

Promises and Lies after Central Java's Earthquake

Saturday 8 July 2006, by [ARIANE Zely](#), [GUSTI Sari](#) (Date first published: 8 July 2006).

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It is now almost two months since the earthquake disaster struck Central Java and Jogjakarta, resulting in the paralysis of citizens' lives in the surrounding area. Thousands of people died and thousands of others were wounded, forced to live in evacuation tents as their houses were destroyed by the earthquake. It also destroyed lots of public infrastructures, schools, hospitals, markets and offices.

The economic activities of the people have certainly come to a halt. The people continue to suffer from want of food and lodging. Any kind of aid is hoped for. The earthquake has also affected the victims psychologically, with their trauma worsened by the problem of security, i.e., cases of theft and robbery.

Indonesian Vice President Jusuf Kalla, coordinator as well of the National Disaster Management and Refugee Coordination Board (BAKORNAS PBP), in his first visit to Jogjakarta, promised that the state would give the victims living cost allowances in the amount of RP.3000 [0,33 US dollars] per person/day; rice 10kg/family/month; grief money for the dead victims RP.2 million/person would be given to the relatives; and reconstruction fund between RP 10-20 million for lightly damaged houses, and until RP.30 million for heavily damaged houses, including the land.

So far BAKORNAS PBP has been very slow and uncoordinated in managing aid. From all the promises that had been given by BAKORNAS, only the living cost allowances (RP.3000 per person/day) have been realized.

Solidarity of the People for Humanity (SORAK)

After the emergency phase, the ISI (Indonesian Art Institute) Command Post of Bantul, Jogjakarta, (our main post in Jogjakarta) experienced limitations in undertaking further activities. This was mainly due to the academic activities undertaken by the students, and also the organizational constraints of the ISI command post's members.

Several organizations which still intended to continue the recovery programs in a long-term period took the initiative of forming a new forum. They agreed to form the Solidarity of The People for Humanity (SORAK) of Yogyakarta which would focus its work on cleaning & the reconstruction program; rehabilitation; advocacy & monitoring; economic empowerment; and the art gallery.

Some programs that were carried out by SORAK were the channelling of aid to the casualties and humanitarian needs in 60 points. These included foodstuff; cleaning the building rubbles and re-

development; also reducing the psychological impact (trauma) with the counseling program, entertainment, and games for the children.

On the bad management by the BAKORTANAS, Aslihul Alya (Yayak), coordinator of SORAK Jogjakarta said, "it was not a surprise, remember that the government had the same terrible management in Aceh with the tsunami reconstruction work, the state administration never learnt anything from what had happened in Aceh. Even the refugees still stay in tents after two years of tsunami reconstruction". Yayak also added, "that is why we are planning to organize a protest around these issues, probably Klaten Post will also be doing the same efforts. This government should be pressured politically or else they won't do anything urgently."

Earthquake Victims Protest in Klaten

On Thursday 6th July 2006, hundreds of earthquake victims in several municipalities in Klaten, Central Java, demonstrated against the government's unfulfilled promises of living cost and reconstruction fund after the disaster.

This protest was organized by a joint post of earthquake victims in Klaten such as Klaten Peasant Forum (FPK), National Student League for Democracy (LMND), and National Peasant Union (STN). They rallied from the Regional Government Radio Broadcast Center (RSPD) of Klaten to the Klaten Regent office. Most of them were women with their children who carried the main banner which said "The welfare of the victims are government responsibility." Hundreds of posters demanded for the re-encoding the aid acceptor based on justice, and to act against the manipulation by BAKORNAS officials etc.

Bismo Prasetyo, coordinator of Klaten Peasant Forum, questioned where the aid that should be given to the victims had gone. After more than one month, many victims have not yet received side-dish money and rice. He added that "thousands of Klaten victims have now been abandoned in emergency tents. The promise by Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Jusuk Kalla (SBY-JK) to give rehabilitation fund for houses is becoming uncertain. There are no excuses why this should be delayed."

The Klaten Peasant Forum also found out that aid money has been misused during its distribution, for example, the grief money received in several areas was only RP.1million, and many victims have not even received any grief money. The money for side-dish [non-rice foodstuff] also was reduced from RP.90.000/person to RP.50.000/person, and also, the rice distributed amounted only to 8 or 9kg/family/month. They also stated that many victims still got no tents for their temporary relocation.

Note

* 1 US dollar = 9.000 rupiahs.

P.S.

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