

# REFUGE

## Jesuit Refugee Service Indonesia

Accompany, Serve and Advocate the Cause of Forcibly Displaced People



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### PREFACE

*The voices of community members are important, as the community often understands best how to solve its problems. Because of that it is important to actively involve community members in meetings, allowing them to raise questions and to search for answers to the issues concerning their life. JRS aims to not only appreciate but also to encourage critical voices within a community be they expressed by a teacher, village leaders or a housewife. It sees villagers not as passive recipients but includes them in its programs as active and dynamic subjects with high social assets.*

### CRITICAL VOICE FROM RURAL PEOPLE

*By Daryadi, JRS Tapaktuan*

When involving communities in the assessment of their village JRS started something new in the seven villages in Kluet, South Aceh. It took intensive socialization with village representatives to create an understanding about the importance and the aim of village assessments with special focus on disaster risk reduction. Many villagers were first suspicious about the "learning activity" conducted by JRS. It took time and effort to secure the attendance of the 20 representatives who were expected to start their activities after the assessment as Village Planning Committee following the scheme of the *Participatory Rural Appraisal* (PRA).

The workshops were facilitated at Simpang Tiga, Simpang Dua, Siurai-urai (Middle Kluet), Alur Mas (North Kluet), Lawe Sawah and Lawe Buluh Didi (East Kluet), starting with a disaster risk analysis in the villages. After the second round, it became clear who was truly interested in the activity and also keen to learn. The participants' interest made the facilitators more enthusiastic and discussions became more active. Through 4-5 meetings villagers learnt about disaster risk analysis, village mapping, the use of transect as well as about the history of and relationships between the different village institutions.

After almost 1.5 months of PRA training in the accompanied vil-





Salman and Sarimin are working on village mapping, Alur Mas

lages, communities responded in various ways. Some were happy and enthusiastic when learning new concepts about village assessment; others who already had been village facilitator under the PPK (*Program Pengembangan Kecamatan* - Sub district Development Program) deepened their understanding and practiced their skills in order to empower their community to mitigate threat or effects of disaster.

Sabarudin (72), a grandfather with only elementary school education from Koto Indarung was eager to share happenings of the past. Asked about the biggest disaster in the village, he spoke about the big flood at the Kluet River in 1953. At the time almost every part of Kluet was flooded. Later on he and others discussed about the chicken pox epidemic in Kapeh village, South Kluet in 1969.

Salman (34) from Alur Mas village, North Kluet sub district was actively asking, giving comments and answering others questions during the mapping exercise. "Mr. Jul, why does north always point upwards, not right or left?" Salman asked. "Does anyone know?" asked Juliasman, the PRA facilitator. Everybody was silent. No one knew. Then Jul explained that the direction was based on the compass, which always points straight to

the North Pole and geographical science formed the standard that North Pole is on the top of a map. Finally everyone did understand.

Later the discussion got heated when the issue of village organization was raised. Salman and Sarimin, the heads of Ceracai and Alur Mas sub village respectively debated about the influence and relationships with organizations from outside the village such as IOM, PPK, JRS and the district departments that distributed aid to village. According to them, amongst these agencies until now JRS had the biggest influence because JRS programs covered elderly people, youth and school children, besides that JRS also build the closest relationships within the community.

*"I've heard that IOM or PPK came to our village and distributed aid, but I did not know the people, that is different with JRS," said Salman who dropped out of Kota Fajar Senior High School after 2nd class.*

The women group at Simpang Dua village, Middle Kluet got active during PRA. They took over the organization of the group to guaranty a smooth learning process. "Ladies, please pay attention to Bang Jul...don't be so noisy," said Mrs. Suriawati (40) to her

friends. She is a focal point for the dominantly female participants of the PRA training in Simpang Dua village, Middle Kluet being never tired voicing her opinion, answering questions and responding to her friends' opinions. When discussing the structures of village institutions, Ny Suriawati raised the issue about the influence of certain circles. Those circles represent certain institutions, which were later criticized by the PRA participants.

