

The Importance of the TAGANA System in Responding to COVID-19

SIAP SIAGA's CBDRM expert, Kristanto Sinandang reflects on why the TAGANA system occupies a unique place in Indonesia's management of disasters.

One of the key mechanisms of the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) for the implementation of disaster management activities at community level is Taruna Siaga Bencana (TAGANA). TAGANA was established by MoSA Regulation No. 82/HUK/2006 and further defined in Regulation No. 28/2012 on General Guidelines of Taruna Siaga Bencana. Under Regulation Number 82/2006. TAGANA is defined as "... *social volunteers or Social Welfare Workers from the community who are caring and active in disaster response in the areas of social protection.*" This definition was revised slightly in Regulation No. 28/2012, which states that TAGANA "*are trained social volunteers or Social Welfare Workers from community who are caring and active in disaster response.*" The two regulations emphasize social protection as a main mandate of TAGANA, with all activities directed towards prevention of and response to social shocks and vulnerability.

The establishment of TAGANA was an effort to empower and mobilise youth ('taruna' means young people) in various aspects of disaster response, especially efforts which centre on the community. The objectives to establish TAGANA is to provide:

- a. a disaster response organization, mechanism or unit at the community level that is adequately trained, and always ready and able to support all aspects of disaster responses; and
- b. a vehicle for participation, empowerment of and partnership with youth around disaster response.

Through TAGANA, MoSA aims to utilize the existing potential in the community based on other disaster response under various names and attributes such as Karang Taruna (Neighborhood Youth Organization), Pecinta Alam (Nature Lovers), social organizations, political organizations, youth organizations, and volunteers, etc. The main objective of the government is to unite the visions, missions, and actions of these groups into disaster response by bringing them under one umbrella.

TAGANA consists of humanitarian volunteers/social welfare workers that come from community. Being locally based, they are familiar with local wisdom of their area and can leverage Indonesia's traditional/historical form of mutual cooperation – *gotong royong*.

TAGANA currently has more than 39,000 personnel

across Indonesia - with each member having a TAGANA membership registration number issued by MoSA - and continues to expand, with the creation of "TAGANA Friends," which consists of 63,140 people. The "friends" come from various professions such as journalism, the arts, or social organizations. TAGANA is accountable to the Director General of Social Protection and Security and Director of Social Protection for Natural Disaster Victims in MoSA and are under the management of social affairs offices at the provincial and district/city levels. Members report the implementation of their assignments to a TAGANA Coordination Forum according to the location where they work, and the Coordination Forum in turn reports to district/city and provincial social affairs offices and MoSA.

Scope of TAGANA's Mandate

TAGANA engages in all phases of the disaster management cycle: before, during and after a disaster. In addition to facilitating Disaster Preparedness Village planning, TAGANA takes part in emergency response and post-disaster recovery activities. For example, during the Central Sulawesi Tsunami and Earthquake in September 2018, TAGANA was mobilized, among other activities, to distribute logistics, manage public kitchens, and collect data on disaster victims.

In practice, TAGANA members serve as agents of change and have the following roles:

Facilitators: to provide a convenient resource for organizations and institutions working on disaster risk reduction through trainings and awareness raising activities.

About SIAP SIAGA

SIAP SIAGA is a five-year partnership program between the Governments of Indonesia and Australia. The program aims to improve the management of disasters and increase community resilience in Indonesia and in the Indo-Pacific Region. Our approach is measured, reflective and forward-leaning which helps us to deliver the best results for DFAT and Indonesia's communities.

Enumerators: to collect and utilize accurate, up-to-date data related to disaster risk reduction in the community for monitoring threats and vulnerability; trainings; preparedness (logistics and basic needs supplies); preparing evacuation routes; and testing early warning systems. In addition, TAGANA volunteers gather data on damage and losses in housing and infrastructure, and in the social and economic sectors, and identify people's needs and aspirations for recovery (part of the Post Disaster Needs Assessment (Kaji Kebutuhan Paska Bencana - Jitupasna).

Emergency Response Actors: rapid assessments of impacts and damage; search and rescue; running public kitchens; providing basic needs assistance to disaster victims, including shelter; prioritized services for vulnerable groups, including ensuring their representation in decision making processes; emergency repair and recovery; and psychosocial mentoring for disaster victims.

