

Update on MERAPI Disaster: Government failing to coordinate aid efforts

Thursday 11 November 2010, by [ARM](#) (Date first published: 9 November 2010).

Statement by Alliance of Peoples' Struggles (ARM)

Starting from November 5 2010, the national SBY-Budiono government decided that the Merapi volcano eruption disaster would be led by the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB). The BNPB Chief will also be helped by the Governor of Yogyakarta (DIY), the Governor of Central Java (Central Java), Commander IV / Diponegoro, Central Java Police Chief, and Police Chief DIY (source: detik.com). The establishment of this new coordinating structure is symptomatic of the failure of disaster management by the Indonesian government; action is only taken once problem emerge rather than anticipating and preventing those problems in the first place.

For example, the evacuation process was not executed well in advance although the volcano authorities had already informed the government that Merapi was on high alert status. As a result the evacuation of residents only took place about 3-5 days before Merapi erupted, not to mention the situation of residents who did not want to be evacuated. Even if they have already been evacuated, they go back home to check on their cattle and their homes. This situation should have been anticipated from the beginning by the government. Even the government's promise that it has set aside Rp 100 billion (approx AUD\$100,000) to buy new livestock was announced after the disaster had occurred.

The delay has meant that the government has failed to establish centralised coordination between the refugee shelters, meaning that there is no clear prioritisation of the needs of each shelter. Furthermore most of the fundraising is coming from private parties and non-governmental organisations, whereas there are many shelters that have not been touched by government assistance. Refugees in the Muntilan region are not receiving government assistance. However, thanks to a strong community response, the refugees are still receiving adequate logistical needs, except for clothes and baby milk. The Keningar village chief, Agus Sumarno said: "Aid flows smoothly, but there is no government assistance. I have to report to the district, but there is no continuity" (source: Kompas).

Unfortunately, when the government does not adequately coordinate the relief efforts the management of individual shelters will try to meet its own needs resulting in uneven distribution of relief supplies. The reality on the ground is that there are still many shelters which are refusing to accomodate additional refugees, one of them is the post SMPN 1, Prambanan. In addition, because of the uncertain status of Merapi there are increasing numbers of refugees seeking aid. Not to mention the lack of proper sanitation and toilets, as in the Maguwoharjo Stadium where there are approximately 20,000 refugees and clean water is still scarce. The same problem has emerged in the Gadjah Madah University Student Center where there are 941 refugees. The governments poor management has meant that the significant relief funds (Rp 3.9 billion, approx AUD\$400,000) have not translated into good results. When the government fails in handling disaster management, then the people must act.

We of the Alliance of Peoples' Struggles (ARM) Yogyakarta demand:

- * The state shall be responsible for the rights of refugee victims of natural disasters.
- * Fulfill the rights of refugees: food, clean water, clothing, good sanitation, toilets, entertainment, education, health, etc.
- * Compensation for damaged homes and livestock that have died /disappeared.
- * Education and free healthcare for the people.

And we call on the community and shelter management to begin organising meetings and discussions related to this issue and seek an appropriate solution to the welfare of refugees and people in general.

Thank you, Yogyakarta, 9 November 2010

Please send messages of solidarity to: Yayasan Aslihul
+ 62 0817460268
Email: [aliansi.rakyat.menggugat @ gmail.com](mailto:aliansi.rakyat.menggugat@gmail.com)

Donations can be made to:
Mandiri Bank Cabang Kediri
Bank Address: Jl. Diponegoro 17 Jawa Timur
Account No. 144-000-5472-979
Account Holder: Aslihul Alia
SWIFT CODE BEIINDJA

Materials donated essential goods, including milk, diapers, clothes, drug captopril (hypertension), mats, maternal milk (Prenagen), blankets, sarongs, adult clothes, kids reading material, sanitary materials, can be sent to: Post ARM Secretariat: 1. Dormitory IKPM-South Sumatra, Jl. Bausasran, DN. 3 No. 595, Yogyakarta, Indonesia 2. Secretariat Mahardhika, Jl. Babaran, alley 6, UH 3, No. 782, Rt 29, Rw7, Celeban Baru,

Yogyakarta, Indonesia

You can check updates on: <http://armformerapi.blogspot.com/>

P.S.

* The ARM is a coalition of womens', students, labour and peasant organisations that is centrally involved in many struggles in Yogyakarta.