Community development in Indonesia

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Introduction

This article begins with a discussion of two of the ways in which we can study community development in Indonesia. One way is to begin with the concept of community development and its cognate terms and investigate how these might be used and understood, either in Anglicized versions or any linguistic equivalents in Indonesian development discourse. Another way is to elaborate principles and practices of community development and identify examples of these, regardless of whether such principles and practices are named as community development. We consider both these approaches. We comment on the context in which the western community development discourse has appeared. In regard to an understanding of community development beginning with its principles and practices, we suggest that notwithstanding the limited take-up of the discourse, the principles and practices of community development are clearly discernible in Indonesia. The second part of the article provides examples of how community development practice was evident in the grassroots responses to the devastating tsunami that hit Aceh at the end of 2004.

The backdrop: the discourse and practice of community development in Indonesia

Notwithstanding approximately 350 years of Dutch colonial rule, and despite the adoption of some European intellectual ideas from over the last 100 years, take-up of the western modernist discourses of civil society, agency, and community has been limited in Indonesia. Yet, this is not to argue that both the idea of agency and the potential sites for practising collective agency have been missing. At various times and in different regions, there were protracted struggles to expel the Dutch and there is a history of

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quasi-independent non-government organizations (NGOs) going back to the nineteenth century. For example, we can identify two forms of NGO-type organization that still exist today. These are the lembaga swadaya masyarakat (LSM), which is often understood as ‘association’, and yayasan, which can be translated as ‘foundation’ in English. These two types of organization are different legal entities, with yayasan being the older, dating back to the Dutch colonial period.

However, the activities of both LSMs and yayasan have been traditionally circumscribed by the state. This was particularly the case during the period known as the New Order (1966–1989) in which ideas of independent political agency were repressed and the term NGO was avoided on the basis of its connotation as an anti-government organization (Nugroho, 2013).

Nonetheless, the regular occurrences of political struggle in Indonesia, culminating in the overthrow of the Suharto New Order regime in 1989, as well as the very existence of LSMs and yayasan, suggest a fertile ground for community development practices. There are many ways in which community development has been practised at the village level, such as in the established practice of gotong-royong in West Sumatra, which involves working together for a common purpose, usually at the village level. Once a week, a village crier walks up and down the main road of the village (West Sumatra villages usually have one main road and houses are built alongside it) and announce the project of the week: which might be cleaning the road, fixing the village irrigation system, or collecting rocks from the river to build a new prayer house, for example. People themselves take charge of such tasks in a collective manner.

Organic community development is also evidenced in language. Indeed, there are words in Bahasa Indonesia, the national language, that have a degree of equivalence to the English terms ‘community’ and ‘community development’. The term community in Bahasa Indonesia can be translated as ‘masyarakat’ and ‘development’ is formally commonly translated as ‘pembangunan’. In a less formal context, such as community development activities undertaken by members of the community working together whether in a quasi-independent NGO format or in a much less organized manner as described above, the term pengembangan may be used. The concept of ‘pengembangan’ means a process, method, or an effort to increase capacity, to increase power, to make it more resourceful. ‘Pengembangan masyarakat’ has somewhat of an equivalent meaning to community development in the English language. Thus, when the explicit term ‘community development’ found its way into the language of aid and development after the year 2000, it was not a completely foreign notion.

The major way in which the Anglicized term of community development and its cognate terms, such as ‘community-driven development’ and
‘community empowerment’ found their way into Indonesia after 2000 was in the funding context that was dominated by international agencies, such as the World Bank, Mercy Corps, Caritas, and the Japanese International Cooperation Agency, as well as international corporations operating in Indonesia, such as Exxon Mobil. That is, the English term community development was imported by international aid and development agencies. In regard to the World Bank, by 2000 its policies had begun ‘to emphasize the importance of shifting the international assistance framework from top-down, authoritarian approaches to an emphasis on increased community control over decisions concerning planning, implementation and resource allocation’ (Dasgupta and Beard, 2007, p. 229). The term most commonly used to describe such projects has been ‘community-driven development’ (Mansuri and Rau, 2004; Dasgupta and Beard, 2007). In Indonesia, the ‘community-driven development’ approach also suited the political context in Indonesia of the period, being a time of the emergence of new institutions and the burgeoning of civil society after the downfall of the New Order regime. But perhaps most significantly, it fitted in well with the profound structural changes involving the devolution of power over resources and policies that came about with the new laws establishing regional autonomy. These laws came into effect in January 2001, and meant that Indonesia moved from a highly centralized state to one of the most decentralized countries in the world (Bell, 2003).

