



Rethinking and Rebuilding Community Spaces: *A Pilot Project with the Pidie Public Library*



Canada/Aceh Local Government
Assistance Program



Federation of Canadian Municipalities



Canadian International
Development Agency

INTRODUCTION

In the morning of December 26, 2004, an earthquake struck off the northwest coast of the Indonesian island of Sumatra, leading to devastating tsunamis along much of the rim of the Indian Ocean. Particularly hard-hit was the Province of Aceh, Indonesia where an 800 km (500 mile) strip of coastline was ravaged by the tsunami. More than 130,000 people were killed. Another 37,000 are officially listed as missing. Half a million survivors were left homeless.

The tsunami caused devastating damage to infrastructure, human life and property as well as the state and cultural heritage. Rebuilding Aceh is a mammoth undertaking requiring work at many levels.

The Canada/Aceh Local Government Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Project (CALGAP) aims to support post-tsunami rehabilitation and reconstruction in Aceh. The project, which is run by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) in collaboration with the Government of Indonesia and the Bureau of Rehabilitation and Reconstruction for Aceh and Nias (BRR), provides responsive support to local government and promotes intergovernmental cooperation models. Its purpose is to rebuild and strengthen local governance (operations management, service delivery and participatory mechanisms) in the City of Banda Aceh, and the Districts of Pidie and Aceh Jaya.

The Pidie district is at the northeastern tip of Sumatra's Aceh province, and being so close to the epicenter of the earthquake, was affected by the tsunami. Two-thirds of the town of Sigli was hit.¹ FCM's support for a library services project in Pidie arose from a direct need expressed by the community in a December 2006 priority setting workshop. During the workshop three priorities for CALGAP were identified—improving governance with the elected council of the district, supporting local economic development and improving library services. Local decision makers recognized the importance of developing a reading habit and a library program.

Why Libraries?

During the tsunami, many cultural institutions were lost. Recognizing that collective memory and group identity are supported through the library, the community understood the potential for retaining their cultural values both through the collection at the library, and also through the various events, cultural activities and stories that could be promoted through the library.

The Mid-Term Development Plan for Pidie district, adopted during Spring 2007, sought to promote the library, improve the library collection and re-vitalize the bookmobile and community library. Education and training of staff was also recognized as an important goal to improve library services. It was in this context that CALGAP developed the Pidie Library Services Project.

SECTION 1: Overview of the Pidie District Library Project

The tsunami severely affected the library system in Pidie due to the destruction of 47 schools, all of which had housed libraries and provided library services to children and youth. Not only were the physical buildings destroyed, but all the books were also lost. This placed considerable pressure on the one municipal public library in Pidie to provide additional services to students as well as to continue to provide services to the general public. Post-tsunami Sigli, the capital of the District of Pidie, has a population of roughly 14,000.

Some of the specific challenges facing the public library in Sigli and the district included:

- Weak and inadequate library collection (most of the 17,000 items were multiple single titles and old magazines), facility, technology and appropriate staff training;
- Insufficient funding;
- Inability of the library to provide adequate services due to increased demand resulting from destruction of school libraries, bookmobile service that covered too large an area for the resources, and limited opening hours; and
- Government regulation that constrains services, e.g., new books are received only once a year preventing responsive service to public.

The project was designed to support Pidie's Library Service Agency and its staff to assess their current library situation and find ways to accommodate the increased demands placed on the municipal library. The project, like others in FCM's international programs, allowed Canadian municipal partners with similar mandates and goals to share their experience and work together to find solutions to practical problems and challenges. The FCM methodology is built on a peer-to-peer transfer of expertise in specific areas of municipal responsibility. In this case, the project included two volunteers from the Canadian library system who offered technical assistance to the library staff in Aceh.

Between May 2007 and June 2008, the Canadian team undertook four missions to Pidie district to implement the project. Pidie library staff worked with the Canadian volunteers to develop new approaches to library management, services and operations, notably on how to modernize the libraries from the limited traditional lending and reference functions to more responsive libraries that meet the needs of the community for a resource and information centre. The goal of the project was to improve core library services and enhance learning opportunities.

