

REJUVENATING THE AGENDA FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD IN ACHEH AFTER THE TSUNAMI

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated Early Childhood Development (ECD) after the tsunami in Aceh. The paper aims to highlight the initiatives being implemented as part of the rejuvenating strategies towards ECD programmes in Aceh since the tsunami. The study employed a mixed method in data collection. A total of 103 respondents took part in interviews and 450 participated in a survey. However, this paper focuses only on the results yielded from the interviews. The views are expressed in terms of the building of new ECD centers, the renovation of the existing ECD centers, the training needs amongst the ECD teachers and the challenges of ECD. The results indicate that ECD is being given focus in the strategic plan for education of Aceh since the tsunami. Thus; this study implies that the agenda of rejuvenating ECD has become priority but the challenge lies in capacity building and advocacy in its ECD activities in order to have a wider impact with sustainable ECD programs.

Key words: rejuvenating strategies, ECD Programs, ECD centers, training needs.

INTRODUCTION

On December 26, 2004, the regions along the Indian Ocean coastline experienced what was the most destructive earthquake that struck off the northern coast of Aceh on the Island of Sumatra, Indonesia. Close to 230, 000 people were killed, 500 000 were left homeless, infrastructure was crippled, and hundreds and thousands of buildings were destroyed and damaged.

The western coastal areas of Aceh, including the cities of Banda Aceh, Calang, and Meulaboh, were among the areas hardest-hit by the tsunami resulting from the Indian Ocean earthquake (BRR Report, 2005). The disaster had a devastating impact on the children. Their lives were completely disrupted with the loss of parents and homes, and schools. The earthquake and tsunami took the lives of almost 2,500 teachers and tens of thousands of children. At this point, 750 schools have been reconstructed. Almost 450 temporary schools built by different actors during first year continued to benefit children. During 2006, adequate space was provided for teaching-learning while waiting for the permanent schools to be completed (BRR and Partners, 2006). Knowing the importance of education for children, many international communities initiated projects to help save lives and also to reconstruct education for the-children. The new focus given to Early Childhood Development (ECD) programs was overwhelming, particularly in Aceh (UNESCO, 2005).

POST-TSUNAMI IN ACHEH

Aceh generated attention through international assistance almost immediately after the tsunami. Eleven countries deployed some 4500 soldiers to provide emergency aid (Renner and Chafe, 2007). As many as 180 international non-government organizations (NGOs) registered in the provincial capital (Telford et al, 2006). Indonesians themselves collected huge amounts of food and clothing for tsunami survivors, and a flood of volunteers from all over the world poured into Aceh (Masyrafah and McKeon, 2008).

One year after the tsunami

After the first year, reconstruction was visible everywhere, but due to the sheer scale of the disaster, and logistical issues, progress were slow. As of February 2006, more than a year after the tsunami, it was reported that a large number of people were still living in barrack-style temporary living centers (TLC) or tents.

Most educational services had quickly restored, but problems of quality remained. Many children were being taught in tents or temporary learning spaces. A large program was undertaken to train more than 1100 new or temporary teachers to replace teachers who had lost their lives. However, children's education suffered from the disruption of services, the movement of communities in resettling, and the trauma of the disasters. More than five percent of children aged 7-12 were still not enrolled in school by August and more than ten percent of children aged 13-15 years were not going to school. It appears that many children leaving school to take up jobs, so potentially being deprived of life opportunities. The challenge was to complete the repairs to over 2,000 schools in Aceh, replacing the temporary facilities with disaster-resistant permanent ones. This also presented an opportunity to improve the quality of education delivery. Donors initially focused their support on reconstructing primary schools in urban areas and along main roads. Better targeting needed to ensure that the needs at the secondary levels met, as well as the significant needs in less accessible rural areas, and those places affected by the conflict (Save the Children, 2005).

Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) is also a major component of Plan's emergency response strategy. Falling under Plan's core emergency response areas of education and child protection, ECCD programs serve as a key mechanism for restoring a sense of normalcy and promoting healing among young children (Chang and Young, 2010).