One of the most extensive western community development programmes in the first decade of the twentieth century was the Kecamatan Development Programme (Guggenheim et al., 2004), funded by the World Bank. Aiming to develop the infrastructure for progressing poverty reduction through mobilizing the capacities of rural communities themselves, the Kecamatan Development Programme coverage grew from 25 villages in 1997 to more than 28,000 villages in 2003 (Ibid., p. 1). When first established, in a time of institutional disruption and economic crisis, the programme offered a new way forward for the development of rural Indonesia. However, its ability to empower local communities was limited by the way in which policy decisions concerning the programme remained highly centralized, and what was actually devolved was the responsibility to enact the policy decisions already made. Moreover, power relations were also circumscribed by the agenda of the World Bank, with its focus on western notions of economic development, which were not necessarily compatible with local conceptions of development. For many western aid and development programmes, fiduciary, accountability, and technical issues have tended to be of central importance, with local corruption mentioned as a major impediment (Susilo, 2012). The effect of these emphases has been the side-lining of the community development principle of prioritizing what local people identify as their needs and goals (see below).
More recently, the National Government of Indonesia has also begun to use the terms ‘community-driven development’ and ‘community empowerment’, most significantly in the National Program for Community Empowerment (PNPM 2012), which receives funds from international agencies. This national programme, which has promised to build on previous community development projects, provides grants to communities for high priority local projects. It operates through over 70,000 villages across Indonesia (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2014). Indeed, the terminology that continues to be favoured today is community empowerment. This term can be found in a number of projects funded by large international funding agencies, such as the World Bank, the Japan International Cooperation Agency, and the World Wide Fund for Nature, as well as by the Government of Indonesia. For example, the World Wide Fund for Nature (2012) aims to stop and eventually reverse environmental degradation and to build a future ‘where people can live in harmony with nature’, by empowering local citizens to protect natural resources, to be actively involved in determining how resources are managed, and to receive benefits from sustainable use of these resources. The Government of Indonesia has received funds from overseas funding agencies, and especially the World Bank, for the National Community Empowerment Program in Urban Areas (2012–2015) (World Bank, 2015). The major aims of the National Community Empowerment Program in Urban Areas are to strengthen local governance and capacity-building and to increase local participation (in elections, planning, and decision-making). The JICA-funded part of the Community Empowerment Programme (CEP) aims to empower people ‘for self-reliance, livelihood and welfare improvement’ at the grassroots level, through collaboration with non-government organizations (JICA, 2015). The CEP programme focusses on women and the poorest and most vulnerable members of society. According to the World Bank, evaluations of this programme indicate that it has been moderately successful (World Bank, 2015). While public documents available from these agencies set out the advantages of CEPs, there is no discussion of the meanings and complexities of the idea of community empowerment and scant empirical data on the ‘success’ of such programmes. The actual extent of control of priorities by local people in these programmes is at this stage largely unknown. It does seem somewhat ironic though, that while the rhetoric is about bottom-up development, the aims and policies tend to be presented in a top-down manner.

Small NGOs in Indonesia also tend to favour ‘community empowerment’ when using English terms. For example, the title ‘community empowerment project’ is now being used in a range of small local projects, including projects for ecotourism (Butarbutar and Soemarno, 2012), for
improving the infrastructure, incomes, and livelihoods of local villages (Poeloengasih et al., 2014), and for lifting levels of nutrition for children and women (Asian Development Bank, 2015). But this is not to argue that the term ‘community development’ is missing altogether. For example, it is used in the context of Fair Trade initiatives run by the Perkerti Foundation (2015a, 2015b), small-scale sustainable farming (Yayasan Usaha Mulia, 2015) (http://www.yumindonesia.org/projects/community-development-projects/), environmental challenges (Ariyanti et al., 2015), and even in approaches to organizing the collection of Zakat, or Muslim charity contributions (Abilawa, 2010). We are also beginning to see some use of the term in academic and professional circles. For example, Purwardi and Tantra (2007) argue that Indonesian universities are expected to play a major role in community development, by offering programmes in community education, community services, and field experiences. There is also an industry organization aimed at supporting people working in, or looking for work in civic and social organizations in Indonesia, which, under the title of the Indonesian Association for Community Empowerment and Development (2012) brings the terms community empowerment and community development together. Currently, however, little detail or analysis of the roles and outcomes of these organizations and programmes is available.