During each mission, the Canadian volunteers worked with the library staff to understand their needs, to develop and implement plans to achieve the objectives, and to provide specific staff training and support. One of the missions included visits by Pidie library staff to the Sleman District Li-

¹ European space agency news. "A year on from the Asian tsunami, satellites are aiding regional rebuilding." 23 December 2005. http://www.esa.int/esaEO/SEMF2J8A9HE_index_0.html

brary in Jogjakarta, Indonesia (which won the award for best library in Indonesia in 2007, in recognition of the community approach to the delivery of services and the introduction of new services) and the National Library of Singapore (one of the foremost libraries in the world on the leading edge of the use of technology to deliver services). While in Singapore, the group also toured a community library, a library for the arts, a large regional library and the Library Supply Centre where 5,000 items are processed each day. This "exposure" mission helped to build understanding of public library services and potential.

SECTION 2: Approach and Objectives of the Pidie Library Services Project

Before beginning the work, it was crucial for the Canadian project team to understand the local conditions and needs for library services in the district. As such, the project began with a "definition mission" to assess and plan the technical assistance needs for Pidie. The resulting "Project Plan" set out the scope, objectives, results, deliverables, and work plan for the project over its approximately 18 month duration.

In creating the plan, the Canadian and Indonesian team worked together to assess the current capacities of Pidie's Library Service Agency, including deciding which library function would best meet the current and future demands of the community, especially children and youth. They also reviewed current levels of services and operations, as well as conditions of the existing library, including physical and equipment needs. The staff at the library com-

piled information about the community demographics and use of the library. They also researched national and regional cultural celebrations for future program development and developed a list of Indonesian publishers.

Through discussions with staff and presentations during the first mission, the team determined three priority objectives for the library project:

- **To create a more welcoming space** — the collection was poorly laid out, the physical space was unwelcoming and there were few library programs.
- **To improve the public's understanding of the role of the library** — in order to increase the use of the library there were a number of issues identified as constraints including insufficient staff training, lack of community outreach, inadequate services for children and youth and weak political interest in the role of the library. In addition, the bookmobile service, which is so necessary in a largely rural area, was not functioning optimally.
- **To develop an efficient system for library circulation and collection management** — the collection was disorganized and unbalanced and there was a lack of appropriate computer technology.

The next section outlines the implementation process and results achieved in meeting these objectives.

Renovating the library helped to create a more welcoming environment to attract visitors. This photo shows the newly painted exterior of the library.



SECTION 3: Implementation and Results

Objective 1: Create a more welcoming public library space

Initially, the library space in Pidie was not conducive to visitors as the building was hot and stuffy, poorly laid out and generally unwelcoming. The library staff began by developing a floor plan and options for use of the space. The plan was developed using data they collected about current use and users of the library. This helped to build an understanding of the steps needed to attract visitors of all ages and backgrounds—men and women, young and old.

The baseline data helped staff to learn how current collections were being used and to develop an approach to enhancing the collection and the library space based on what the users and potential users want to use and borrow. This

information also helped staff to evaluate its operating hours and services offered.

The staff ultimately created a more welcoming, accessible and functional environment that attracted more visitors by revitalizing the building and furnishings, and by creating distinct spaces for different age groups. They also developed community-based displays to promote messages of local government related to the prevention of dengue fever, deforestation, health and nutrition and other messages that support good citizenship (see Connecting with Communities tool on page 11). The Canadian team also worked with staff to improve client-centred customer service, through both training and the exposure visit to Jogjakarta and Singapore.

As a result of these efforts, the library's physical space has improved, a 270% increase in visitors has been recorded and is expected to increase further, and library services provided to children and youth are steadily improving. A more detailed analysis of the results is available in the table on page 10.

