

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY TRAINERS

UPLINK-GROOTS Workshop on "The Role of Grassroot Women in Disaster Management",

December 3rd - 7th 2006
Magelang, Indonesia

- Report

Last December 3rd -7th UPLINK and GROOTs held a workshop on the role of Grassroot Women in Disaster Management in Karang Tingal, Magelang, Indonesia. The goal of this workshop was strengthening women community trainers in disaster affected/prone areas. Twenty three community leaders/organizers (20 women and 7 men) from 14 UPLINK areas plus 4 women participants from Turkey joined this workshop. This workshop was facilitated by GROOTS team (Suranjana Gupta and Sandy Schillen) and KAIL on behalf of UPLINK (Intan Darmawati and Any Sulistyowati).

The workshop consist of three major parts, i.e. (1) Sharing women experiences from disaster affected areas, (2) Identifying Learning Needs and Teaching Opportunity for grassroots women leader/trainer, and (3) Developing Action Plan.

There were 3 presentations for the first part, i.e. from Yogyakarta, Aceh and Turkey. They shared their experiences facing disaster and their strategies in response to disasters. There were a lot of similarities found in those 3 cases. Below are summary of the similarities.

Entry points for collective action after disaster:

- Food security (community kitchen, etc)
- Pool / collect money and available aid
- Collective labour + tools for house repairing
- Income generation (dollmaking, livelihoods, sewing, herb making, etc)
- Health and well being (prayer meeting, trauma healing,etc)
- Child care and family support
- Protecting land and community from encroachment
- Restoring basic services (water and electricity)
- Collecting information and rename settlements (village mapping, community need assessment)
- Meeting information and negotiating with officials
- Organic composting and waste recycling

Strategies to sustain participation:

- Mobilize resources and info to participation (labour, electricity, etc)
- Revive orinitiale community organisations
- Established democratic participation decision making process
- Establish public center by and for women
- Resettle in traditional villages to anchor your future
- Mobilize youth and educate children
- Building relationship with NGO's and other, who will support you over time

There are also some challenges, such as:

- Mismatched aid/entitlements and aid came in the wrong time.
- Bureaucratc partial government and support
- Only focus on relief and forgetting the long term process of recovery and rehabilitation
- Corruption (NGO, government, community, donor)
- No room for community participation in decision making process
- Women do not participate in public decision making and implementation

- No information about safe place to live
- No special place for women to be together
- Developing justice for the weak
- Role division in community doesn't work
- Not using local and internal resources

The participants also got an opportunity to go for a field visit to disaster affected area. They went to Kategan and Manding, 2 villages in Bantul that hardly affected by earthquake lat May 2006. Through this visit the participants could get the first hand experiences and exchange learning/ experiences/ideas/support directly with disaster affected communities. Some informal exchange among participant already happened in this field visit, such as Nenek Dela, a community leader from Jakarta, already supporting community in Kategan to advocate the issues of housing aid from Vice President of Indonesia. Or how this field visit had changed the paradigm of Aceh participants about their self, about how lucky they are compared to other disaster victim in Yogya.

The second part is done in two separate group work. The first group consisted of disaster affected group such as participants from Turkey, Aceh and Yogya, while the second group consisted of participants from disaster prone areas. They were given different set of questions as follows:

Questions for the group 1:

1. What do you have to offer others, especially related with disaster management?
2. What do you want to learn to increase your/your community leadership capacity? Are there anyone that can offer the skills you mention?
3. What kind of support do you need so that questions number 1 and 2 can be fulfilled.

Questions for Group 2:

1. Why our community need to learn to the affected disaster community?
2. Two strengths and two challenges your community/region/group brings to responding to disaster?
3. What strategies should be thought so that the community will be empowered to face disaster? What should they do? What they need?

The second part resulting some data about potency of community to community learning needs and teaching opportunities.

The third part is about creating action plan. Based on the data from part two, then they drafted an action plan for community teaching and learning in every area. This draft will be discussed in UPLINK National Meeting during the second week of December 2006.

Some of the learning points of this workshop are:

- Many strategies that are used to handle disaster are the same as many activities that already done by the participants in their communities, such as saving, income generating, child care, alternative health, community meeting etc.
- It requires skills which are more or less the same as the skills required for community leaders, such as how to collect people, how to set up a community meeting, how to manage activities effectively, how to create a good system.

The communities, including women, already have some skills and knowledge to handle disaster although their knowledge and skill are often ignored in the public sphere and they are often been left over in the public decision making process.

For the action plan, the groups were divided into 4; i.e. Yogya, Aceh, Turkey and two UPLINK's interest group: Women and Children Group and Disaster Management Group. Yogya team came up with two types of learning program; i.e. women leadership program such as public speaking and facilitation skills; and technical program such as arpillerra, composting, construction and how to set up public kitchen. Aceh team came up with technical program such as arpillerra, composting, decorating umbrella, housing construction and alternative health. The Women and Children Group also came up with two types of programs. The first type are the skills that already mastered within UPLINK network. They will create community learning program among UPLINK network members. The second one are the skills that they wanted from the Turkey Team. The Disaster Interest Group came up with 7 training proposals, ranging from disaster preparedness to how to develop long term post disaster strategies. The Turkey Team came up with the plan to create manuals and training plan for the activities they already set up for teens of years. All of these action plans will be integrated with the overall UPLINK yearly plan which will be discussed on its yearly national meeting.

Despite of some problems like language barrier and time limit, the workshop can be said to be successful. It met the target of creating action plan for community trainers. It also had successfully facilitates exchanges experiences/learning process among participants, especially women in UPLINK networks from different parts of Indonesia as well as with their colleagues from Turkey.

Another success of this workshop was the entry level of participants kept high since the beginning until the end of the workshop. Most of them actively participated in the discussion. Many plenary and group work sessions lasted for longer hours than the initial plan to accommodate their curiosity about certain issues. They were willing to work hard until late at night and started again early in the next morning. This expressed the habits of 'hard work' of poor people within UPLINK network.

The participants were performed as expected during the selection process. Most of them also seriously participated in every single workshop activities, ranging from very fun activities like ice breaking game, serious plenary debates, group work, personal reflection, field visit until singing and dancing for the cultural night. There were some exception of participants qualification, either too quiet/shy or too destructive. Both of type mostly came on the last minute decision, without any selection process. In the case of women that were very shy to express their feeling in the beginning of the workshop, all of them spoke up at least once during this workshop. Ibu Kamirah, one of the quietest participant from Yogya, even promised herself to be more active like Nenek Dela in the future. Nenek Dela was one of the most active women leader from Jakarta who encourage Ibu Kamirah to be more confident with herself and willing to learn a lot despite of their old ages. She said that she totally understand Ibu Kamirah's feeling, because she had experience the same some years ago in her earlier time joining UPC (UPLINK Jakarta).

There were several recommendation as follow up of this process as follows. Many women community leaders of UPLINK had shown their promising potencies to be a good community trainers in the future. It will be fruitful if they get the capacity building process. Learning from other community has been believed as an effective process for community capacity building. Therefore UPLINK need to design the systematic process of capacity building process among women leaders. Special person in charge will be required to follow-up this process.

For some women, this workshop is their first experience to meet other women leaders from different countries, different cities or event from different communities. They have already exchanged many things, experiences, knowledge, network and spirit. Hope it will be fruitful and strengthening their role back to their communities.