REFUGE

Jesuit Refugee Service Indonesia
Accompany, Serve and Advocate the Cause of Refugees and Forcibly Displaced People

SEPTEMBER 2006

Preface

This issue if Refuge is dedicated to Aceh. With the new law on the Governance of Aceh being official and the local elections coming up, fear exists that this could precipitate conflict. Some of the features in this newsletter focus on what is happening in Aceh at the moment and how people look to the upcoming elections. A story from our office in Langsa, West Aceh, shows how conflict affects the life of children. And how goats can resolve their trauma.

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WILL PEACE PREVAIL?

By Paulus Enggal, JRS Banda Aceh

The situation in Aceh has changed drastically since the Tsunami. The reconstruction is gaining pace, the new Law on the Governance of Aceh is now official and local elections are coming up. There is also a large presence of foreign aid workers bringing in cultural differences but also their presence keeps Aceh in the international arena for now. This article looks at the possible future of Aceh and within our work how we have to be aware of the risk of conflict. This article summarizes the need to incorporate conflict preventing activities in our programs so that should the conflict re-arise we are prepared.

The Peace Agreement of 15 August 2005 brought hope for the people of Aceh. Finally an agreement was reached between the Government of Indonesia and GAM to proceed in peace. However, not everyone believes the peace will last, given Aceh's past of longlasting conflict.

Both the Indonesian army (TNI) and the Acehnese army (TNA) wait to see what will happen. Rumors have it that about 5000 freedom fighters are still up in the mountains and still possess weapons. Even though GAM handed over their weapons to the Aceh Monitoring Mission, they have logically kept some so they are not left defenseless should the peace agreement fail to succeed. Some former TNI posts are still operative and whilst others have just been taken over by The Aceh Freedom Movement (GAM).

A banner in front of the Mosque stating "the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) has to stay in Aceh until Self-Government is established

There has been an up-rise of crime after the peace agreement, mainly blamed on ex-GAM who have not yet received the compensation they are entitled to. The compensation program (a living allowance of 1 million Rupiah) to 3000 ex-GAM does not seem to be running effectively. One of the reasons is the registration process, with a number of ex-GAM residing in areas different from their places of origin. The creation of BRA, the Reintegration Body of Aceh has only increased the bureaucracy. BRA was created to facilitate the reintegration of former GAM members into their communities and to deal with the compensation program. However, for some former GAM members whose proposals had been refused several times, frustration and anger towards the institutional only builds up. According to Muzakir Manaf, the head of KPA (Transfer Body for Aceh), set up by GAM, only 30-35% of former GAM members have received their compensation. Moreover, for many former GAM members it remains difficult to enter politics as government staff.

On 11 December 2006, local elections will be held in Aceh. The election of new leaders and members of local parliament will no doubt influence the government's policy on the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Aceh. Everyone concerned is anxious to know who will hold power for the next five years, a crucial period for Aceh in the aftermath of the Tsunami and in maintaining peace. For example, the policy of Irwandi Yusuf and Nazaruddin will be different from that of Malek Raden and Sayed Fuad Zakaria. Also of concern is how will the Indonesian army react to those who gain power? There is also a strong possibility of horizontal conflict arising between supporters of different candidates in the run for the elections for the governor's office and therefore need to be tackled now. There is also a strong possibility of further conflict for the when the election of District heads and Mayors will take place. The main fear is a split in GAM because of the elections. GAM leaders in Aceh and abroad have stated formally they will not support any candidate. Should GAM members run for office, they should do so under their own name. However, local GAM supporters are more inclined to support GAM members running for office. Older members, lead by Muzakir Manaf openly support Ahmad Humam Hamid and Hasbi Abdullah whilst a group of younger members under the leadership of Sofyan Daud support Irwandi Yusuf and Nazaruddin.

Another reason for friction among GAM is the new Law on the Governance of Aceh. The older members view the Law as a victory. Even though some articles do not coincide with the peace agreement, they choose not to be confrontational. Considering the past of oppression and longlasting conflict, they fear the Indonesian Government will respond to any confrontations in a similar, oppressive manner. They rather would aim to address inconsistensies with the peace agreement within local parliament or through other policy options. On the contrary, the younger ex-GAM members feel they have been deceived by the Indonesian Government. The demonstration of 15 August 2006 was a way for them to voice

their concerns.

The acceptance of foreigners into Aceh and the reconstruction efforts have brought about other issues. The presence of a large number of foreigners exposing different cultural and moral values and behaviour in a predoninantly Muslim society ic also creating friction. Aceh is the only province in Indonesia where Syariah law prevails, be it solely for Muslims. Non-Mulsims shoud abide by the Criminal Act Law. In the new Law on the Governance of Aceh it is even stated that acts by non-Muslims not handled by the Criminal Act will be ruled by Syariah Law. Recent raids by Syariah police on the WFP compound and incidents of foreigners with Syariah police have raised fear among aid workers about their safety.

In the mean time, the work of these foreign and national aid workers is being more and more scrutinized by the Acehnese. BRR, the Government's Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Agency is responsible for the coordination of all the activities. It is however turning more and more into a slow implementing agency, hampered by its own bureaucracy. Hence having little effective control over the NGOs. Difficulties coordinating its own people, in a not yet fully functional office and accusations of corruption taint its reputation and in turn make the Achenese sceptical. NGOs are now more and more handing over the reconstruction and rehabilitation process to the Government as inaccordance with the Governement policy. After two years in which many agencies have been working on capacity building for the Government, it is now time for Indonesia as a whole to take over. When this happens will peace remain? A question which will in the very near future be answered.