Community mobilizers: building understanding, awareness, responsibility, commitment, participation, and ability of all community members in the pursuit of disaster risk reduction.

TAGANA's Role in the COVID-19 Response

In line with the mandate of the **of Directorate of Social Protection for Natural Disaster Victims (PSKBA) at MoSA** (to formulate and implement policies; set norms, standard, procedures and criteria; provide technical supports and supervision; and evaluate and report in the area of social protection for victims of natural disaster), activities for basic recovery and services are implemented by local social affairs office and TAGANA. However, in the context of the COVID-19 response in Indonesia, the scope of TAGANA's assignments aligned to those in a 'normal' development environment, focusing on the dissemination of information and basic needs to patients in self-quarantine, public education, rice and basic needs distribution to vulnerable groups and various other actions – spraying of disinfectant, security of isolation areas, etc. With the emergence of the 'new normal', TAGANA's assignments have concentrated on operating public kitchens, shelter, providing psychosocial support services, and logistic distribution.

Lessons from TAGANA's Role in the COVID-19 Response

The value of competency-based volunteerism

As a part of the community, TAGANA enables more direct outreach to the people for action on disaster management and serves as a *model for a nationwide volunteer organization and an important actor in disaster reduction and response*. One of the reasons is that while volunteerism is a critical component of the pentahelix approach/multistakeholder approach to disaster management, TAGANA is distinct in that its members have specific competencies relevant to disaster management. TAGANA members take part in trainings on technical matters, concepts, management, and *esprit de corps*. A more systematic approach is being developed by TAGANA to standardize the competency of TAGANA members.

As trained social volunteers, TAGANA demonstrates a good practice in disaster response. They provide a cohort of locally based human resources with knowledge of the local community, its strengths and weaknesses, local culture who are trained in disaster management. Furthermore, TAGANA has systems (and know how) to coordinate with local government to effectively fill gaps and deliver services as needed. This has been demonstrated in the COVID-19 response where TAGANA volunteers have augmented and provided additional logistical, psychosocial and health support to government organisations. Different from civil society organisations which can also provide appropriate competencies for disaster management, TAGANA is an on-demand resource of volunteers with extensive coverage across all of Indonesia, whose members can work across sectors and support a variety of actors.

Facilitating the dissemination of accurate information and public awareness

One of the key challenges faced by the Government of Indonesia is the prevalence of misinformation, disinformation, and hoaxes. This phenomenon thus made the public awareness and risk communications undertaken by government and other actors (civil society, private sector) on the risks associated with COVID-19 and necessary mitigation actions that needed to be taken much more challenging. Moreover, while public communications by government targets traditional and social media platforms, these messages do not always reach to the grass roots level and are framed in generic terms for wider public consumption. TAGANA played a very significant role in ensuring the wider and deeper dissemination of public health and behaviour change messages to their local communities, contextualizing the information in ways that were relevant to their communities and easier to understand. They also provided an avenue for public awareness information to reach the most vulnerable – the elderly, people with disabilities and the very poor – who are often not able to access standard communication channels.

TAGANA also served as a feedback mechanism – while government public communications are one-way, TAGANA has been able to provide answers to questions, dispel rumours and address mis- and disinformation in communities. While hoaxes and conspiracies continue to persist, TAGANA serves as an important mechanism to

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get accurate information to a wide audience. Government messaging and communications shared through volunteers who are known and trusted actors in the community brings additional value to the risk communication process that cannot be achieved through TV, radio, or social media.

Volunteers as Part of the Disaster Management Pentahelix

While the lessons above demonstrate the particular value of TAGANA in the context of the COVID-19 response, these same strengths resonate across the scope of the TAGANA mandate. Competency-based volunteers are invaluable to government during times of crisis, and as known and trusted members of their communities, working on risk reduction and awareness is more personal, and better able to cater to the specific needs and demands of communities.

Volunteers fill an important role in the disaster management community. Alongside other actors in the pentahelix (government, academia, private sector, and media), volunteers create space for more community engagement by contextualizing disaster management processes to their local communities and supporting the provision of critical services. TAGANA also act as a feedback mechanism for government at all levels. All of these elements together add value to efforts on community-based disaster risk management, and support to strengthen TAGANA as a recognized and valued disaster management actor is an investment that will contribute to the strengthening community resilience in Indonesia.

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