In the immediate response phase, temporary ECCD centers are often set up in conjunction with child-friendly spaces as an initial safe space for young children. For example, Plan was able to set up temporary ECCD centers within 10 days of the devastating earthquake in Pakistan in 2005. Plan also successfully supported ECCD activities within Indonesia's tsunami reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts (Chang and Young, 2010).

Four years after the tsunami

Four years after the devastating tsunami- the biggest emergency response for many government and non-government agencies in history, while the world's focus had largely moved on. Save the Children has been positioned to help the communities recover. For example, in the education sector, schools kits, text book and scholarships were distributed. Besides that, inclusive education was expanded and Early

Childhood Development (ECD) programs had been strengthened by establishing a provincial ECD working group to promote the inclusion of ECD policies into mainstream education policies.

According to the new strategic plan for fiscal year 2009, ECD became a priority sector in the mainstream Aceh program. Thus, the year saw ECD programs emphasizing capacity building and advocacy in its ECD activities in order to have a wider impact sustainable ECD programs. This included strengthening the working group at provincial level to ensure the quality of ECD programs met and to advocate for the allocations of more resources for ECD in Aceh (Save the Children, 2009).

In this period both Plan International and Save the Children were very instrumental in the longer-term reconstruction and rehabilitation. Plan worked to establish or re-establish permanent ECCD programs. For example, in the aftermath of the December 2004 Tsunami, Plan Thailand worked through the Education Services Area Office and pre-existing ECCD centers to improve the quality and utilization of ECCD. The centers were re-equipped, caregivers were trained, and awareness-raising activities were held to increase demand for quality ECCD services. The project was highly successful, with positive results recognized by parents and government officials alike. In particular, the programs were especially well received by minority and vulnerable groups in the intervention areas, as they had little access to other options for childcare or education. In recognition of the high quality of care and teaching provided at Plan-supported ECCD centers, the local government committed to expanding Plan's model into all ECCD centers in the area. Plan also successfully supported ECCD activities within Indonesia's tsunami reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts in Aceh from 2004-2009 (Save the Children, 2009).

Following the Indian Ocean Tsunami of December 2004, Plan International implemented a three-year, American Red Cross-funded project in seven coastal sub-districts of Aceh Besar, Indonesia. Aimed at improving maternal and child health, ECCD activities constituted an important component of the project. In support of the District Health Office, the project revitalized 89 Posyandu (integrated service posts incorporating both health and ECCD services) in 55 villages. Through the project, 584 Posyandu cadres were trained on topics such as improved parenting and ECCD techniques, development of ECCD tools/toys, and child health education for mothers of children under five.

In addition, information, education, and communication (IEC) and behaviour change communication (BCC) activities promoted increased utilization of the revitalized facilities, as well as improved maternal and child health and parenting behaviours. IEC was integrated into a larger government network of Posyandu and Polindes throughout the province. The project-supported facilities have become fixtures in the 55 targeted post-tsunami villages, with high utilization rates and measurable improvements in health behaviours. An independent final evaluation found that Posyandu were functioning effectively—mothers regularly brought their children to Posyandu for ECCD activities and regular check-ups (i.e., child immunization, growth monitoring, etc.), with attendance rates at biweekly sessions ranging from 60 to 100 percent of the relevant population (Chang and Young, 2010).

According to the report, Save the Children (2009) also implemented an ECD programs in Aceh through community-based ECD centers in eight communities (Save the children, 2009). The target group was 3-5 year-old children. All of the planned activities under the ECD Aceh Program were completed with the funds from Save the Children Italy in December 2008. The completed activities were as follows:

1. Strengthened 54 the existing ECD centers with educational materials and outdoor play equipment.
2. Trained over 180 ECD facilitators.

3. Established a provincial ECD working group
4. Promoted the inclusion of ECD policies into mainstream education policies.
5. Supported 29 community learning centers that provide equivalency classes and vocational training to 2700 children engaged in at-risk of entering hazardous labour
6. Coordinated provincial level conference
7. Initiated ECD program review.

The above section provides an account of the initiatives being taken by various actors in the reconstruction phase after the tsunami in Aceh. Notable here is a greater concern being given to the ECD area.