One explanation of the low take-up of the term community development in Indonesia is that it carries with it the idea of intervention by outsiders involving an external person going into a community ‘to develop that community’. In this approach, communities come to be objects that need to be developed. They are not agents in themselves. This viewpoint is expressed in the following statement:

> We never use or very rarely use the term ‘community development’, because we believe we are part of community and working together to help each other. We live within community and we will continue live here and we not going anywhere and what we do is for our lives, for our children, for our future. We are not doing this for a job and we would do whatever it takes to rebuild our own community (Community Activist, June 2015).

This is not to suggest that international community development workers are not accepted in Indonesian community programmes, but to urge caution in regard to the expectation that external workers can always improve or assist in development programmes.

Now whether such terms as community development, community-driven development, and community empowerment are part of everyday, academic or official language in Indonesia or not, we can find many examples of activities and processes which can be described as community development. But what constitutes community development? Most broadly
understood, community development involves the empowerment of people in disadvantaged communities for the purpose of influencing and exerting greater control over resources and decisions that affect their lives (Craig, 1998, p. 15; Mayo, 2005, p. 101; Ife, 2010, p. 67; Gilchrist and Taylor, 2011, p. 3; Kenny, 2011, p. 8). Community development is premised on the principles of local people themselves collectively identifying and prioritizing their needs, goals and their own assets and taking charge of these. Given this broad definition, the agents of community development can be existing community members themselves or these members working in partnership with external community development facilitators. Understanding these two categories of agents is important. As indicated above, one of the reasons why some local Indonesian activists do not relate to the idea that they are undertaking community development activities is that they identify community development work as involving external facilitators only.

As a value-based practice, community development is committed to social justice, equality, human rights, and self-determination through collective endeavour. While this collective endeavour might involve ameliorating existing conditions, it can also mean challenging and changing existing power relations (see Gilchrist and Taylor, 2011, p. 16). Of course the strategies for achieving empowerment vary according to context. For example, in the case of Indonesia, strategies vary on the basis of different histories and cultural traditions. What follows is a case-study of how community development has been practised at one particular time in one particular region of Indonesia. The region was the province of Aceh (Nangroe Aceh Darussalam) and the time was the period following the devastating Indian Ocean tsunami at the end of 2004.

**Post-tsunami reconstruction**

On 26 December 2004, an earthquake measuring 9.0 on the Richter scale occurred in the sea off the northern tip of Sumatra. The effects on this part of Sumatra were that over 800 km of the coastal area of Aceh was destroyed, thousands of lives were lost, thousands of people were displaced, and all productive activities along the coast were threatened. While there was no exact final body count, there were at least 130,000 people killed in Aceh and over 500,000 people displaced (United Nations Development Programme, 2006). Financial commitment to help with the relief and reconstruction effort has been estimated to be US $13 billion (Telford et al., 2006), an unprecedented amount for post-disaster reconstruction. Over 200 international aid workers, many of them with considerable experience of relief and aid projects in different parts of the world, arrived in the months following the tsunami.
Many of these workers were keen to show that relief and reconstruction could be ‘done differently’ to the top-down approaches that had dominated the aid industry for decades. Indeed by 2004 there existed a considerable body of a literature critiquing the assumptions of international aid: as naïve and misguided; as a new ideological form of post-colonial control; or just the latest form of global capitalism. A dominant view in these critiques was that aid programmes in the so-called ‘developing world’ were always inappropriately embedded in what are known as western values and western notions of how to organize society (Latouche, 1993; Escobar, 1995; Schuurman, 2000; Ziai, 2004). For example, for Escobar (1995, pp. 413–414), western interventions were strategies ‘for the production and management of the third world’. From the perspective of this ‘westernization thesis’ (Kenny et al., 2013), these western development discourses involve what Foucault (1991) calls governmentality, which set up spaces, knowledge, logics, technologies, programmes, and strategies that govern behaviour within a framework of western values and rationalities. Moreover, notwithstanding the extensive practice knowledge of many of the aid workers, just because a programme had worked effectively in one part of the world, this did not mean that it would work equally effectively in a different setting. In a discussion of the applicability of what he calls policy transfer, from one jurisdiction to another, Dussauge-Laguna (2013) has highlighted how incompatibilities in governance systems, performance measurement and budgetary decision-making can produce a policy outcome significantly different from the original ‘model’.

