16, 2007, http://www.insideindonesia.org/the-price-of-peace. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
28. Patrick Barron, “Lessons from Aceh: Early Focus on Institutions Critical to Cementing Peace,” Asia Foundation, June 12, 2013, <http://asiafoundation.org/2013/06/12/lessons-from-aceh-early-focus-on-institutions-critical-to-cementing-peace/>; Note: Aid for post-tsunami recovery totaled to $8 billion. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
29. Barron, Rahmant, and Nugroho, “The Contested Corners of Asia,” 5; “Indonesia’s Nationals Violence Monitoring System, World Bank, 2015, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/video/2015/08/17/indonesias-national-violence-monitoring-system>. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
30. Barron, Rahmant, and Nugroho, “The Contested Corners of Asia,” 1, 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
31. Avonius, “Justice and the Aceh Peace Process,” 227. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
32. Barron, Humphreys, Paler, and Weinstein, “Community-Based Reintegration in Aceh,” 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
33. Barron, Rahmant, and Nugroho, “The Contested Corners of Asia,” 50-51. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
34. Barron, Humphreys, Paler, and Weinstein, “Community-Based Reintegration in Aceh,” iii. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
35. Avonius, “Justice and the Aceh Peace Process,” 226. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)