While it is relative to identify the effectiveness of the reconstruction program, the achievements were much more difficult to determine. From this perspective of contemporary, how far had ECD had been reconstructed to cater to the needs of the children in general? To what extent had the affected children benefited from ECD programs now in Aceh after the tsunami? Thus, a study is timely to examine the current situation of CED in Aceh.

THE RESEARCH

This study was carried out in the context of a joint research undertaken by the Office of Governor Aceh and Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) in Malaysia. The study looks into understanding the important lesson learnt amongst the survivors from the impact of the tsunami. The study also aims at investigating into the schools' development at the three levels, after the eighth year of rebuilding programs contributed

by various actors at post tsunami period. The study focus is on ECD after the tsunami. In June 2012, this collaborative research between UPSI and Aceh was initiated and a team of researchers embarked on the study. Specifically, the paper presented the results based on the main objectives of the study, which are:

1. To what extent have new ECD centers been built?
2. How have initiatives for renovating the existing ECD centers progressed?
3. What are the training needs for ECD teachers?
4. What are challenges faced by providers of ECD?

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a mixed-method design in soliciting qualitative and quantitative data. The first phase consisted of the collection and analysis of qualitative data. The qualitative results were obtained from interviews with 103 respondents. They comprised of officers from the Governor's Office, officers and staff from the Education Department, teachers at all levels -- pre school, primary school and secondary school.

The researcher conducted the first phase of the study in Feb, April and May 2012. In Feb, the researchers collected the data through key-informants. Researchers interviewed representatives from the Governor Office, Education Department and the Higher Institutions. From 10 April to 28 April, researchers went to the three hardest-hit towns which were Banda Aceh, Calang and Meulaboh to conduct interviews upon the respondents. On January 10, 2013, the researcher made an additional visit to Aceh to update the findings during the first two visits.

During the first phase data collection, a field trip had been made to ECD centers in three areas. The initial information regarding ECD programs were gathered through the conversational-style interviews with the seven key informants identified for the study. Thus, the researchers gained access to the ECD centers through the key informants. Three ECD centers in Banda Aceh and two in Calang and two in Meulaboh were selected for the field trip. The interviews were conducted face-to-face with the respondents; some of the interviews were carried out in focus groups. During the first visit, a total of 103 interviews took place. During the additional visit made to Aceh in January 2013; a total of 53 interviews took place. At the same time, some of the initial findings were confirmed.

The second phase of the study was a survey. A set of questionnaires was constructed and distributed to 450 respondents in Aceh. In short, there were two cohorts of respondents in this study. The first cohort consisted of respondents who participated in the first phase of the study in gathering qualitative data, and the second cohort consisted of respondents who participated in the second phase of the study in gathering quantitative data. However, this paper aims to present only the findings based on the qualitative data.

In this context, the data obtained from all the respondents were collectively analysed to uncover common themes and sub-themes on the development of ECD in Aceh after tsunami. It is the aim of paper to highlight only the issues suggested in the objectives. Additional research should be carried out to investigate other areas in a more comprehensive manner in order to extend this information.

FINDINGS

The results of the investigation into ECD in Aceh after tsunami are presented and discussed in this section. The investigation was carried out based on the four critical areas at this juncture; they were: building of new ECD centers, the renovation of the existing ECD centers, the training needs for teachers in ECD programs and the challenges for ECD providers. In sum, the findings are presented based on the four objectives as below:

1. To what extent have new ECD centers been built?
2. How have initiatives for renovating the existing ECD centers progressed?
3. What are the training needs for ECD teachers?
4. What are challenges faced by providers of ECD?

The extent of ECD centers being built

ECD centers in Aceh were mostly set up through the community before the tsunami. After the tsunami, more private organizations were encouraged into building new ECD centers especially in the urban areas like Banda Aceh. A respondent put forward her observations in Excerpt 1.