By 2004, many of the practices of international aid were being re-thought and scholars in the international aid field had begun to champion the importance of working with people at the grassroots, in a people-centred, participatory and bottom-up approach to aid and development (Bhatnagar and Williams, 1992; Nederveen Pieterse, 2001; Fukuda-Parr et al., 2002; Hinton and Groves, 2004). This shift involved the idea that aid and development must be more than just externally driven and controlled interventions requiring first and foremost, technical competence (Robb, 2004). The Indian Ocean disaster provided an opportunity to put the bottom-up principles into practice. Yet, the will and ability amongst international agencies to do this was mixed (Telford et al., 2006; Kenny, 2010). There were many constraints, including arguments concerning the urgency of relief and the view that the ‘victims’ were too ‘shell-shocked’ to be able to respond effectively (Kenny, 2010). In the context of such arguments, the tendency was to revert to the established top-down methods of aid delivery in which aid agencies decided what was needed and how it would be delivered. The apparent necessity of this top-down approach was facilitated by the imagery used by the media that presented the Acehnese people as ‘passive
victims being saved by outsiders’ (both foreign and Indonesian). But what such presentations missed was the remarkable work undertaken by the Acehnese themselves. What was ignored in the extensive media coverage was also the resourcefulness of the Acehnese, their networks and their ability to work collectively. While some survivors were disoriented in the immediate aftermath of the tsunami, many took control of the situation, for example setting up local poskos, or meeting places, in the parts of buildings that were still standing. Through these poskos survivors could access information as to where they could get food and medicine and as sites for sharing information about those missing.

Acehnese people living elsewhere in Indonesia were among the first to arrive after the tsunami. It was, then, the Acehnese people themselves, from different walks of life and different parts of Indonesia, who lead the searches for emergency accommodation and who organized basic schooling with the aim of providing some semblance of daily schedule for children. While the term community development was never used as a descriptor of these activities, in so far as they involved local people themselves taking control of their situation, identifying and prioritizing their needs, goals and working with their own assets, what they did can be described as community development. This is the largely untold story of the reconstruction of post-tsunami Aceh.¹

Above we mentioned how community development activities can challenge and even transform established structures or they can work to ameliorate conditions within existing structures (Kingsbury, 2010). In the community development activities, in the reconstruction of Aceh, we can observe both these aspects of community development. What follows is a discussion of how the Acehnese people took control of the situation after the tsunami in ways that both ameliorated dire conditions and challenged conventional notions of who should control the post-disaster relief and reconstruction. The first discussion describes community development processes which involved not only a small decimated community taking control themselves but also challenging the accepted (disempowering) ways in which aid was organized. The second explains the principles set out by one NGO, Forum Bangun Aceh (FBA), involving Acehnese people prioritizing

¹ The analysis draws on different sources. These include reports coming out of western aid and development agencies, official Indonesian figures and reports and interviews with a number of people involved in the reconstruction, including local Acehnese, government officials, and participants in Acehnese NGOs, Indonesian NGOs and international NGOs and agencies, who were interviewed over the period from February 2005 until February 2011. The research was funded by the Australian Research Council and Deakin University. Without the generous giving of time by the respondents, this research would not have been possible.
their needs, setting out their own agendas and establishing what can be described as community development programmes.

**Lampuuk**

Lampuuk community is a coastal settlement located about 20 km southwest of Banda Aceh, the capital of the Province of Aceh (Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam). Prior to the tsunami, it had a population of about 6000 residents (Fanany, 2010). After the tsunami, all that remained physically at the site of Lampuuk was the local mosque. The survivors of that fateful day on December 26 numbered about 400. Many of these people left immediately to stay in temporary shelters around the district. However, once the water receded, 28 residents returned to the site. They became the key players in the reconstruction effort. These initial returnees built temporary huts with bits of wood and other materials and decided amongst themselves what their priorities should be.

