

REFUGE

Jesuit Refugee Service Indonesia

Accompany, Serve and Advocate the Cause of Forcibly Displaced People



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Preface

On 3rd December the world will observe the International Day of Disabled Persons, reason for JRS to reflect in this edition of Refuge about its work with disabled persons for example within the communities in South Aceh or fellow campaigners of the Cluster Munition Coalition maimed by this "inhuman weapon" and now advocating for a global ban on Cluster Bombs. The singer Susan Boyle once said: "I want people like me to see that they shouldn't let a disability get in the way. I want to raise awareness - I want to turn my disability into ability." It is the role of the rest of society including NGOs working in communities and campaigns to encourage and enable people living with a disability to be aware, use and develop their abilities.

WHAT A PROSTHETIC MEANS TO MR SYAM

By: Fatmasari

I first met Muhammad Syam (50) at the meeting between JRS and the group of vulnerable people from Air Pinang Village, Tapak Tuan Sub-District in October 2009. *Mak* Syam, how the people call him in Air Pinang (Mamak means uncle in Minang language) looks healthy though his left leg was amputated due to a work accident in Alur Kering, ten years ago. A worsening infection forced him to un-

dergo amputation surgery after he had treated his leg with alternative medicine for over nine months. The amputation changed his life completely.

All of the sudden he was limited in his activities since he only had a simple walking stick supporting him when walking. More recently a pair of crutches provided by the Social Department of South Aceh District 5 years ago accom-





Mr Syam and his daily activity: raising ducks

pany him through daily life. His mobility and so possibilities to earn a living are still very limited. Mak Syam is not able to work outside his village and faces difficulties in carrying out some of the necessary activities. However, his disability did not stop him from continuing the struggle of live. So he opened a small business selling seeds and plants of cocoa, nutmeg and various fruit trees. He is social, very persistent and has an optimistic outlook on life. Usually he does not go home directly after the JRS meeting but will have a chat with me, as happened in our first meeting.

"Miss, could you please help me?" he asked

"How can I help you, Sir?"

"Look at my leg, Miss. If I had a prosthetic, it would be easy for me to earn money," Mr Syam answered.

"What do you do now?"

"Nothing certain, Miss," he answered

"How do you earn your living?" I asked, considering the high living cost nowadays.

"I raise nutmeg plants, but I can only sell them in a month time," he added. "Could you tell your boss about my condition so I could receive some assistance," he asked. "If I have a prosthetic, it will be easier for me to earn money. I could move and work freely," he tried to explain the importance of a prosthetic for his life. "People do not accept me for work due to my physical condition," he added further describing his difficulties. "Thank you Mr Syam for sharing this with me," I said but had to explain that I could not promise anything since JRS's program in South Aceh is rather group and community focused.

"I will try to share this request with my colleagues and perhaps they could connect you to other related parties," I tried to give him hope.

Mr Syam had once his leg checked in Zainal Abidin Hospital in Banda Aceh. According to Mr Syam, at the time the doctor asked him to wait until further result after they examined his foot. However, there is still no follow up until present.

The next time I met Mr Syam, he was proposing an alternative.

"If someone could provide me with a tri-cycle motor I could earn a living. I will design it and make some adjustments on its system so I can drive it all with my hands. But where do I get a tri-cycle motor from. Could you help me with this, Miss?" he asked.

"*Pak Keuchik* (the village leader) once told me that I could ask for people's donation. But I refused to do that, Miss," he continued further. "Though *Pak Keuchik* allows me and people give their donation, but I prefer not to beg for food," he continued.

"Have you asked for assistance from the government?" I asked.

"Yes, I have. Three regents have changed but nobody cared about me. I visited the Social Welfare Department twice. They asked me to wait. Then one of the staff gave me IDR 5,000. I was very offended and angry at that time. I said that I came to ask about the possibility to request a prosthetic not for begging for money. I also went to the regent's office and submitted my request for a prosthetic," he explained.

Now, Mr Syam lives in an old house inherited from his parents and receives food from his sister who also lives in poverty. Mr Syam tries his best to help this family, considering his sister's children as his, so if some of the nutmeg or cocoa plants are sold, he gives the money to her to buy treats for all.