Excerpt 1:

Ever since the tsunami, there have been many organizations providing aid for ECC and advocating on the importance of ECC. Many organizations also helped establish community based ECC allowing easier access of ECC for children

As it has been discussed in the earlier section, ECD centers had been rebuilt by Plan International and Save the Children in the effort of the reconstruction activities for Aceh after the tsunami, the results showed that in reality, the establishment of new ECD centers in Aceh faced certain constraints. For example, the constraints are lack of knowledge about ECD; the inadequate skills to promote ECD programs and lack of support from community.

Lack of knowledge about ECD

The providers, teachers and parents at the seven selected ECD centers as stated in the sample section, provided the views that ECD is important. However, the providers and teachers faced constraints in implementing ECD programs at the community level. They seemed lack of knowledge about ECD. More often than not, they found themselves handicapped as a teacher who is teaching in an ECD center in Meulaboh expressed her feelings in Excerpt 2.

Excerpt 2:

The knowledge about ECD is still limited, among teachers; among parents; what ECD are we talking about? Nursery? Kindergarten? Pre schools? Why are there so many different concepts?

Due to the lack of knowledge, teachers and parents could not interpret the concept of ECD effectively. Their mis-conceptualizations hindered their understanding and support for new ECD at the sub-urban or village level. Therefore, some parents were not encouraged to participate in the ECD programmes. A parent stated her feelings as shown in Excerpt 3.

Excerpt 3:

Sometimes we misunderstood about the ECD program from many sources. Even though they are good, we are more concern about the fees, the education and the learning?

The teachers stated that due to the lack of knowledge about early childhood, the emphasis on sending their children to school at a young age had continued. Some of the initiatives after the tsunami shifted the focus to child care and nutrition. Interestingly, the changed focus areas to child care and nutrition has aroused an encouraging change of mind set of people wanting to be involved with ECD. However, it was found that those who are interested are lacking in skills. As one of the teachers said, she was aspired to have her own ECD centers, she shared her opinions in Excerpt 4.

Excerpt 4:

We wanted an ECC which stimulates learning in a supportive and flexible environment while still encouraging the children to have fun. In particular, we wanted an ECC that fosters children's creativity and allow them to develop the skills, knowledge, values and attitudes to prepare them for life.

Despite the constraints, the ECD teacher at the above section revealed her interest in ECD programs for the children after the tsunami. Her inspiration is admirable. Should it serve as one of motivations towards the ECD programs in Aceh? On the other hand, she also expressed her concerns about that the inadequate skills in the ECD centers in Aceh nowadays. In this context, all the teachers revealed that they lacked

skills in managing the ECD programmes in their existing school projects, and also in the teaching and learning process. The following statement by a teacher is elaborated in the excerpt below.

Excerpt 5:

I always go inside the class. I always feel not so confident. Ordinary a normal class is Ok. But sometimes, we need some skills to handle the children. Especially when they first join the class and some have minor problem of understanding. It is difficult...

Most specifically, the majority of the teachers at the selected ECD centers admitted that the lack of skills had hindered them from gaining cooperation at the community level to enhance the implementation of ECD practices. From an experienced teacher at an ECD center in a village at Calang, it was found that when handling a case of a child who had lost the parents, the method became controversial and somehow contradicted other opinion found within the community. Hence, lack of the support from the community is seen as a challenge to the ECD providers.

Lack of skills to promote ECD

Besides the lack of knowledge about ECD, the respondents reported they also lack of skills to promote ECD in their existing programs, and in the teaching and learning process. The statement by a teacher in Excerpt 6.

Excerpt 6:

I always go inside the class. I always use the way I teach in the old days. I am stuck many times as I don't have the correct skills in delivering the content of ECD. Sometimes, I was asked and this affected me.

Most specifically, majority of the respondents admitted that the lack of skills had hindered them from gaining cooperation from all levels of community to enhance the implementation of ECD. As one of the teachers shared her views:

Excerpt 7:

Many new things are in early childhood nowadays. Some of the parents want to more. We tried to share with them. It seems they are not sure of what early childhood includes of. We are so lacks of skills to promote to the parents especially to a big community. At times, they don't see what we are trying to do

From the experience of a teacher at an ECD center in Calang, it was found that when handling cases amongst the children is too challenging and many times the support from community is very important. However, the respondents feel getting the support from community is still difficult after the tsunami.

