

## Supporting Women's Livelihoods

Research conducted at 8 camps in Banda Aceh after the tsunami of December 2004 revealed that there were twice as many males as females among the survivors<sup>3</sup>. Not only are women physically weaker than men, but they are less able to swim and climb due to traditional customs. After the tsunami, the women survivors were challenged to develop better adaptation to future disasters. The vast majority of women in Aceh rely heavily on various farming activities, but the survivors were left with land littered with debris. PMI, with support from Red Cross Red Crescent partners working in Indonesia, has been working to restore the capacity of women in Aceh Jaya. With sector training and cash grants routed directly to the women beneficiaries, they have been able to become economically independent with a stable income.



## The Way Forward



“Strategies and Approaches in Relation to Gender Sensitivity” is PMI’s milestone in the commitment to supporting gender equality and gender mainstreaming throughout all of its programs across different sectors. It will be incorporated into the PMI Strategic Plan 2009-2014, and will be further promoted at all levels and sectors throughout the country. At the same time, PMI also plans to research and develop a comprehensive “Climate Change Adaptation Policy” including “how-to” manuals to consolidate the integration of Climate Change Adaptation into PMI strategies, policies and training manuals. One of the highest priorities for 2009 is the objective for the General Assembly to adopt the “Climate Change Adaptation Policy” into the PMI Strategic Plan 2009-2014, thereby setting forth the commitment to integrating climate change adaptation measures throughout the PMI system and structure.

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Climate  
**Change** | Gender  
Adaptation

## Background



Women form a significant proportion of the workforce in Indonesia, accounting for over 70 percent of labor in farming activities<sup>1</sup>. However, they are usually considered as unskilled manual “laborers” while men are considered skilled “farmers” and their economic contribution is not often recognized. In post-disaster situations, women with weak social position have less access to resources, decision making processes and benefits. On the contrary, men’s psychological health is often neglected and left untreated because men are seen as mentally more powerful than women.

A component of the response to climate change that needs to be reflected upon is gender equality. The existing patterns of gender inequality are magnified by the impact of climate change since it is strongly correlated to poverty, cultural norms, technology, information, and decision-making authority. Most cultures of the world, including that found in Indonesia, are shaped by male-dominated societies. However, it is recently being suggested that women better understand the causes and local consequences of changes in climatic conditions<sup>2</sup>. Addressing gender equality in disaster response and management is important in accessing knowledge and skills for orienting the adaptation process. PMI has issued “Strategies and Approaches in Relation to Gender Sensitivity” in 2008 to ensure proper implementation of gender mainstreaming in all disaster management activities.

## Gender Mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming involves mobilizing policies and measures at all levels of the organization. Palang Merah Indonesia or PMI’s (Indonesian Red Cross) gender policy is focused on promoting gender-sensitive vulnerability and capacity analysis in all disaster response and risk reduction activities. The policy encourages balancing the roles, responsibility, needs, interests and capacities of both genders in contingency plans for disaster emergency response as well as implementation of community based projects. For instance, PMI encourages a balance in the number of men and women on the management board (as a decision making body) and community based action teams (as the implementation body). In addition, domestic items and hygiene kits, which are among key pre-positioned stocks for PMI, respect the practical needs of women.



## Gender-Responsive Shelters



The most important need after a disaster occurrence is often the delivery of safe shelter that addresses the necessities of the affected population. With a key role in nationwide disaster relief operations, PMI has integrated gender-sensitivity into shelter planning as a means of ensuring all affected people benefit equally from safe shelter. The PMI Disaster Response Teams (SATGANA) and volunteers that are mobilized to assist shelter construction and management have been given gender-responsive training on shelter construction. This involves recognizing the specific needs of women, such as security, hygienic needs and accessibility of public services and prioritizing them in shelter design and allocation. In addition, intervention indicators of the Sphere standards such as the distance between water points, safe separation and privacy between the sexes within a given household in emergency shelter settings have also been considered.

<sup>1</sup> Madhuchhanda M. (2003) “Gender Mainstreaming in Extension: Experience from Indonesia,” Presentation made at Operationalizing Reforms in Agricultural Extension in South Asia, New Delhi, India, May 6-8, 2003.  
<sup>2</sup> Carvajal-Escobar Y., Quintero-Angel M., and Garcia-Yargas M. (2008) “Women’s role in adapting to climate change and variability”, *Advances in Geosciences*, Vol. 14, pp. 277-280.