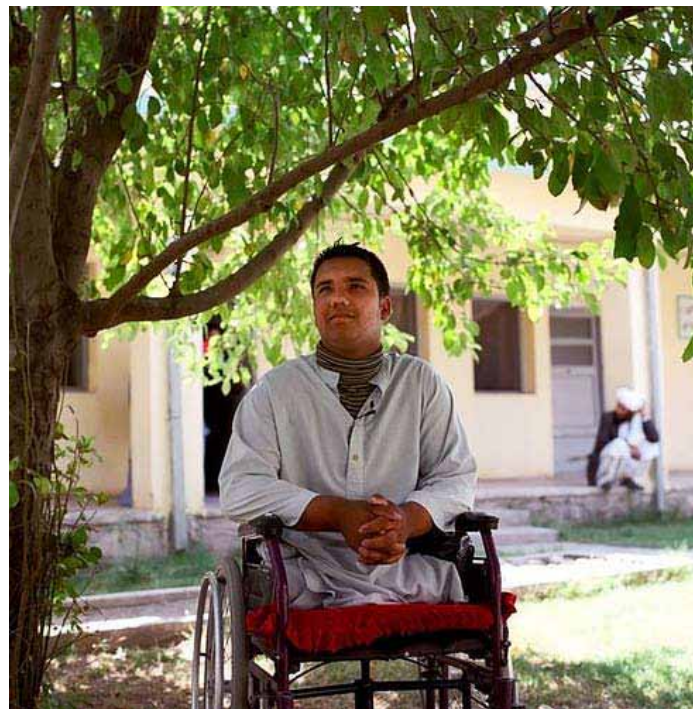
Mr Syam has a new activity now. He raises ducks, an activity introduced by JRS in assistance to vulnerable people in Air Pinang Village. He was very keen to be part of the group building the shelter for the ducks the first week of November. After helping to build it Mr Syam now started to raise ducks together with the group.

Regards his prosthetics dream, Mr Syam is planning to apply to the "1,000 Prosthetics Program" launched by Kick Andy Foundation. It is the prospect of a prosthetic that revives Mr Syam's living spirit and hopes to be able to earn a living again.

SURVIVORS TO CAMPAIGNERS BAN ADVOCATES PROMOTING THE CONVENTION ON CLUSTER MUNITIONS



Pham Quy Thi, one of the cluster bombs survivors from Vietnam



Soraj Ghulam Habib: one of Ban Advocates member who lost both of his legs and one finger in a cluster munition explosion in 2001 in Herat, Afghanistan

By: Lars Stenger

"Ladies and Gentlemen, first of all, I would like to thank the host country, Indonesia, for organizing such an important conference in Asia as the most cluster munitions affected region in the world. It is an honor for me to speak on behalf of the thousands of cluster bomb survivors in this important conference." Mr Thi's voice was firm when addressing the audience of over 50 high level representatives from 21 nations¹ that came together in Bali for two days at the Regional Conference on the Promotion and Universalization of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Pham Quy Thi is a cluster bomb survivor from Vietnam. In 1977 while he was working in his rice field, he accidentally hit a cluster bomb and lost his right arm. "Suddenly I became an amputee, I was too depressed to live but thanks to support from the community and my family, I survived the tragedy and continue working to support my children. But to this day, a number of metal fragments are still lodged in my body."

More than three decades after the war ended in Vietnam, explosive remnants, including unexploded cluster bombs still pose a deadly threat to the lives and livelihoods of the people in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. More than 100,000 people have been killed or injured because of explosive remnants of war. "I have a dream," said Mr Thi, "of a peaceful world in which cluster munitions are banned by all countries forever for the sake of our children who will

have a safe environment to study and prosper. Therefore, I call on more countries to jointly participate in this global effort to make it happen by signing, ratifying and putting the convention into practice and implement the Convention very soon." Mr Thi is one of the 35 campaigners attending the conference and taking the opportunity to not only telling his story as a survivor but also asking governments to prevent future incidents by banning Cluster Munitions once and for all by joining the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