As Fanany (2010, p. 111) comments, ‘The group worked to exhaustion every day and discussed future plans at night. Without realizing it, they made themselves into an operational team that would be central to the eventual reconstruction of the settlement…’ Within a month around 100 residents had returned and some two months after the disaster they formed the Lampuuk Recovery Centre (LRC). The LRC provided a formal organization, which could express the wishes of the residents in discussions with aid providers and facilitate the co-operation of all residents in planning for the reconstruction effort. Interestingly, rather than waiting for the aid agencies to come in to clear the debris, as survivors in other communities had done, the LRC had decided to do this themselves. This assisted them in assessing their own needs and identifying the best ways of satisfying these needs.

Unsurprisingly, at various times, there was much discussion and heated debate concerning needs and priorities in planning (see Fanany, 2010). For example, some residents wanted to discuss their needs individually with the agencies that were offering aid. However, the majority wanted to act collectively. For example, the prevailing argument was that houses should not be built without an adequate infrastructure (roads, electricity, water, etc.) and agreement was indeed reached, that there would be better results if they negotiated as a group. There was also reluctance on the part of some residents to give up a piece of their property to make the roads (there had been no formal road system before the tsunami).

However, when the LRC decided that no house was to be built in areas without roads, most residents agreed to donate a piece of their land to
ensure that both houses and a road system would be constructed. Apart from dealing with such disagreements about the reconstruction priorities, the residents also had to decide on how they would respond to offers for aid from different aid agencies. They accepted offers of earth-moving machinery to help clear the land and build roads and tools and trucks for carrying supplies. However, they also refused an offer for prefabricated housing from one aid agency, causing friction amongst some residents who thought they should be just grateful for what was offered.

In a somewhat lengthy process, the LRC linked up with the Turkish Red Crescent and after many delays and much apprehension, the Turkish Red Crescent contracted a Jakarta-based construction company to build 701 houses and renovate the mosque. Concerned about the exorbitant profit to be made by the construction company, action was taken by the LRC and the contract was cancelled. The 200 houses already partially built by the contractor were completed and the other 501 housing contracts went to other firms. Residents decided that they would not move into the houses until they were all completed, mitigating the issue of favouritism over who could move in first. Throughout the building process, residents were able to put their views about design and building materials, many of which were taken up in the building process. Moreover, the Turkish Red Crescent actually hired some Lampuuk residents as field supervisors who were able to ensure the quality of the buildings. In April 2007, the Turkish Red Crescent handed over the keys to 701 new houses to the general satisfaction of the residents.

The community’s participation in the physical rebuilding of Lampuuk is clearly an example of how community development processes not only empower a community in an ameliorative sense, but also challenge and transform existing power relations (Aspinall, 2005). Post-disaster reconstruction is generally a story of passive victims grateful for assistance. The terms on which assistance is given are set by aid agencies who argue that accountability to donors for effective use of funds is a priority when distributing aid money. Little control is ceded to the recipients. The case of Lampuuk is one example of how a community, even in extremis, can adopt community development methods, while not using the terminology of community development, and in the process it can also take a large measure of control of its own destiny.

**Forum Bangun Aceh**

Another example of where community members took control of their lives, and also challenged pre-existing power relations, is in the work of FBA.
Like the LRC of Lampuuk, FBA provides an exemplar of how people at the local level can organize spontaneously around community development principles and practices without using the term community development to describe their activities.

FBA was established as an immediate and spontaneous response to the tsunami, when a number of young Acehnese people living elsewhere in Indonesia returned, and teamed up with tsunami survivors to form their own indigenous organization. Members of FBA argued that if the reconstruction was to be effective, respect for the integrity of local people and acknowledgement of their resources should be at the centre of all activities. They argued that if their work was to be taken seriously, it must be based on the priorities of people themselves.

The dominant need for the survivors was to get back to normal, as far as this was possible. Perhaps most importantly, survivors, including members of the fledging FBA, argued that did not want to sit idly by, watching foreign workers ‘rescue them’. Whilst they might have lost their homes, physical resources, and loved ones, they still had many assets, including knowledge, skills, and networks. This understanding was the basis of the asset-based approach to reconstruction taken by the members of FBA. As well as listening to, valuing and respecting survivors, for FBA one of the most critical aspects to building trust was to ‘actually do something immediately, however small’, rather than ‘just talk about what they could possibly do’. From the members’ perspective, fast delivery of assistance was more consequential than the size and scope of the assistance.