Participants were conducting threat analysis, identifying sources of possible threat and ways how to mitigate these. The village secretary of Koto Indarung, Syaldi tidily took notes of all important points raised, while other participants from Simpang Tiga village, Middle Kluet were eagerly engaged in mapping their village facilitated through Syahril, the head of Karang Taruna.

In one of the Aceh community an interesting incident happened in Siurai-urai village. 19 years old Yusniar, as representative of the women group during the first PRA session, suggested a ban on smoking during the meeting since smoking might disturb the learning process. Smoking is widely practiced by Acehnese men. Women are not used to criticizing the males of the family or community. Yusniar explicitly encouraged the other female participants not to feel inferior to male participants.

Later that day, in a nearly smoke free environment, the village map was presented and after comparing it with the PRA mapping module, the title and directions were adjusted and a legend explaining the symbols on it, including dangerous areas, safe areas, an evacuation site and safe routes leading to it were added. JRS staff and participants equally enjoyed the participative and interactive learning process.

The 20 participants attending the four training sessions in Lawe Sawah included village elders and the village youth.



Mrs. Suriawati participate in PRA training, Simpang Dua

Some of them were walking to up to 4 km in order to participate in the training. One of those from far was Zaitun (53). When asked to write about the impact of disasters he wrote *penjakit* (Sickness) on one card, profit on another. He was the only one finding something positive in a disaster. After being asked about the meaning, he just said that whenever there was disaster the community got aid. The community laughed.

## THE SERVICE OF A TEACHER

By Enggal, JRS Tapaktuan

He does not speak Jamee<sup>1</sup> nor Kluet<sup>2</sup> language fluently. However, that is not a reason for not socializing with him. Ismail (40), the teacher of SD Lawe Sawah, is not a native resident of the village at East Kluet Sub district. He came from Binjai, North Sumatera province in the mid 90s. "I came to Lawe Sawah as a construction worker to build the mosque here, then houses in Kota Fajar," he said. "I remember the date; it was the 5th of October 1995 and we saw army on the way to the village."

During the *Living Values* training Ismail was quite active. He led his friends in preparing a session for the last training day. When he sang the song 'Mama' (mother) he touched some of the other participants to tears. Another time he shared some of his experiences openly. "Once I fell down during work on the construction site. I broke my arms. The doctor said that it could be treated either with medical surgery or with Chinese medicine from a traditional healer," Ismail started his story. After long consideration he chose the traditional healer. Being ill away from home made his heart heavy. "Imagine, for one year, I was cared for by a fam-

ily, I was fed, bathed, even cleaned after defecation." This experience made Ismail learn about values. That even from people that he did not know yet, he learned about mercy, patience, and love. "This is what I remember until now," he said.

Most of his life he spent far from home, adapting to different customs and traditions in order to be accepted within a different community. "When I first arrived, I joined the youth organization and got active because every young newcomer should join the local youth organization," he explained. His involvement in this organization brought him together with his wife. "That's it. How could I have guessed? This is merely a blessing, because I was active in the youth organization I met my wife, what if I would have been not active," he said in laughter. According to him, there is a balance in life, you can't be always at the top but will for sure fall to the bottom; so you will not only give but also receive. "What we receive can have a different from then what we gave." Living as a newcomer had its challenges especially in an exceptional situation. The conflict in Aceh did also reach Lawe Sawah community. "But

I had no problem, all depends on how you behave at the new place," he explained.

Even though he was only the newcomer that did not mean Ismail couldn't make a contribution to education in Lawe Sawah. "Fortunately I graduated from SPG (Sekolah Pendidikan Guru - teacher training school)" he says. Ismail saw an offer to teach as a calling. "I was asked to teach via the village secretary, Mr. Misbahuddin." Then right after meeting with the secretary of Lawe Sawah village he goes to get his teaching certificate from Binjai the same night. "I was offered to teach at SD Tapak Aulia," he recalls. Academy year 2001/2002 was the beginning of his service at Lawe Sawah School. He received his position through his continuous determination. "First, I was a volunteer, then I got a honorarium from the district," explained Ismail. In 2003, Ismail passed the national contract teacher test. Now he is a national teacher, in grade IIB. He teaches Mathematics and Indonesian for class IV, V and VI. Twelve years of teaching is a long time full of stories. "One challenge of teaching is to make students understand," he said. According to him, students got accustomed to

1 Jamee language is used by suku Aneuk Jamee tribe spread mostly on South Aceh District.

2 Kluet language is used by Kluet people daily.



Mr. Ismail tell his life story while teaching at Lawe Sawah elementary school

communicate in their mother tongue (Kluet language) while he is used to communicate in Bahasa Indonesia.

