



There's a huge job at hand

11 Million euros for tsunami aid

Karst-Jan Hoogsteen, chairman of the H2O-Partners Sumatra Foundation, has visited the area hit by the tsunami in Northwest Sumatra three times now. "New projects have been started to boost the renovation and rehabilitation of the infrastructure. But there's a long way to go, because the tsunami and earthquakes caused such sweeping and extensive damage."



NORTHWEST SUMATRA

Minor, but important steps are being taken in the tsunami-hit area, says Karst-Jan Hoogsteen. "Don't forget it's an uphill task to get aid delivery organised properly. The situation on the ground does not make it easy. Looking at it from our comfortable positions in the Netherlands we would like aid to get under way quicker and more efficiently. But when you visit the area, you see how bad the infrastructure and

municipal authorities have been hit by the tsunami. The entire infrastructure has been heavily damaged, as have the archives and the planning system. In some cases they've vanished completely. The fact that so many people have died, well-trained local water company employees included, makes it very hard to come to grips with reconstruction."

Balance supply and demand

The system has been completely disrupted and there's a huge job at hand, says Hoogsteen. "Reconstruction is seriously hindered by the fact that all registration of ownership has been destroyed. Imagine if the land register in the Netherlands would be lost. Can you imagine the scale of the problems you would encounter if you had to rebuild a town? You first have to get things straightened out in order to know what you're talking about. You'll have to determine whether you're going to build houses on the same spot, or somewhere else. When that's become evident, you can start designing, which is also very complex. If you compare the situation here to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina you'll find many similarities. Like here, reconstruction in New Orleans has been slow to get going. And we're talking about the rich and prosperous United States here."

What did slow things down in the area hit by the tsunami is the



fact that so many different international aid organisations wanted to help in the same area, Hoogsteen admits. "That situation has substantially improved since a central agency has been set up to balance demand and supply of aid and to coordinate who does what and where."

Renovation and rehabilitation

At the end of last year the H2O-Partners Sumatra Foundation launched a number of new projects to enhance renovation and rehabilitation of the infrastructure, Hoogsteen says. "We've started the rehabilitation of a number of pumping stations. In the city of Meulaboh we have already started construction. That will take a few months. We've also started construction of a number of distribution networks in the areas of Aceh Besar and Aceh Utara. The new houses under construction there will be connected to the water distribution network. In addition the Foundation is building a training centre. Demand for training is high. Because water companies have lost people, they need to train new staff. We've mapped out demand for training in a survey and the first lessons started in December 2005. We're also devoting attention to drawing up master plans for the long term. These are plans concerning locations where reconstruction has yet to start and plans for water distribution networks that will need to be constructed there, like the outer areas of Banda Aceh. Reconstruction will be in areas bordering the original sites. We've also begun a number of studies into water resources management, because in places the ground has subsided as a result of the earthquakes. That has disrupted run-off and changed some river courses. We're talking projects on a grand scale here that will take enormous investments."

The H2O-Partners Sumatra Foundation has 11 million euros at its disposal for emergency aid, renovation and rehabilitation of the area in Northwest Sumatra. The Dutch water industry has raised 5 million euros. The Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation Agnes van Ardenne is going to double that amount (see page 2). Partners for Water, a cooperative effort of five ministries to promote export of the Dutch water sector, added 1 million euros. That makes a grand total of 11 million euros. Hoogsteen: "There's a lot we can do for water supply with 11 million. But in the long run a lot more money is needed for rehabilitation and improvement of sanitation and water management. Where and whenever we are able to, the Foundation will contribute to improve sanitation."

Sustainability

Sanitation infrastructure in Indonesia is something else. There are no sewage systems like we have in the Western world, says Hoogsteen. "Septic tanks are the common method for sanitation in Indonesia, so that's what we'll work with for the time being. When the second phase, the renovation and rehabilitation, will have been completed – and we're aiming for the middle of 2007 - the last phase will come into view, the phase of sustainability." Hoogsteen: "It is certainly the intention to keep the Netherlands involved in the water supply in Northwest Sumatra. That means that the Dutch water companies want to enter into long-term partnerships with local drinking water companies. Speaking for my own company in Drenthe I feel that we have an obligation to use our know-how and experience to upgrade water supply there to reach higher standards permanently. The way the people of Northwest Sumatra have gotten on with their lives deserves respect, admiration and long-term support."