A YEAR AFTER THE PEACE AGREEMENT

By Paulus Enggal, JRS Banda Aceh

On the 13th of August, whilst I was Banda Aceh, at a training with teachers from Lamno, Father Bambang, Head of the JRS Tsunami Program informed me there was a large crowd coming up from Langsa (East Aceh) in order to welcome the Governor of Aceh. I was asked to assess the situation in Banda Aceh. The news startled me because I had not seen anything out of the ordinary that morning.

A tour round the city proved there was nothing too out of the ordinary. A number of shops were closed, which was strange even on a Sunday, but the streets were crowded as usual, women bustling around the market. Whilst in front of the central and sub police stations there was no unusual activity as there had been when under Martial Law. In order to gain better knowledge of the situation I contacted a colleague at the Aceh Monitoring Mission.

Protesters in front of the Baiturrahman Mosque in Banda Aceh

"I just know that Jusuf Kala, Hamid Awaluddin, Malik Mahmud, and Marti Ahtisaari will visit for the first anniversary of the Peace Agreement. I don't have any information that Hasan Tiro has a plan to visit Aceh". I was also then informed that they were aware of the convoy from Langsa to Banda Aceh but they were not the only ones.

The reason being as stated in the

newspaper Serambi Indonesia, that Panitia Bersama Organisasi-Organisasi Sipil Aceh, a local organization had been coordinating for a demonstration for peace. According to the head of the organization, there would be political speeches about the non acceptance of the new Law on the Governance of Aceh because several articles of the new Law were not in accordance with the Peace Agreement. As well as political speeches prayers for peace would take place, a petition against the existing Law would be presented along with a proposal for a new version of the Law to be given to the central government, GAM and the European Commission.

From the balcony of my hotel I saw every type of vehicle jam packed with demonstrators, trucks filled with people as well as hundreds of motorbikes. All of the vehicles flew flags to show they were part of the same movement. Flags called for Self governance, Save the peace agreement or Government of Indonesia, don't deceive the people of Aceh. Those participating could also be clearly identified wearing white head bandanas with political slogans. The trucks often had speakers on board blasting out political speeches and Acehnese songs. The term "independence" was also heard mainly from the group from Pidie, who made up for majority of supporters.

The usual NGO cars that can be seen all over Banda Aceh were nowhere to be seen. It became evident that Banda Aceh was prepared for the demonstration with soldiers evident at government offices weapons on display, a rare sight in the last year. Rumor had it no vehicles were allowed to leave the city without permission of GAM.

The teachers from Lamno started to worry about the safety on the road between Banda and Lamno. "This reminds me of the referendum before" said one of our staff who used to be involved in another local NGO. Six years ago the situation exploded when a thousand people demonstrated in front of the Baiturrahman Mosque. It was common back then to find unidentifiable bodies after a demonstration as large as this one. It was therefore not without reason people started to worry. Mass gatherings can always potentially insight friction between groups, police or army. A good example of the scale of friction was the tragedy of Santa Cruz, Dili, (East Timor) on November 12 1991. Luckily 13th August saw no conflict but it did highlight that there is a need for conflict prevention in order to make sure that the peace process keeps running smoothly.

GOATS HEAL TRAUMA

Ali Umar loves to walk and play around with the goats

By Daryadi, JRS Langsa

Two months ago, JRS donated some goats to the Bustanul Fakri school in Langsa (Eastern Aceh Province), as part of a Trauma Healing Program. The school is an Islamic boarding school for conflict children. There are 124 students involved in all sorts of activities such as sowing; tailoring, group discussions for girls, theater, and music etc., 17 of them are participating in the Goat Rearing Program which now has a herd of 16 goats. On a recent visit the goats were roaming free followed by students who could be seen to be enjoying washing and caring for the goats.

Under the guidance of one of

the Islamic teachers, Mochamad Rizky, the boys spend their evenings tending the goats and herding them in the palm oil garden around the boarding school. They are given the responsibility to tend the goats, clean their pen and wash them once a week. For 14-year old Ali Umar, running around with the goats helps him forget about his mother for a while, who lives far away.
Most of the children at the school come from conflict environments, usually having experienced traumatic events during their young lives. Many of them have lost a loved one, a father, an older brother or another member of their family. They have faced these traumatic experiences and have lived their lives in poverty. One student, Chusna Alia, a sixteen year old (born in Arakundo, Julok, East Aceh) still cries when she talks about her father who was shot dead in 2001. The teachers had been at a loss how best to help her with dropped grades and a lost motivation. Through the recent introduction of the Trauma Healing Program Chusna can now been seen to start to engage herself in some of the activities and there is hope.

The children enjoy washing the goats

"The children participating in the trauma healing activities are often aggressive. They isolate themselves from the others and cry more and their motivation to study is rather low. When they are encouraged to talk about the relatives they lost, they start to cry and lock themselves up in their room." explains Vivi Amalia, (JRS staff) coordinator of the Trauma Healing Program.
Although JRS recognizes traumatized children benefit most from individual therapy, the current JRS human resource capacity is too limited to assist them one by one. The JRS Trauma Healing Program is based on providing activities for groups providing a variety of activities to accommodate the children's preferences.

Trauma healing is not an easy job. It takes up a lot of time, requires extensive planning and needs constant monitoring. The JRS trauma healing team consists of Vivi Amalia, a psychologist and Achmad Syahranie, who has a background in music and theater. Through the activities, they analyze the children's emotional behavior and try to seek the cause of the trauma. They also seek assistance from other organizations to assist in building the students futures allowing them the opportunity to become the future leaders of Aceh.

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