

**Smong From Simeulue to Kobe**



# Local Wisdom that saves lives



Drs. Darmili, Municipal Mayor of  
Simeulue, Aceh, Indonesia

# What happened

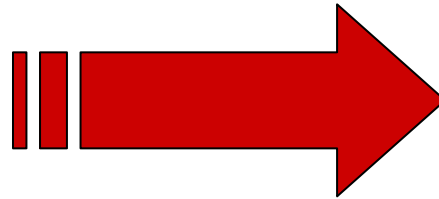
- Indian Ocean Tsunami (26/12-2004) killed hundred thousands and devastated millions in Aceh
- In Simeulue island, only 5 persons (0.007%) out of 66 thousands populations killed. How did this happen?
- Possible explanations
  - First, God works in mysterious way.
  - Second, Simeulue happens to have natural evacuation high-grounds some one to two hundreds metres away from beaches.
  - Finally, *living local wisdom in people's mind triggered instant escape.*

# Info: Simeulue

- Proud recipient of the UN Sasakawa Award 2005
- 200 hectares island, west of Aceh, near earthquake epicenter
- Population 84,000, some 80% living in seashore fishing communities

# Destruction

- All houses affected, 7000 destroyed, 6,500 damaged
- All health facilities damaged
- 75% schools and 300 religious facilities
- 20,000 pupils study in temporary tent schools
- 33,000 still displaced



# The event 26 December 2004

- Felt earthquake
- Seawater receding
- Fishes stranded in sands
  
- Someone shouted SMOOONG
- Repeated from one to another while running uphill
- Triggered mass instant evacuation

# Smong: Local wisdom

- Tsunami 1907 destroyed Simeulue
- Older people pass on the information to next generations in stories and songs
- Describing the symptoms of tsunami
- Telling people what to do what not to do

# The SMONG Song

*Hear you all, this story  
Once upon a time  
A place gone under the sea  
This is what happened*

*First there would be a quake  
And then a wall of water  
A village goes under water  
In a flash*

*So when the land shakes  
Run you all, run  
Find places that are high*

*Smong that is  
Told by our great old ones  
Remember this and be aware  
Hear ye, message from elders before us:*

*Smong is your bathwater  
Quake is your gentle swaying lullaby  
Thunders are your tambourines  
And lightning are your sparkling lights*

- Japanese translation



# After tsunami

## **Risk reduction measures:**

1. All sub-district officers are to devise disaster rapid response
2. Together with the municipal parliament, a local ordinance prohibiting disturbance of mangrove and shore islands
3. Local people to self-support escape routes to the high-grounds

## **What's next,**

- Long and difficult recovery ahead.
- We need to pass on local wisdom to next generation.
- Not only about *Smong*, but also other disasters.

## **FINALLY**

- Please come and visit us in our beautiful Simeulue Island.



***You are invited to visit Simeulue***

***Terimakasih***