

# REFUGE

## Jesuit Refugee Service Indonesia

Accompany, Serve and Advocate the Cause of Forcibly Displaced People



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### Preface

*This months Refuge shares experiences from three current JRS projects. As beginning of the year two boats with people from the Rohingya minority in Myanmar after drifting in the open sea stranded in Aceh JRS endeavored to ensure the basic needs of these people are met. JRS youth project in South Aceh describes how small events can help to overcome conflict trauma and social implications. Finally an account from JRS school project shares experiences on how to integrate disaster preparedness into school also involving the parents and other parts of the community.*

## THE PATIENCE FOR A LONG JOURNEY

*By Yoppie*

Since early January 2009, international and national media reports have been appearing on the plight of the Rohingya boat-people who were drifting for days at sea in dingy boats without engine.

It was allegedly reported that with meager supplies of food and water, they were pushed back into the sea from Thailand and drifted towards Indonesian soil after a long traumatic voyage facing starvation and illness at the open ocean. A month after the first arrival of 193 people in Sabang, the most western part of Indonesia, a second boat carrying 198

people arrived in Kuala Idi Rayeuk, East Aceh district. Its arrival, raised questions regards to the background of the situation and the compelling reasons which forces to such a perilous journey in the sea and the responsibilities countries also have to undertake when facing such a situation.

Appreciation should be given to fishermen of Kuala Idi, Sub-District Government of Idi Rayeuk, the members of the Navy base in Sabang and the Sabang Government for promoting a humanitarian perspective and for responding to





Sleeping mattresses and kitchen ware ready for distribution

the humanitarian needs of the sea survivors from Burma/ Myanmar and Bangladesh washed ashore in Aceh.<sup>1</sup>

Jesuit Refugee Service Indonesia was concerned about the situation of the survivors and in line with its mandate – to serve, to accompany and to advocate for the forcibly displaced people, it supported the Indonesian Red Cross (or PMI in Indonesia) in their efforts to provide the much necessary humanitarian assistance.

JRS team in Banda Aceh coordinated with PMI and the Mayor of Sabang in providing the relief supplies for the survivors in Sabang and Idi Rayeuk. On 5<sup>th</sup> February 2009, JRS distributed relief aid in Idi and on 14<sup>th</sup> Feb 2009 in Sabang. The relief supplies distributed were aimed at addressing the daily needs, e.g. sleeping mattresses, slippers, sarongs, hygiene kits, clothes, underwear, sleeping bags, tents and kitchen wares for the public kitchen in Sabang.



JRS, PMI Sabang and local government in a coordination meeting before the distribution

It has been now two months since the Rohingya boat-people arrived, but there is a continued uncertainty about their situation and where the actions of the Indonesia governments' response will take them.

This uncertainty does not only affect the boat people themselves but also the local authorities, volunteers and local organisations providing humanitarian care. It might be one of the reasons why until now a proper camp management has not yet been put in place in Idi Rayeuk.

For the boat people it means again waiting for a decision of the central government as to how the government wishes to proceed with them, waiting till UNHCR and IOM will get permission to start exploring the reasons for them being in Indonesia. Then waiting again for decisions to be made, not knowing how long their journey really will be.



Refugees from Myanmar and Bangladesh receiving JRS supplies

Facing again an uncertain future, for them is the same situation like their boat without engine or proper sails drifting in the vast ocean just waiting where the current will take them, quietly, with patience for deliverance and a prayer.

Maybe waiting for an answer to the question: Will this journey ever end?

<sup>1</sup> When we refer to the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue (also known as the SAR Convention) from 1979, Acehese fishermen acted appropriate when rescuing the survivors as did the Indonesian Navy and Sabang authorities when providing emergency assistance at the Naval Base in Sabang. Recalling chapter 2.1.10 of the SAR convention, "... to ensure that assistance be provided to any person in distress at sea. They shall do so regardless of the nationality or status of such a person or the circumstances in which that person is found". The obligation of states is also defined in the same convention, as to "... provide for their initial medical or other needs, and deliver them to a place of safety" (Chapter 1.3.2). Aim of this regulation is to ensure that the survivors at sea are safe and recover both physically and emotionally. In certain cases, psychological recovery requires a longer treatment as the impact of the experience is hard to measure.

## "WHAT ARE BROWNIES LIKE?"



By Ninuk

"Friends, please come to the *meunasah*. The women from JRS have arrived. We will gather to bake cakes," announced Rosmanita (23) through the loudspeaker of the mosque. She is the leader of the women group in Lhok Sialang Rayeuk village. The announcement is made in Acehnese so Rusniati (20) translates it for me as we are walking towards the *meunasah*, the center of Islamic & community activities in the village.

