

Yogyakarta Earthquake Community Recovery Grants supporting *Gotong Royong*

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Context

A powerful earthquake measuring 6.2 on the Richter scale struck Central Java near the city of Yogyakarta, Indonesia at 5:54 am local time on Saturday, 27 May 2006. Java is one of the most densely populated places on earth with approximately 1,000 people per square kilometre and consequently the level of destruction was widespread, ranging from 30 per cent to 90 per cent destruction in affected villages. The quake affected nine districts across the provinces of Central Java & Yogyakarta,¹ killing approximately 5,400 people and directly affected more than 500,000. Most of the people affected stayed close to their homes in emergency shelters in order to protect their belongings and start rebuilding their houses.

The affected areas were both peri-urban and rural. Most households depended on daily labour, agricultural or casual, petty trading, small home industries and farming as their main sources of income. Households' immediate food needs were covered by relief agencies and local markets and trade resumed quickly after the quake. The main needs were shelter and support for people in order that they could get back to their normal lives.

What did Oxfam do?

Globally, Oxfam's Emergency Food Security and Livelihoods team has built up extensive experience and knowledge in different forms of Cash Transfer Programming.²

Throughout villages in Java and most of Indonesia *Gotong Royong* is practiced, an ancient system of reciprocal labour exchange whereby people offer their time and labour voluntarily to support others when they are in need and can claim support in return. At the start of the relief operation local organisations and the Indonesian government voiced major concerns that Cash For Work relief programmes might undermine local support mechanisms, such as *Gotong Royong*. Supporting households through directly targeted cash transfers could also damage traditional community spirit and willingness to help each other, it was feared. As a result Oxfam chose to pilot a system of community grants. The objective of the grants was to support community coping strategies after the quake by providing cash grants to most affected communities, and advocating appropriate and fair assistance.

This case study was written as a contribution to the development of *From Poverty to Power: How Active Citizens and Effective States Can Change the World*, Oxfam International 2008. It is published in order to share widely the results of commissioned research and programme experience. The views it expresses are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of Oxfam International or its affiliate organisations.

A key element of the intervention strategy was the *community-based approach*. The Cash Recovery Grant (CRG) project was designed to give communities the opportunity to determine their own recovery needs. This was done through open consultation at *Rukun Tetangga* (RT, neighbourhood) level using a process supported by Oxfam partners to facilitate proposals and implementation. In Indonesia, the RT is the lowest administrative unit. It consists of approximately 30-40 households. Working at RT level ensured active involvement of community members in the process without creating 'new' community structures, whilst also ensuring recipients could easily be held accountable.

Where the RT structures were found to be dysfunctional or were not representing the needs of the most affected and vulnerable communities, the Oxfam team worked through partners and with the community to elect additional representatives to ensure equal representation. The pilot programme supported 3,104 households (12,346 people, 6,194 men and 6,152 women) in 78 RT's through three local partners.³

Partnership with local organisations was crucial in this approach - they were actively involved in the design and responsible for the implementation of the grants. Careful financial procedures, monitoring, and the promotion of transparency among communities and partners were fostered to mitigate the potential risk of fraud. Community sensitisation and participation were key elements in ensuring transparency and accountability.

The maximum amount of cash distributed per RT was IDR 30⁴ million, approximately 1,500 GBP. The exact amount dispersed depended on the number of households in the RT. The payments were completed in two instalments, with the last instalment made against evidence that the activities were proceeding as planned. Each partner was allocated RT's in their working areas, and supervised and supported them to form committees to come up with a grant proposal. The proposal had to support households most affected by the earthquake but could not include shelter needs, as these would be supported through the shelter programme.

Impact

The grants were used to rehabilitate communal structures, roads, bridges, irrigation canals, mosques, restock animals, purchase agricultural equipment, support agricultural activities, for food storage, and to provide capital to resume business activities. Parts of the grants were used to rehabilitate water-pumps, tractors and restart rotational livestock management schemes, *Guduh*, run by women. The diversity of expenditure showed how the grants were able to meet the varied needs of each RT and were productive, social and infrastructure related. The grants also strengthened local *Gotong Royong* systems and supported communities to finance their recovery needs, for which they would not have had any capital. A woman from Kragilan who benefited from the programme observed:

'...the CRG programme had a positive impact on women's lives, since we were able to replace damaged productive assets and had initial capital to start economic activities...we also feel that the project gave spirit and harmony and built reciprocal support amongst the community'.

Though partner approaches varied, an Oxfam evaluation showed that 80% of respondents said that the cash was the most appropriate way to meet their needs. In some cases, the infrastructural investments also improved access for neighbouring villages to markets and schools.

The grants enabled early recovery of productive activities and reinforced community spirit and decision-making. In one RT the tables, chairs & tents purchased through the grant have become a source of income for the community. These are rented out for weddings and other ceremonies and the income received belongs to the community and still supports their reconstruction work. Women appreciated their active involvement in the RT committees and overall the community-based approach enabled people to be active, and not passive recipients of relief. People felt safe, confident and supported.

References

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Notes

¹In Yogyakarta, the earthquake affected Sleman, Bantul, Gunung Kidul and Kulon Progo districts. In Central Java, it affected the districts of Magelang, Boyolali, Klaten, and Purworejo.

² Cash programming models include cash for work, voucher systems, household grants & community grants.

³ Budget was 160,000 GBP distributed to 3,104 households (approximately 12,400 people) so £50 per person.

⁴ In 2006 in UK pound was approximately 20,000 Indonesian Rupiah (IDR)