Lack of support from the community

To enable ECD programs to be implemented well at all levels, all teachers agreed that support from the community, whether the leaders, teachers or parents is one of the utmost importance. The teachers revealed that no parents had been involved in ECD classrooms .thus far. One teacher put forward her opinion about this, "The center seems to have no idea how to involve the parents or address problems related to family

background, which can be very serious.” On the other hand, a provider of ECD admitted that it was difficult to get support from the community. Another teacher stated her feelings in the excerpt below:

Excerpt 8:

At the moment, there has been only limited involvement from parents and communities. However, in the near future, we will be involving parents and communities a lot more, especially in holding special events and ceremonies

At the community level, it was found that the implementation of ECD activities could not sustain success as some of the parents refused to cooperate. One of the parents elaborated, “We are lack of time; we can’t support the program as it is carried out as a special project here”.

The renovation of the existing centers

As highlighted in the above section of the paper, some initiatives about the renovation of the existing ECD centers had been going on after the tsunami to enhance the availability and accessibility of ECD for the affected children and also for the vulnerable group. The number of ECD centers which had been renovated is only 54 according to a report of Save the Children (2009). However, the people are aware of Plan’s programs for upgrading the old centers. As the respondents feel there should be a common practice to be adopted as a standard in the establishing of ECD centers. They are calling out to the parties involved to draw out policy and procedures of implementing an ECD. Basically, they feel the ways to help to rejuvenate the ECD in Aceh can be seen from the two sub-themes below.

- Establishing a common practice for all ECD;
- Collaborative effort for ECD.

Establish a common practice for ECD

In order to improve the ECD in Aceh, the efforts should go beyond renovating the existing centers in terms of only on the physical building. The teachers strongly feel a common practice should be imposed on all the providers of ECD centers so that a standard can be achieved and the quality of ECD can also be assured. One of the providers shows her observations and concern in Except 9.

Excerpt 9:

We need to have a more effective system. That’s the reason the implement this ECD at all levels because it is important now as so many children are affected after the tsunami. Not necessary to be very much in the policy but guidelines is important for us.....one of the ways to develop better ECD...

The above ECD provider suggested that some initial understanding on the implementation of ECD should follow certain procedures and rules.

It was revealed from the investigation at this stage that ECD seemed to be a relatively new matter at the some community level, so to minimize the issue of implementation of ECD, some administrators in the Education Department feel they should find ways to collaborate the projects with other organizations or agencies. They strongly feel the collaborative work would not only improve the existing ones but help to expedite the development of ECD.

Collaborative effort of ECD

Although the teachers gave positive feedback, some teachers at the ECD centers hoped some agencies or NGOs would carry out activities related to ECD in their centers. One of the teachers put forward her views which she feels can make the implementation of ECD programmes more effective. Her reason is shown in excerpt 10.

Excerpt 10:

Implementation is good and it should be supported. If possible, the special agencies or any NGOs body come down to the field. They did the program at schools. Give us more guidance. For example, the parenting education? We can work together. They provide some materials or workshop. It will be more effective. It is appropriate but all ECD centers must take part.

There are also teachers who felt the responsibility of developing ECD lies mostly with the cooperation of the local community. A respondent expressed her views in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 11:

If it s a community project like the home-based pre school. It would be good if people can work with people at the place. Understand what they need and want...

In short, the respondents indicated that ECD implementation should be a collective responsibility between the provincial and local community. Nevertheless, the support of the government, the Ministry of Education, local community and the parents is important. In spite of all, the teachers' needs became the major concern as the teaching and learning lies in the competencies amongst teachers.

Training needs of ECD teachers

The qualitative analysis on the teachers revealed that, not only the teaching materials re limited at the local environment, the training or workshops to strengthen their competence is also not common in Aceh. Fundamentally, they feel that they need to upgrade their knowledge and skills in ECD. As one of the teachers who had just started her involvement in ECD stated, she had been looking forward to workshops on ECD. But, her passion was not stifled by the shortcomings as she used her previous knowledge to help the center. She shared her experience in excerpt 12.