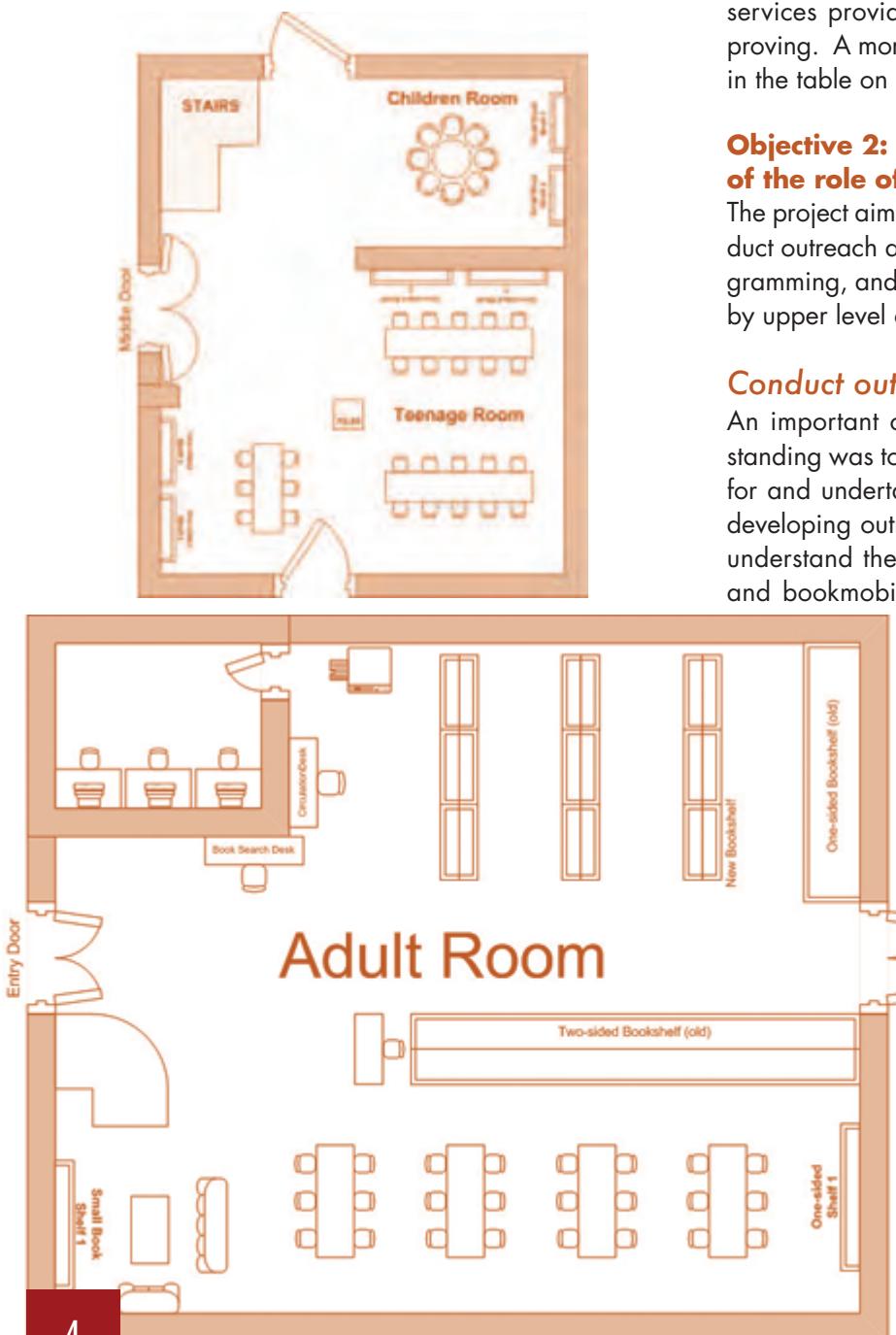
Objective 2: Improve the public's understanding of the role of the library

The project aimed to improve the skills of library staff to conduct outreach activities, to deliver children's and youth programming, and to enhance the understanding of the library by upper level officials.

Conduct outreach activities

An important component in improving the public understanding was to improve the skills of the library staff to plan for and undertake library related activities and events. In developing outreach activities, the library staff first had to understand their demographic and the use of the library and bookmobile. By conducting various surveys that allowed them to understand the context, staff was able to plan and conduct suitable programs and outreach activities at the Sigli location and through the bookmobile.

For example, the library implemented an "I love my library" bulletin board in front of the library where customers leave comments about the library and provide ideas for the collection through a suggestion box. Considerable time was also spent developing the plan for World Environment Day on June 5th. The staff created a bulletin board display with key messages and articles found on the Internet and displayed several books in the new book holders. The event also included a storytelling presentation and an art contest with winners announced over refreshments. The official program for the event also included tree planting by local officials (see World Environment Day box, opposite page).