"It is normal that students are naughty," he says. But Ismail has certain tricks to face naughty students, students who like fighting or cheating. "If there is a serious violation, I do not beat them, but I ask them to give salute to the red and white flag and promise not to do it anymore," he explained. Traditional punishment for students is still common. "For example, if there is a student who does not do his

homework, I ask him to write: I have not done my mathematics homework," he said. "Then I ask him to ask his parent's signature," said the teacher who did not feel free to teach during conflict. The changes in student's behavior are his concern. "Now, they are more naughty because they are freer than before."

Ismail said that agencies especially the government should pay attention to children's trauma from the conflict. As far as he knows, the government has not yet conducted any training or program of

trauma healing for students. "Perhaps the living values training from JRS can be applied," he said. Ismail thinks the living values training could be used for help self-inspection and to change previous behavior. "Besides that, it can be used to understand student's behavior and interests," he explained. When he applied it in class, students' reaction was very positive. "Perhaps with cheerfulness students' trauma decreases gradually," he said while watching the repair work on the school building.

## OUR EFFORTS CANNOT JUST STOP HERE

By Junaidi, JRS Melaboh

Rice is planted all over Aceh, just after Idul Fitri, at the end of the fasting month of Ramadan. Samsul Bahri (53) smiles proudly when presenting his green paddy field to Junaidi JRS staff from Banda Aceh. Samsul is the head of Glee Putoh village in Keduee sub district, Panga Aceh Jaya district. In the village everyone calls him *Keuchik*, village head in Aceh language.

Glee Putoh is not easy to reach. It needs a one-hour journey from Meulaboh passing rubber plantations secluding this village from other communities. The only way reach the village is through a long-winded path. Since the community



CMP socialization meeting with community of Glee Putoh village

has no access to electricity, usually provided by the State Electricity Company, they produce it themselves with a generator. Health facilities are not properly provided. The nearest school is 3 km away from the

village. Glee Putoh is home to 52 families and counts 163 inhabitants.

According to the community *pak keuchik* is generous and attentive to their matters. People here live in simplicity.



Pak keuchick's house has been renovated at the front, Glee Putoh village

Their livelihood is farming and gardening. Patchouli is one of the crops harvested. Most of the villagers are now planting it due to its high market price. Besides patchouli they also plant rubber and coffee. During the raining season paddy is planted to secure the needs for rice without having to build an irrigation system.

Due to its location close to the mountains Glee Putoh has during conflict time often experienced armed clashes between the Indonesian military (TNI) and the armed independence movement (GAM). "After the conflict the situation in the village became safe," said Samsul in his strong Acehnese dialect. He also asserted that although the condition in his village was far from ideal the community has a strong spirit to survive and to struggle for the better.

"We have sometimes different opinions here, but all I can do is to understand and give

the best I can in being neutral to the parties in order to secure unity for the sake of the development of our village", said Keuchik Samsul while smoking. There were quite a few local and international organisations that came to Glee Putoh to provide aid. For example JRS with its 'Knockdown' houses (assembled houses) for tsunami victims who lost their homes. We got water and sanitations from Oxfam, and aid for farming from FFI. "Although there is aid, it does not mean that we can be lazy and depend on the next aid. However, these circumstances drive us to work harder," he explained further. According to Samsul, everyone was aware that the aid from agencies will stop one day.

"We are aware of our constraints and shortcomings here. The situation wouldn't have changed to what we see here now without the NGO's coming here and helping us", said Samsul. Moreover, he said

that aid from government has not reached Glee village. Samsul refers to a plan from the government to asphalt the road four months ago but there is no further news until now. "Our efforts cannot just stop here, there are still many other issues to be advocated." said Samsul when closing the evening.

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