This Tuesday afternoon (17/3) is the first time for the women from Lhok Sialang Rayeuk Village, Pasie Raja Sub-District, South Aceh District to all come together. Girls from 12-years-old like Salamah and women like the 45-years-old Mrs Murni are walking towards the *meunasah* some of them bring their children along. This first women gathering is not just a usual meeting according to Erda (25), "It is more than just speaking about things." We come together this afternoon to learn how to bake cake. The weekly activity is an alternative for the women in this village as the traditional leaders and the community will not allow the women to engage in sport activities, including volleyball, which is practiced in the other villages accompanied by JRS. "What kind of cake do you want to make today?" asks Qoni Khoiriyah, one of the gender-trained staff from JRS. "Tart," they answer all at once. Oni, the nick name of Qoni Khoiriyah, then explained that the cake trainer can not attend today. So she asks the 40 women to suggest an alternative activity. Many suggestions are brought up, including making a cake with the available ingredients

and equipment. Eventually the women ask what cake Oni can bake. When Oni offers her brownies recipe all women agree to make brownies. One of the women starts whispering, "What are brownies like? Further discussion reveals the women do not know many names of cakes. "We only recognize sponge cake and tart. Therefore, we suggested to make tart," sais Zahara (24).

The women start to prepare the ingredients taking turns in using the scales, the kerosene stove, taking water, melting the chocolate and butter, stirring the eggs, then mixing the dough. While their hands are busy with the dough they tell jokes in Acehnese. Then whilst waiting for the brownies to finish baking the women are chatting with each other. Happy voices of the women and children's laughter fill the 10x10 meter *meunasah* with joy. After 45 minutes the brownies were done. "This cake looks delicious," said Aji-ah (20) to her friends. Rusmiati cut the big cake into small pieces and Rusmanita, Erda and Rusmiati ask the other women what they would like to do with the cake. All agree to share the cake between everyone participating in the meeting. "So that we all know what it tastes like. We baked it so we should taste it first. If it's delicious, we can share it with others next week," suggested Hasnibar (35). When the group is asked who should receive the rest of the cake, "the children," is the spontaneous answer. After eating the cakes, the women discuss very enthusiastic the baking process, the taste and finally the activity plan for the following week. They also agree to form small teams baking the



next brownies so that at the end everyone will know how to bake them.

### Displaced in their own land

For Sartika (30), ‘gathering’ with other women was a special event. “Since the conflict women never held a meeting. When attending this cake-baking workshop, we could tell jokes and have a chat. The feeling of fear that hangs on us from past years disappears bit by bit when meeting our friends.” According to Sartika, during the conflict in 1995-2005, the people of Lhok Sialang Rayeuk Village were forced to relocate by both TNI and “people on the top” (people in the mountains) or GAM (Free Aceh Movement). In 1998, people were told by GAM to flee. In 2003, they were forced by TNI (Indonesian National Army) to relocate for 1.5 months to Lhok Bengkuang, Tapaktuan Sub-District, South Aceh District. “Women of Lhok Sialang Rayeuk Village found it hard to gather after the conflict period,” she says. “Previously, we were forced to gather when our houses were searched for hidden GAM members,” adds

the women who has three children. The women from the neighboring village, le Merah Village, which used to be considered a GAM basis tell similar stories were. Nuraini (30), a woman from le Merah says that during the conflict people were often told to gather in the field for a variety of reasons. “Then someone would often be found shot afterwards. That is why I experience trauma when I am told to come to meetings or gatherings,” said Nuraini, while Nurlaila confirms nodding sitting next to her. Both Nuraini and Nurlaila agree that the meetings for women in their village are not just to train the women some skills but that regular meetings will also function as a means to build up relationships among the women.

“Even though we only bake cake, we meet and strengthen our relationships. We can discuss about anything. We can speak about village difficulties, women issues and then find the solutions together. We have hope that conflict will never occur again. It is hard to be an IDP. But how sad is it to be displaced on your own land just because of the conflict,” said Nurlaila.

## UNDERSTANDING AN UNCERTAINTY

By Enggal

The noise had just begun in one corner of SDN 3 Kota Fajar. While students next-door had started their learning activities this corner seemed to be in chaos since no teacher held a lesson here. But this time it were not children’s voices that could be heard, the voices consisted of bass, baritone, soprano and some alto frequencies. They were the principals, teachers and committee members of the school. It was not romanticism about old times that brought them together, nor was it the drafting of a curriculum,

which changed every year. Their foreheads did not furrow over how to interpret mathematics, natural science (IPA) or *Pancasila* and Citizens Education (PPKn) into children’s daily language. No, they were busy with the experiences, which until now were only explained as natural phenomenon or as the unchangeable fate given by God.