Transformed Space for Reading

Perspectives from FCM volunteers Dawna Rowson and Katherine Palmer (May 26, 2008)

"Yesterday we went to the library in the morning. It is hard to describe the combined effect of the many changes that have happened since January. First of all, the outside of the library is a marvelous, eye catching bright lime green... There is now a new sign identifying the library and welcoming people. Upon entering the library, the first thing you notice is how packed it is with people. AND there are people of all ages...the regular students, but also adults and children.

The new shelving is in place and the collection is starting to get organized by Dewey, not as before where it was filed by size. (They had always catalogued by Dewey but they shelved by size of book, with little nod to non-fiction, fiction or adult and children's collections.) The library now has an internet room, with public access internet stations. The 3 workstations have been available for a week now.

Distinct spaces have been added for children and youth. Currently the youth area is housing a lot of the new equipment and furniture. The children's area was painted with a wonderful mural, depicting local cultural dances and the community. The mural couldn't be more appropriate.

The staff is so proud of the changes and eager to hear our responses. We just kept conveying to them how wonderful everything looked and we applied a new Bahasa Indonesian word...jelita which means beautiful."

A new space for children in the library



The Pidie Public Library Celebrates World Environment Day

Fresh with training on how to conduct effective outreach activities and with support from Canadian volunteers Dawna Rowson and Katherine Palmer, Pidie library staff organized a very successful event on World Environment Day in June 2008. A painting contest, storytelling and refreshments were on the agenda at the library. Working over the course of a couple of days the volunteers and staff created stick puppet sets for stories about the "Great Kapok Tree" and the "Great Big Enormous Turnip." A library staff person helped to adapt the various puppets to fit the Indonesian context—turnip to a carrot, anteater to a squirrel and señor to tuan (mister). The volunteers coached the staff through the delivery and how to work with the participating children, who read well and were motivated to contribute. Several NGOs in Pidie collaborated on the festivities, which included tree planting throughout the town and environmental displays at the town centre park.

World Environment Day activities at the Pidie District Library



Improving services throughout the district using the bookmobile was one of the most important outreach activities of the project. The new bookmobile schedule has been implemented with visits to 22 sub-districts every 15 days (up from only 6 districts in 2007). CALGAP also purchased a second bookmobile allowing the library to visit even the most remote locations (see bookmobile box).



Bookmobile Service Reaches Remote Communities

With the addition of a second bookmobile and a new schedule in place, communities in formerly unserved areas are able to read and borrow materials. One such area is Tangse, a two-hour drive from Sigli. Tangse is the second farthest bookmobile stop and had not been visited for the last six years due to civil unrest in the region. The bookmobile now stops in two locations in town—one by the elementary school and another by the high school—which also happens to be located across from the mosque and just beside the market. The project team has been encouraged by the huge turnout at both stops and by the tremendous response from children, youth and adults who are eager to read and borrow materials.

Left: Children sit with their books in Tangse. Below: Children flock to the Pidie Bookmobile to borrow new books.



Deliver children and youth programming

Given the destruction by the tsunami of a number of school libraries, it was also critical for the library to increase its understanding and delivery of library services for children and youth. Interactive workshops were delivered on the value of preschool programming, specifically the library's role in fostering early literacy and recognizing a parents' critical role as their child's first teacher. The project developed content for brochures about early reading and literacy programs and increased awareness of the need to provide collections and programming for distinct age groups. Events such as the World Environment Day, which used puppets to tell stories, provided the first of many programs that will continue to attract children and families to the library.

Schoolteachers are now visiting the library and there are several requests to bring classes as extracurricular activities, to enable students to read and also use the new computer workstations.

Increase political support

In order to gain sufficient funding and support, the library needed to work on enhancing the understanding of the library services by upper level officials. The project helped the staff and library leaders to understand the importance of gaining political support.

The staff of the library worked with the Canadian team to deliver a presentation to political leaders on the library project. After receiving the business case seminar from the Canadian project team, the staff submitted its business case to the local Council, which successfully attracted additional financial support to the library's budget and a promise of future support for further improvements. The Vice Bupati (Vice-Mayor) was invited to join the project team during the exposure mission to Singapore and Jogjakarta and was very engaged with the group in learning about the activities and systems of both host libraries.

