

Remarks of Agus Wibowo

**HIGHLIGHT SESSION: LEARNING ABOUT LOCALISATION FROM THE  
SULAWESI EXPERIENCE**

**28 August 2019, 09:15 – 10:15**

Madame Chair, Ibu Tan Sri Dr. Jemilah Mahmood, IFRC Under Secretary General for Partnerships,

My fellow panelists:

- Bapak Ritola Tasmaya, Indonesia Red Cross Society (PMI)
- Ibu Rahmawati Husein, of MDMC, and
- Ms. Yulies Puspita, Plan International

Ladies and Gentlemen,

*Assalaamu Alaikum warrahmatulahi Wa Barakaatuh*, and a very Good morning

***Madame Chair, ladies and gentlemen***

I appreciate IFRC, AHA Centre and BNPB for organizing this important regional conference, and for inviting me to speak in this session.

I will begin by presenting legislations that drive localization of aid in Indonesia.

First the Disaster Management Legislation number 24 of 2007 Article 3. It stipulates that disaster management is founded on the principles of partnership. This is through the active roles of communities, including local Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), in all phases, from risk reduction, preparedness, emergency response, and recovery.

Local government Law, Number 23 of 2014, makes disaster management including response preparedness to be one of basic services to be provided to each and every citizen in 514 local governments that spread over 416 municipalities, 38 cities, and 34 provinces.

Moreover, Government Regulation Number 23 of 2008 stipulates that international organisations or foreign agencies may take part in disaster management with their Indonesian CSO partners who have shared vision and mission

With such a legislative and regulatory framework, Indonesia wholeheartedly supports the new shift in the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit and the Grand Bargain. In our view, localization of aid is not only inevitable, it is already ongoing. In Central Sulawesi response, we have taken the first step. What remains, now Indonesian Government support the donors, UN agencies, international partners and colleagues to take localization toward practical implementation coherently and in coordinated manner.

*Madame Chair, ladies and gentlemen,*

In Central Sulawesi emergency response last year, Government of Indonesia carefully screened and selected international humanitarian assistance. Firstly, we learnt from bitter lessons that a free-for-all international response carries the risk of hampering our national response, and that it potentially does more harm. We used to called it ‘ a tsunami of aid’. Secondly, we are confident that our system that includes national and regional partnerships, are capable of responding to the crisis. Thirdly, we deliberately provide an ecosystem whereby local governments are the first to respond, together with national and local CSOs, and their existing international supporting partnership.

We streamlined the humanitarian response which resulted from the reduced volume of non-credible, non-solicited, supply-driven overseas relief personnel, facilities and commodities. The response demonstrated the surging of the in-country humanitarian relief funding. Finally, national and local CSOs gained greater confidence to lead the response coordination. Meanwhile, international responders adapted their usual way of working to suit to this new policy.

We are pleased to note that this policy decision brings about response outlook that become substantively interesting as a good practice in the localization of aid.

In the lead up to this Regional conference, there have been multiple studies, three of which were conducted by BNPB’s partners such as the Pujiono Centre, to document the localization of aid in Central Sulawesi. Pujiono Centre and partners also built the momentum to consolidate local and national experience from Central Sulawesi including the following inclusive and multi-level consultative process:

- 1) On 5 August, a meeting among agencies that conducted localisation studies,
- 2) On 10 August, a localization workshop among local CSOs in Central Sulawesi,
- 3) On 15 August, an interagency localization roundtable among donor agencies, intergovernmental organisations, UN agencies and INGOs, and
- 4) On 26 August, a national CSOs’ localization workshop.

This body of knowledge, so far, provides the evidence that point to the following themes

**Capacity building.** In the onset of emergency, local government and local CSOs had to quickly learn what humanitarian emergency is all about, to rapidly transform their organisations to become humanitarian emergency responders, and to deploy their personnel to perform totally new tasks. The typically fast-tracked and haphazard briefing by international and national actors to CSOs was effective to deliver relief supplies. But they did not go far enough to help CSOs sustain the response to transition to recovery, and further to preparedness for future emergencies.