After early discussions with a range of survivors about priorities for action, FBA developed a framework that they called the ‘brain and stomach approach’, whereby the brain required education and knowledge, and the stomach required re-establishing livelihoods. Within the ‘brain and stomach’ framework, two priorities stood out. First, for families with surviving school-age children, education meant ‘getting children back to school’. This involved finding teachers and locations where schools could be set up. In the capital, Banda Aceh, where a large number of schools had been destroyed and teachers killed, tent schools were set up in the foothills of the city. Many people offered to take on teaching roles to ensure that classes continued. One of FBA’s first efforts was to work with local and other Indonesians to bring in teaching materials from all over Indonesia to support the teachers. Secondly, the other key priority for the Acehnese survivors was to be able to participate in society as active members, by reinstating their livelihoods. To do this, they required an income. Mostly, survivors wanted to return to their previous occupations.

The deep working knowledge of Acehnese culture and politics (including experience of over 30 years of internal conflict between those fighting
for an independent Aceh and the Indonesian military) as well as the networks of the members of FBA, meant that they were able to ‘hit the ground running’, unlike so many international agencies that had to develop contacts and knowledge from scratch. The working knowledge and contacts proved invaluable in accessing the resources required for the ‘fast delivery of assistance’ which could facilitate the survivors’ ability to ‘get back on their feet’. Thus, FBA began by sourcing funds through what they called ‘people to people’ assistance. For example, through one of their networks they secured a donation of US $1000 from a supporter in Ireland, which they used to buy, among other things, a moped rickshaw. The rickshaw was given to Syarwan, a tsunami survivor, who was living in a shack constructed of debris and who was trying to find a way of providing for his six dependents. With the new found means of making a living, Syarwan was able to provide for himself and his family again and within a month he had reimbursed the cost of the rickshaw so that someone else could be assisted.

Thus, using an asset-based approach, FBA began discussing with survivors, such as Syarwan, what exactly they wanted and needed. In these discussions, survivors focussed on the economic activities that they had practised before the tsunami. FBA and the survivors calculated together what was needed to re-establish businesses. For some families, rebuilding a business meant having a replacement motorcycle taxi. For others, it meant a set of saucepans to re-establish a way-side stall, or seeds and fertilizers to re-establish a farm. Drawing on money donated by themselves and their friends, FBA set up a system of revolving small loans whereby they would purchase the materials needed on the basis of an agreement that recipients would repay the debt, so that funds could be provided to another small business.

For the first three years after the tsunami no interest was charged, but when a business began to do well small amounts of interest were introduced. One of the reasons for the success of the revolving loans programme has been the employment of ‘organic’ leaders to both motivate and facilitate. These leaders, called motivators, are already members of villages, and most importantly, they are trusted members. They have not necessarily been village leaders, formal or otherwise. They are selected for their skills, experience and understanding of village needs. Motivators attend programmes to deepen their knowledge of small business practices. They participate in workshops run by FBA, where general issues and strategies are discussed.

There are a number of ways of explaining the successes of FBA. First, as FBA staff point out, right from the beginning they had the networks and understanding of the local traditions and cultures, so that they were able to
work quickly and through the principle of trust. For example, understanding the primary importance of verbal communication in local cultures meant that paperwork and formal requirements have been kept to a minimum. Secondly, from the perspective of FBA workers, the key to successful reconstruction is the collaborative way in which needs are identified and fulfilled. Thirdly, a corollary of this approach is the importance of taking an asset-based approach to development, noted above. Fourthly, a critical factor in FBA activities has been the principle of maximizing independence from funders, including international aid agencies and government. Indeed, the default position of FBA has always been a sceptical approach to the aid industry. In contrast to many other local groups, their dealings with donors have always been on the principle of real partnerships, rather than the tripartite donor, contractor, recipient categorization, based on asymmetrical power relations. Rather than opportunistically accepting the agendas and terminology of external funders, the members of FBA focussed on the agendas of local people. This strategic approach has assisted in ensuring the sustainability of FBA’s activities. And there is evidence to support the value of this approach. Eleven years after the tsunami most of the other income-generating projects set up by international agencies have collapsed. This is in contrast to FBA which has facilitated over 5000 small and micro-local businesses, with over 60 percent still operating. Fifthly, FBA is committed to a mutual learning environment, where all parties participate and learn as equals, including international agencies, FBA staff and participants in programmes. In this way, there is a continual programme of capacity-building, for international agencies, their own staff and the Acehnese they are working with. Finally, there is continual follow-up and informal evaluation of programmes and projects, with the aim of identifying the source of the inevitable issues that arise, and developing solutions within a partnership framework.