In general, the project has been quite successful in increasing awareness and understanding among the public and senior officials about the importance of the library. Local officials have committed to providing more funding, and there has been a marked increase in the number of visits to the library. A more detailed analysis of results in this area is available in the table on page 10.

Did you Know?

The International Federation of Library Associations and UNESCO developed a Public Library Manifesto in 1994, which encourages national and local governments to support and actively engage in the development of public libraries:

<http://www.ifla.org/VII/s8/unesco/eng.htm>

Objective 3: Develop an efficient system for library circulation and collection management

An important aim of the project was to assist the Pidie Library Service Agency and its staff to modernize the libraries to go beyond their traditional lending and reference functions to incorporate a more responsive approach to meeting community needs as a resource and information centre. In particular, this goal involved technical assistance and capacity building to improve library services and functions, and operations and management.

The Canadian volunteers began by working with library staff to assess and develop the library collection. Collection development involved an assessment of the community's needs, the development of a policy that describes the library's intentions for building its collection, and addressing a number of basic functions.

These functions included:

- selecting material (to meet the needs of the community) while respecting intellectual freedom (issues to consider in the selection process related to balance, truth, obscenity, etc);
- acquisitions (acquiring and processing the selected material and making decisions about donating deselected materials);
- weeding (removing items that are no longer useful); and
- preserving (dealing with damaged materials)

The second task was to automate the library services and to introduce computers to the customers. The library catalogue was the first library process to be automated. Staff was trained in the system that is now installed on the library computers. In addition, staff is now able to prepare library reports to support library administrative functions (performance measurement, creation of library signage, preparation of brochures, and communication with the public).

Public access to the Internet supports the project goal of using the library to respond directly to the needs of its users, so automation also included introducing computers for public use. Staff received training on the use of computers and electronic resources by the public in order to assist customers with problems. Nine staff attended four days of training on Word, Excel, Powerpoint and Internet use. The staff members who received training are sharing their experience with other staff and two of them are designated to support the computer systems. By the end of the project, there were three computer stations available to the public for a small fee. The staff also worked with the Canadian team to develop an Internet policy to help staff operate the public Internet computers.

SECTION 4: Implementation Challenges and Replicability

From Collection to Connection: Internet becomes a fast friend to the Pidie community

In June 2008, FCM's Chief Executive Officer joined Canada's Ambassador to Indonesia in Aceh to witness first-hand some of the results that were emerging from different projects supported through CALGAP. The two officials presided at the opening ceremony of the renovated Pidie public library. They also visited a mushroom farm where they got a demonstration on what is clearly a very effective method of production. The Ambassador asked the farmer how they had learned to modernize their production techniques and double their yield since working with CALGAP...and he said that he had gone into Pidie and researched on the Internet using the computers in the new library!



The public can now access the Internet at Pidie District Library

As a result of their efforts to develop an efficient library system, the collection has been refined and enhanced, the cataloguing system modernized and automated, staff trained in computer use, and computers have been made available to the public. A more detailed summary of the results is available in the table on page 10.

Working with ineffective government regulations

The team members saw great progress over the course of the 18 months of the project. Nevertheless, some minor challenges related to government funding and other specific constraints remain. For example, the Canadian project team was promoting regular and scheduled ordering of material to ensure a steady flow of relevant materials to respond to local needs of library customers. This ordering schedule was difficult for the library due to government processes that restrict ordering books to only once a year. The vice-Mayor was informed of this issue and is working with staff to address the problem. The same kind of challenge exists regarding opening hours. Some efforts were made to increase them but it is difficult to get around government constraints regarding public servants' salaries and working hours. Little flexibility exists.

Initial need for direct support and guidance from municipal practitioners

The program required considerable direct support from the project team and, while some of the information could be transferred through the creation of tools and other resources, the peer-to-peer support was critical to the success of the project. Local staff learned directly from the experience of the Canadian volunteers who also work in the local government context and were able to understand some of the issues facing the Pidie staff. The exposure mission to libraries in Jogjakarta and Singapore helped the Pidie staff to learn by seeing a successful library in action. With the success of the project, the Pidie District Library could itself be used as a model library for other area library staff to visit and learn from the improvements.