Excerpt 12:

I used to work in UNICEF where I receive lots of information on ECC. Prior to establishing the ECC, the teachers including myself were also trained by a prominent ECC trainer in Banda Aceh who has established an ECC.

It is also recognized now that training provided for teachers is essentially the contributing factors of qualities of ECD teachers (ACDP, 2011). All the rapidly changing educational system recognizes the complexity and primacy of the challenges of teaching and learning specifically in ECD. The experience following the tsunami called for an increased knowledge of ECD. The adequate skills and knowledge of ECD is deemed important amongst ECD teachers. The teachers feel they should develop a set of skills to perform effective teaching and learning. One of the young teachers was telling her needs in the below excerpt.

Excerpt 13.

I used to work in this primary school in the rural areas. I know very little but just want to see the children get some education. Actually, training is very good for me. But it is so difficult here, I don't know how to get. May be the town like Banda Aceh is easier...

One of the issues put forth by the teachers was that in the way forward was to improve the quality of ECD teachers. The teachers need knowledge and skills. The knowledge on the subjects matter has to be mastered. One way of helping the teachers to adopt change is through the change of their attitudes. One of the teachers revealed her feelings in excerpt 14.

Excerpt 14.

Now this early childhood is different, ya? We just teach the children to learn some English language, some maths last time, We need to learn as everything is changing. They also have education for parents nowadays.

Change in education is inevitable. The realization of the added value of ECD indicates that teachers do reflect on the routine of their jobs. Through this, teachers review their lesson plans and find new ways to improve their weaknesses and provide a mechanism for continuous improvement.

Obviously, the teachers in ECD were aware of new development in the programs and their interest in workshops and training was at very high level. Some of the teachers said they were willing to attend formal courses to learn the new and latest methods to manage a class more effectively. Excerpt 15 shows the enthusiasm of one teacher

Excerpt 15.

I will go. I even go now, the UNICEF workshop. I use the materials. I check the internet. But it is good to attend and you can ask questions. I can bring them back and teach some who cant afford to go. Training is important with so many things happen at ECD. Now this early childhood is different, ya?

Consistent with the notion of quality in ECD, in order to ensure the teachers are conducting their ECD programs effectively, some form of training needs to be provided to them. In other words, a training development program will be good support systems for helping the teachers to improve their content knowledge, to upgrade their skills and to create the best system to enable teachers to learn from others. The positive attitudes of the ECD teachers deserve some encouragement to help them to continue to marvel challenges throughout their teaching journey. Realistically, it is undeniable that, the implementation of ECD programs comes with a string of challenges especially after the disaster in Aceh.

The challenges for ECD providers

Despite evidence of the development of ECD, the people in Aceh faced a number of challenges. For example in Aceh, being a high risk land of natural disasters, disaster knowledge can be incorporated in the curriculum to help to create awareness of health and hygiene at the ECD level. The administrators from the Education Department and teachers feel that the lack of parents' involvement in the progress of

the children is one of the challenges at this moment. As one of the respondents pointed out in excerpt 16 and 17

Excerpt 16:

The parents are more concern of the reconstruction activities. They just want a safe place for the children during that time.

Excerpt 17:

May be the facilities at the ECD center is also important. They can have playground, day care, clinics etc. We are still very lack of all these things.

The providers and teachers of ECD at the three areas which were Banda Aceh, Calang and Meulaboh admitted the benefits of ECD at this stage of the investigation. They suggested as on-going support is provided and some of the challenges are overcome, the opportunities of ECD would gain more attention from all levels. They felt it is timely that ECD is given more emphasis now as compared to the situation before tsunami. It was speculated that the implementation of ECD would be more systematic now being given priority in some strategic plans in education in Aceh.

DISCUSSION

The study was initiated to investigate ECD development eight years after the tsunami. The focus on the study was on ECD. The research focused on the four critical areas. It can be gathered that, activities within EDC is being implemented as the plan by various actors. For example, it is found many private organizations were encouraged to invest in ECD. In addition; teachers for ECD were looking forward to new knowledge and skills to be more competent. The support of the private organizations and teachers indirectly supported the effort of rejuvenating ECD in Aceh after the tsunami.

