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Important, the Role of Good Labour Relations in Rebuilding Aceh Jaya

CALANG (ILO News): Sound, harmonious industrial relations play an important role to better facilitate the rebuilding tsunami affected areas and to ensure the implementation of decent terms and conditions of working, says a set of guidelines produced by the Provincial Department of Manpower of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam (Disnaker NAD) with technical assistance from the ILO.

The Guidelines titled *Ten Priority Responsibilities of Employers in the Reconstruction Sector* have outlined rights and responsibilities of workers and employers involved in the reconstruction sector. They cover labour related issues ranging from minimum wage for part-time workers, probation periods, termination of employment to who bears the responsibility to ensure the implementation of occupational safety and health of workers when construction work is contracted out to private companies.

The Guidelines were introduced and reviewed during an employment workshop, jointly organized by Disnaker NAD and the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Calang, capital of the Aceh Jaya District, on 17 January 2006. The aim of the workshop was to give workers, employers and the government an opportunity to explore ways of creating more harmonious labour relations in order to better facilitate the rebuilding of Aceh Jaya.

Ridwan Achmad, Head of the Aceh Jaya District Labour Office, in his opening remarks emphasized the importance of the good industrial relations in the reconstruction and rehabilitation phase. “Harmonious labour relations are a key to reconstruction and rehabilitation, especially in a place such as Aceh Jaya where supply routes are limited and the rebuilding process is taking longer than in other parts,” he said.

Issues raised during the workshop, among others, were about the cost of living and the involvement of local people in the reconstruction sector. Some members of the community stated that due to the higher cost of living in Aceh Jaya as compared to other parts of NAD Province, a District Minimum Wage should be introduced like in some parts of Java. Youth leaders, meanwhile, expressed concern that the recruitment by UN agencies and NGOs is

not being conducted in a transparent manner, and that many non-locals are being employed despite the high unemployment rate in Aceh Jaya.

“At the end of the day, we are all here to rebuild Aceh Jaya. We need the best people for the jobs this entails, and will do our best to employ locals where possible,” responded Gregory Blamoh as a representative of a major reconstruction and rehabilitation employer in Calang.

The Labour Office stated that reporting job vacancies to the joint ILO-Disnaker Employment Services is one way to enhance transparency in the recruitment process. The Employment Services were established to assist with the placement of job seekers in the new jobs and to provide recruitment services for employers.

Closing the meeting, Teuku Syarul, NAD Province’s Chief Labour Inspector, spoke of the importance of dialogue on these issues. “Harmony in labour relations comes through understanding, and understanding comes through information and socialization events like this.”

Approximately 70 people attended the workshop, including representatives from the Provincial and District Governments, NGOs, UN agencies, the Aceh Monitoring Mission, youth leaders and community groups.

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