**Coordination.** Local government assumed the leadership in Central Sulawesi, with the support and complement by BNPB, national authorities and ministries, as well as the military.

CSOs are integrated part of coordination at different levels, mostly through the application of the Cluster approach. It became evident to us that, for local CSOs, it was not easy for them to participate in coordination with other CSOs from local, national, and international levels. It was even more difficult to participate in multi-layered government and the military operations coordination.

Emergency coordination is completely different from developmental and advocacy works that CSOs are doing in peace time. CSOs need support and investment to initiate, sustain, and engage in emergency coordination. This is more so in the case of local CSOs, that work in development, advocacy, and sectoral services. They know little or nothing about disaster emergency and humanitarian response. And yet, they will be the one that has to rise to the occasion, when major disasters occur in their localities.

Central Sulawesi also showed the need to support a more unified and solid national platform or network among humanitarian CSOs, in that way, government could collaborate with CSOs in a more streamlined manner. And it could build the assurance that knowledge and resources are better spread both at national level and, more importantly, to local CSOs in highly disaster risk regions.

**Partnership:** Despite the changing policy in Central Sulawesi, humanitarian partnership did not seem to be too different from previous responses. We saw that larger national CSOs, such as Muhammadiyah and PKPU, were courted by many more donors and international NGOs than before. By and large, however, there were the usual partnering of the usual donors, usual international NGOs, and usual national NGOs.

Local CSOs, in the other hand, were left out. As you know, local CSOs are on the ground with the affected people, they know the habit, culture, and problems people facing before and in emergency. More importantly, they will never leave the affected areas even after the emergency. However, at least according to the conventional criteria of donors and international INGOs, local CSOs might not be large and sophisticated enough, not sufficiently experienced, and perhaps not even credible.

At the end, some of the larger national CSOs hired new personnel, created new structures to deliver short term relief assistance programs. Were they doing better jobs compared to the Local CSOs? Surely there is room to improve. Additionally, along that note, the partnerships are typically of short term relief distribution. So, local CSOs are, again, at unfortunate position. While the international and national CSOs leave the emergency, local CSOs must stay and continue to transition to recovery. Here again, we see that short – termed and risk-avert conventional humanitarian partnership need to be improved.

**Funding.** I am certain that, not very different from our government budgetary system, donor agencies have their emergency response fund to be allocated and regulated very differently from the peace time development funds. INGOs and other intermediaries also have to implement and reinforce this to local implementers.

From the government side, I am pleased to share with you that Indonesian ministry of finance, national development agency, and ministry of home affairs have been more amendable to allocate budget for the transition from emergency to recovery. This allows us, for instance, to help local government construct temporary housing and facilities, and to deliver recovery-oriented goods and services, not far behind the emergency.

Central Sulawesi could serve as a calling for donors and international actors to reciprocate the government's emergency response funding policy with the more flexible and longer term window. Without such adaptation, local CSOs may find themselves, again, dead on track. Not being able to sustain their relief engagement and facing difficulties to return to their non-emergency development and advocacy works.

Additionally, as Indonesia being the world's largest Muslim country is steadily moving upward to become a middle-income country, the public have more disposable income, and part of this, goes to humanitarian charities.

Central Sulawesi showed how national faith-based CSOs are emerging into rather large funding entities. Perhaps, this is a good time for international partners to map out how to best utilize their resources to complement national funding and, in effect, strengthen CSOs roles in humanitarian financing.

**Madame chair, ladies and gentlemen,**

Regardless of what transpires in regional and global localization conferences, Indonesian government, CSOs, and international partners must sustain the momentum and seize the opportunity to bring the means of humanitarian response to those closer to the ground.

While it is comforting to think that there is a growing normative shift towards more international support and more funding for local and national CSOs, this will only make difference when donors and aid organizations are willing to make a strategic institutional shift. We, as stakeholders of localization, must take lessons from Central Sulawesi to devise and sustain the more sophisticated, more innovative and longer term strategies to strengthening capacities of CSOs in humanitarian response.