To learn about the complex causes and effects of disasters individual experiences of the 24 participants were a



Left: Teachers of Lawe Sawah school develop an early warning system  
 Right: Presentation on how to deliver first aid by PMI (Indonesian Red Cross) South Aceh

good starting point for the Preparedness to Cope with Disaster for School Community Training workshop. *"The participants seemed to easily understand the disaster materials since they often face those conditions,"* said Enggal, Advocacy Officer at the JRS School Project.

*"The expectations regards outcomes from this training are not too pompous. At least participants will identify different threats and their specific characters, some basic preparedness mechanisms including an early warning system and permanent procedures,"* explained Amsa, EPS (Emergency Preparedness System) trainer for schools in the first cluster of 5 villages. *"We expected that at the end, schools will have permanent procedures in place for each identified disaster. Hopefully this permanent procedures of the schools are then integrated in those of the villages,"* added Elis, Coordinator of the JRS School Project.

The days between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of March 2009 became the starting point to open up new perspectives on disaster. *"We used to think that floods are always a disaster. In fact, we can only call it a disaster when it actually harms human beings through both loss of lives or property,"* said Nur-mawati, a teacher of SDN 3 in Kota Fajar. *"We just found out the difference between threat and disaster,"* added Hamdani, a teacher of SDN Alur Mas. The method used in the training was as systematical as possible following a clear chronological order facilitating participants towards a new perspective on disaster. Knowledge on threats and their characteristics made up a big part of the workshop and became a reference in following discussions. *"The first two sessions are very important. If the participants don't understand the concepts of what is a threat, disaster, risk, vulnerability or capacity, it will affect future discussions,"* said Entis Sutisna, one of the facilitators.

Interest in the objects beyond our reality is based on our visual experience, hearing, touching or other effects

which are directly and undoubted. This basic idea is also promoted during the three days of training using methods that educators call PAKEM (*Pembelajaran Kreatif, Aktif dan Menyenangkan / Creative, Active and Fun Learning*).<sup>1</sup> This method is used in disaster preparedness training for some reasons. Communities, who always deal with disaster, consider it a regular phenomenon of nature and as fate from God. There is nothing to do about it. So the basic principles of disaster preparedness have to be explored through games, group dynamics and discussions. *"They (the participants) were enthusiastic when we started a discussion based on their own experiences. The standards of camp management could be drawn from their experience in IDPs camps",* explained Elis. *"We even discovered new aspects in this discussion",* she added.

The head of the Department of Basic Education in South Aceh district, Darwis Azis received JRS training method well. *"The method used by JRS includes PAKEM. We hope that the teachers will develop this kind of methods and use it in learning and teaching activities,"* he said. The participants themselves felt encouraged through the group' assignments, as they felt their presence was valued and their opinions were heard and appreciated. *"We felt more involved in this JRS training because what we discussed were our own experiences,"* said M. Hakim, a teacher of SDN Koto Indarung. *"There was a lot of space to ask questions and to express opinions,"* added Cut Fitriah, a teacher of SDN Alur Mas.

This is the real essence of education. *"I am pleased to join JRS training since the school committee had never been involved in trainings together with teachers or the principal itself,"* explained Amat Mahli, a member of the school committee SDN Lawe Sawah. Education should open up spaces for everyone to develop knowledge, either cognitive, empiric or emotional. It is sad to see that partner organizations of the school are alienated from the school itself.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> PAKEM aims to encourage group activities for students, individuals and school classes, using participation in small projects, research, investigations, discovery and other approaches only limited by the teacher's imagination. Phillip Rekdale (Jakarta, November 2005)

In some cases school committees become inferior and have no bargaining power towards the school's principal and the board of teachers.

At least what JRS did helped to open communication between the school and the committee and so enabled to leave the ambiguity, which made the committee powerless. The aspirations of JRS are in line with the national strategy on education, which are based on many discussions on national level. *"One of the plans of national education is to strengthen the school committees so they have the same responsibility regards ensuring the quality of education in school," said Darwis Azis. "The committee is expected to play a bigger role solving difficulties at school,"* he added.

To know about disasters is essential for all Indonesians considering the potential risks caused by both nature and humans. To address the needs in facing natural and man made disasters Indonesia in 2007 made Law No 24/2007 on disaster management manifesting the right of all Indonesian people to be protected from disasters. One way to protect people is to raise awareness and to enable them to gain and share knowledge on Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Early Warning Systems. The more inclusive and participative the awareness and knowledge is shared and discussed the more likely it will represent not only the best out of current experiences and possibilities but also include the really specific experiences of a wide range of people and benefit from their traditional or cultural based wisdom.

<sup>2</sup>School committees are formed based on the national decree of the Ministry of Education No. 44/U/2002. School committees are expected to collaborate with the school principal in ensuring the quality of education including good school management, transparency and accountability to the community.



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