Notwithstanding the success of FBA, with its strong asset-based practices that valorize the views and skills of local people and local cultural traditions, there have been limitations and issues in the community development model of operation. First, it does not offer a full participatory model. For example, whilst the recipients of revolving loans choose and propose their small business start-up endeavour, they do not participate directly in the decision as to whether they will be supported or not. Often they have little involvement in calculations regarding the repayment schedule, the rate of how far to expand the scope of their activities. Secondly, there is the challenge of how to avoid corrupt suppliers of goods. Thirdly, there has been constant concern about whether and how far to expand the scope of their activities. Fourthly, is the issue of whether to apply for grants from western agencies, and if so, under what conditions. In regard to these last
two points, within FBA there have been passionate debates about whether receiving international funds might compromise their activities, especially in the eyes of other local Acehnese. Hence, a decision was made early on not to seek or just accept any funds that were available, but to focus on only those funds which were directed to the core aims of FBA: education and local economic development. The decision not to seek funds opportunistically turned out to be a wise one, because other organizations that had sought funds for programmes outside their remit found great difficulty in managing such funds effectively. However, even accepting funds for programmes that were consistent with FBA’s aims could be problematic. For example, a partnership arrangement with a Jakarta-based financial institution, which involved moving to a mainstream micro-finance programme, ran into trouble. Unlike the established and tested FBA approach based on local motivators, this alternative programme was not based on an understanding the assets and needs of local people themselves and subsequently dropped.

**Conclusion**

In many ways, the examples of the community development practices of the LRC and FBA are unique because of the particular context in which they occurred. Not only were they established as an immediate response to the immense devastation caused by the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, but the province of Aceh had also been affected by nearly 30 years of often violent conflict between Acehnese forces (GAM) and the Indonesian military (TNI), which continued sporadically until 2005. This context was one of suspicion of the military, and for some, suspicion of any involvement on the part of the Government of Indonesia. It also meant that there was significant solidarity amongst the Acehnese people who had suffered during the armed struggle. Pulling together in times of threat, operating independently of the state and taking initiative was part of Acehnese culture. Pride in their traditions and identity can be traced back centuries. But pride in local traditions and independent action are also found in the many various regions of Indonesia and it would be likely that community development practices like that in the LRC and FBA are found throughout Indonesia (for other examples of community development in action, see Kenny *et al.*, 2013). While the authors of the paper have extensive experience of un-named community development activities and anecdotal evidence of bottom-up organizing strategies that communities use for self-determination, currently however, we do not have research documenting how widespread community development practices are.
There remains an important issue here. As stated above, one reason why FBA and other NGOs in Indonesia do not use the term community development is because it is associated with a viewpoint that assumes the necessity of external intervention into disadvantaged and disaster-affected communities to facilitate and steer these communities. In the mainstream, community development literature, there is little attention paid to the idea that community development can take place without external intervention, or indeed, without being named as such. And this leaves us with a dilemma. On one hand, there is the argument that any discussion of community development in Indonesia should cover all un-named community development activities. These comprise activities taking place at the grassroots level, in disadvantaged communities, and in many contexts where people work collectively for the purpose of influencing and exerting greater control over resources and decisions that affect their lives, including the context of seasonal work which is done most effectively as collective work.

Yet, on the other hand, if it is the case that local communities do not use the terminology of community development (either directly or through translation), is not the naming of activities as community development by outsiders an example of the assertion of power through language, and as such, a new form of intellectual and political colonialism? This paper then, ends with a call for more discussion and research regarding the issue of the naming of grass roots practices in Indonesia as community development and careful consideration of the dilemma posed above. And whatever the processes for the empowerment of local people are called, there is a need for the lacunae of information about opportunities and challenges for ‘bottom-up’ planning and control to be addressed through research and analysis.

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2 There is a very long history of quasi-independent associations and other much more independent groupings that people form, something which is still practiced at the grassroots level at least in some part of Indonesia today.
References


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