Firstly, the results revealed that ECD centers are being built not only in urban but also more can be found in the rural areas. As reported, after the tsunami, life for the children of Aceh was completely disrupted with the loss of homes and schools. Knowing the importance of structure and stability in children's life, the setting up of better and more early child care centers was deemed meaningful in the recovery phase after the impact of disaster. The notion of building new ECD centers were found to be aligned to several initiatives in Plan, Save the Children and UNICEF. Statistically, it was reported the percentage of children with ECD experience was 37.7% in 2006. And, it is expected that in 2015, the ECD services will reach 75% of ECD children in Indonesia (UNESCO, 2005).

Secondly, it was found out that only 54 existing ECD centers had been renovated. It was targeted at the end of 2015, 75% of the ECD centers will be equipped with educational materials. It can be seen now some of the efforts of renovating ECD centers have achieved its level. ECD is getting the support from the provincial office and also the local village officials. For instance, a specific ECD center is adopted by a group of local community in Meuloboh. Indirectly, this invites more parents' involvement and more systematic interventions can be applied at the ECD centers. It was found during the visit to an ECD center in the rural area, a mini library was initiated by the local communities so that the children can have access to reading materials. Evidently, these specific ECD activities had, in more ways than one, increased the awareness amongst parents and brought along positive implications on improving ECD at large through active involvement of different stakeholders in the ECD programs.

Thirdly, the results also showed that the challenges faced by ECD programs. Namely, the challenges are lack of knowledge and inadequate skills to implement EDC programs. It was also the issue of lack of support from community. The administrators faced constraints in terms of ways of implementing teaching and learning plans. The teachers felt there was a lack of sources to rely on. And, UNESCO reported (2005), only 6% of ECD teachers had the relevant qualification. The training for the ECD teachers is indeed urgent. Nevertheless, it was observed that ECD had been given priority in some education strategic plans. It means that ECD in Aceh is getting provisions and funding for further improvement.

Finally, in overcoming the challenges in the implementation of ECD programs, the respondents in the interviews suggested that the collaborative effort between agencies such as Save the Children and UNICEF would be a significant contributing factor in helping them to develop ECD after the tsunami. The study shows evident that the networking has been connected and collaborative work is also taking place. For instance, many of the projects being implemented in Aceh after the tsunami are still under the supervision of the agencies at this stage. In the near future, the increased of availability and accessibility could be ensured. The teachers felt that it was important for the experienced ECD developers to share their experiences and understanding on the implementation process and procedures to enhance success. And, the agenda of rejuvenating ECD should be viewed and taken seriously by all stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

The study investigated into ECD in Aceh after the tsunami. The investigation focused on four areas, namely, the extent of the new ECD centers built after the tsunami, the renovation of the existing ECD centers, the training needs for ECD teachers and the challenges faced by the ECD providers. Based on the first area, the results showed that there were constraints faced by ECD in terms of building the new centers after the tsunami. The constraints were lack of knowledge and skills amongst the teacher and providers. It was also reported lack of support from community had hindered some of the ECD programs. A common practice of ECD is needed in order to help in the renovating of existing ECD centers. The government and non-government agencies need to work collaboratively to help to expedite the development of early childhood programs. The results also showed ECD teachers' interests were at high level but they need training and workshops to upgrade their knowledge and skills in order to perform effectively. Nevertheless, the challenges faced by the providers were lack of support from parents and community. It can be concluded that ECD in Aceh after the tsunami has shown progress in terms of the four areas discussed in the above section.

On the other hand, a lot of initiatives and efforts are still needed to establish ECD in Aceh after the tsunami. Basically, the new and existing ECD centers need to be re-equipped; caregivers to be trained, teachers to be upgraded and awareness-raising activities need to be held to gain the support from community at all levels. Indeed, a significant support had been focused on ECD by the international agencies since the tsunami. Thus, the challenge lies in the local government to expand the efforts for a wider impact specifically for children in Aceh.

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