Tip

Library staff requires hands on training to learn how to develop a modern and efficient library collection that includes automation.

The Arizona State Library Archives and Public Library provides practical training on collection development. See <http://www.lib.az.us/cdt/>.

The Toronto, Canada Public Library website has a special section on collection development, which includes policies on selection of materials and Internet use, and position statements on intellectual freedom and children's rights. See: http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/abo_col_index.jsp.

Incorporation of CALGAP cross-cutting themes

The project was particularly successful at incorporating three cross-cutting program themes that were built into all CALGAP projects—environmental sustainability, gender equality and social cohesion (see below for a description of each theme).

Environmental sustainability was a significant focus with the library now using better environmental practices such as green sourcing of material, planting trees to increase shade, and lowering the air-conditioning to conserve energy. In addition, the library was effectively used to raise awareness on environmental sustainability issues through the activities associated with World Environment Day and through encouraging book displays on deforestation and other environmental topics.

The project team also made significant efforts to promote gender equality in the project. In particular, the Canadian team worked with library staff to ensure that in managing and developing the collection, the specific needs and interests of women were considered.

The project aimed to provide equal access to all in the community to channel ideas and share information, and in doing so the library was a key vehicle for promoting social cohesion in the community.

Many of the presentations and activities focused on supporting better governance structures for the library. Through these presentations and through the development of transparent funding, the project made strides in promoting anti-corruption in the library community.

Lessons Learned: While much was done in all the cross-cutting areas to ensure that these issues were well integrated in the project, the environmental sustainability theme was particularly successful and provides an excellent model for all the cross-cutting thematic work. For example, the success of using library events and displays as opportunities to highlight environmental issues could be replicated to highlight issues related to women's equality such as violence against women, women as economic actors and women's political participation. Project planning documents should also include specific and deeper results related to all the cross-cutting themes. For example, though collecting disaggregated data about women's participation is an important aspect of understanding the needs and users of the library, gender equality results should address specific questions related to gender equality such as greater understanding of women's rights or greater participation of women in decision-making. In all of the areas, explicitly identifying the results expected in the cross-cutting themes will allow a better analysis of success achieved.

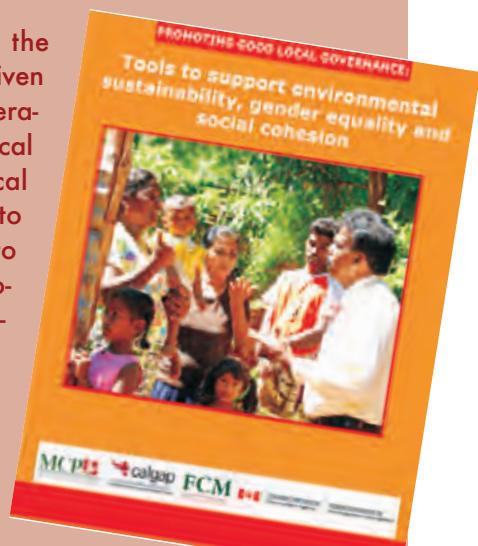
What are the CALGAP cross-cutting themes?

The CALGAP cross-cutting themes are tools for promoting good governance practices. By integrating each of the themes, projects are taking steps to build transparent and accountable governance practices that reflect the priorities of the diverse local community.

Environmental sustainability – Activities of local government have an impact on the environment. Reducing the negative impact of municipal activities and decisions on the environment while increasing positive environmental impacts help to reduce poverty and promote sustainable development.

Gender equality – Women and men often have very different needs and resources. Therefore, local government officials need to understand the differences in the situation of women and men, and deliver government services in ways which meets those different needs.

Social cohesion – is the ability of citizens in a given area to function cooperatively together. If a local government or local organization wishes to make a contribution to strengthening social cohesion, it needs to understand any sources of resentment and tension that parts of the community may feel and how local conflict resolution mechanisms might be made more legitimate or stronger in the eyes of all community members.



Highlighted Results of the Pidie Library Services Project

Objective 1: Create a more welcoming public library space

- The library's physical space has been improved, for the various core user groups (youth, students, children, and adults). The entire library was cleaned, painted (interior and exterior), and the electrical system upgraded. Broken windows were replaced as well as the tiles around the building. Some work was also done on the roof and in the bathrooms. New furniture was provided for the different sections of the library.
- A 270% increase in visitors has been recorded and it is expected to further increase with the end of the renovation process (from 100 visitors borrowing 70 books in January 2007 to 2702 visitors borrowing 1610 books in July 2008). Local government has responded by allocating more operational funds, so the library can continue to stay open longer hours. There are now 25 staff members (compared to 13 previously).
- Library services provided to children and youth are steadily improving, with an emphasis on early literacy and making the library's physical environment more attractive. The library space has been adapted to encourage greater use by children. A mural featuring children reading and playing as well as depicting children performing the traditional Aceh clapping dance is now on the walls in the children's room. Staff has participated in training on child-focused library programming, including information on the benefits of early literacy for child development and school readiness.

Objective 2: Enhancing the public's understanding of the role of the library:

- A customer service approach has been adopted: visitors are surveyed every day (# of visitors; # of books borrowed; # of books read at the library—data is disaggregated by age groups and—since March 2008—by sex) to help library staff better understand the needs and preferences of the users.
- Library staff improved their skills for planning and carrying out library related activities.
- Staff developed a plan that takes into account demographic information to make sure all age groups have access to appropriate book collections and programs, making the library attractive to more people.
- Senior officials have a better understanding of the importance of library services for community members and have become more supportive. Local government leaders have committed to providing additional funds in 2008 (108,500,000 Rp as one-time funding).
- Increased library hours of operation by two hours a day (Monday through Thursday, and Saturdays) has lead to a tremendous increase in visitors, library use, and borrowing of books.

Objective 3: Developing an efficient library system

- Staff reviewed their current book collections and prepared a report on how they proposed to weed it. Approximately 3,000 books have been removed from the initial collection. New books have been purchased and integrated in the collection. A book repair training was provided to Pidie District Library staff.
- The library catalogue is now automated and staff has been trained on how to use the system.
- A computer room has been set up and three workstations with Microsoft Office Suite and Internet access are now available to the public for a small fee per session.
- Nine staff attended a four day training on Word, Excel, PowerPoint and the use of the internet. Library staff started using the Internet to connect to other libraries—they signed up for e-mail and started corresponding with an Ontario library (pictures of Pidie library were sent and included in a presentation at the Ontario Library Association's Super Conference 2008).

Pidie Public Library Project: Connecting with Community

The CALGAP Pidie Library Project worked in post-tsunami Aceh to improve library services. One aspect included encouraging its partners to support local agencies or community groups by making use of the facility as a community resource centre.

WHY should we do it?

- Gives profile to important community information
- Educates the public
- Attracts people to the library
- Connects the library to different groups who will in turn promote the library to their members, visitors or customers
- Library is recognized as a key community resource

WHO should we invite?

- Local women's work initiative group
- Government representatives such as: public health nurse, nutritionists, police, waste management personnel, etc.
- National government projects such as forestry management/conservation
- District councils who may have new information about upcoming events or new rules or regulations
- Local nongovernmental organizations, community-based organizations, etc.

WHAT should we promote?

- Community groups may have brochures or posters to promote something specific such as nutrition for newborns, including lists of foods and when to introduce them, safety precautions to take in the home or reducing the risk of malaria.
- The library can help by finding appropriate books from the collection to put on display to support the message.
- There is no direct promotion of businesses or commercial items or direct fundraising unless it is something relevant and topical.
- Remember: the library is neutral but still government-funded.

HOW do we do it?

Connect with the community group

Make a list of local groups and government offices

Consider which have messages that need to be communicated to the community

Set up a meeting or visit the office to talk about how the library can help to get the word out

Organize a public talk and follow it up with the display

Set up the Display

Use a table, bulletin board or poster holder

Create a small poster to highlight the message—"Safety first for all" or a slogan "Protect our forests" or "End violence against women"

Use everyday objects to draw attention to the display—pots, stirring spoons for a nutrition display

Create a flyer that can be taken home and reviewed such as "how to protect your home from fire"

Keep the display for no more than a few weeks

Create something interesting to see when you come into the library and keep the messages fresh



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