During the session on 'Perspectives from the Most Affected Countries of Cluster Munitions and Victims' another victim, Miss Nguyen Thi Huong spoke from the podium. "In 1991 my husband had a cluster bomb accident while working in our own garden. Because of the explosion, my husband lost his left leg and more painfully, my then four-year-old daughter who was playing near her father was killed. I still feel terrified whenever I recall it. The accident caused a huge pain and nothing can compensate these losses to my life. My family has encountered a lot of difficulties since then because my husband as the breadwinner was made permanently disabled, thus placing all family affairs on my shoulders." After Laos PDR, the most cluster munitions contaminated country in the world, Vietnam is one of the most affected countries currently. In Miss Huong's home province alone, cluster bomb accidents account for about 35% of the to-

¹ The 21 governments attending included Afghanistan, Austria, Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Fiji, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Norway, Palau, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Timor Leste, Thailand, and Vietnam along with UNDP, UNMAS, ICRC, and the GICHD. The Conference had a high level of attendance of non-signatory states; nearly equal to the number of CCM Signatories participating. The Conference was particularly significant as while the Southeast Asian region is the most heavily affected by cluster munitions, only 12 of the 40 countries in the region have signed the CCM.

tal casualties since the war ended. Children are the most vulnerable to the cluster bomb risk because of their restless and curious nature. "Last July in Hai Lang District, three children were killed on the spot because of cluster munitions while herding buffaloes. Obviously, the impact of cluster munitions is enormous, not only to my family but also to the community. There is no peace of mind for those who have to work on contaminated land. Most of the cluster bombs survivors, such as my husband, lost their working ability forever, resulting in a huge burden on their families and the society as well," Ms Huang stated.

Survivors of cluster munitions incidents are an important part of the success story of the campaign to ban cluster munitions. It is the engagement of people like Mr Thi and Ms Huang that get governments from around the world to give up old practices and unrealistic security concerns to join the supporters of a ban of this 'dirty weapon' whose remaining bomblets claimed in 2008 alone 125 casualties including 52 children and this only being the number of recorded incidents.

What is a Cluster Bomb?

Cluster bombs are large weapons containing multiple - often hundreds - of smaller bomblets. Housed like peas in a pod, the container opens in the air and scatters the bomblets over a wide area - sometimes the size of several football fields. This means that their impact is not limited to one precise military target, but injures and kills many civilians during an attack. If the bomblets don't explode on contact then they become in essence randomly scattered Anti-personal landmines waiting to take victims for days, months, years and even decades like is the case in Afghanistan, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia where civilians face the danger of a bomblet encounter since three decades while farming or children while playing. The legacy of cluster munitions is one of fear and suffering caused to civilian victims and their families that often loses all hope and the essential means of income, when the bread winner of the family gets maimed or killed.

As before in the International Campaign to Ban Landmines it is important for survivors to become key campaigners for the international convention on Cluster Munitions, the weapons that impacted on their lives in such a terrible way. The 12 Ban Advocates from Afghanistan, Laos and Vietnam attending the conference are a leading example of the strength and the will of people going through shock and depression after losing not only their limbs but often also members of their family. Then finding the strength and courage to change the curse of future so that no one else has to suffer what they went through. For this to be achieved it needs not only the ban and destruction of all



Soraj during his statement at the Regional Conference on Universalisation of the CCM in Bali, November 2009

cluster munitions but also international support for clearance of contaminated areas as well as assistance for the victims in facing the challenges of living with a disability in some of the poorest countries of the region.

The Regional Conference in Bali was a further step to the "Entry into Force" for this new International Convention, which after one year already recorded 103 signatures and 24 ratifications and now only needs another six countries ratifications before its regulations regards stockpile destruction, clearance of contaminated areas and destruction of remaining cluster munition bomblets on the ground, risk education and victims assistance as well as in regards to international assistance become binding for the states party to it.

Soraj Ghulam Habib lost both of his legs and one finger in a cluster munition explosion in 2001 in Herat, Afghanistan preventing him from attending school, playing with other children, and participating in other social activities. He became a campaigner against Cluster Munitions and stated at the conference, "At the time, cluster munitions destroyed my dreams. If you do not want to have your citizens, in particular your children, face the challenges I am facing, as many countries as possible, and especially in this hugely affected region, must sign, ratify and implement the Convention to save the lives of human beings from the nasty effects of cluster munitions. We, the Ban Advocates, came here to the Conference for your support and we are ready to work with you and our governments at national level in developing action plans for the support of victims to meet their needs. Survivors know best what they need. So listen to us".

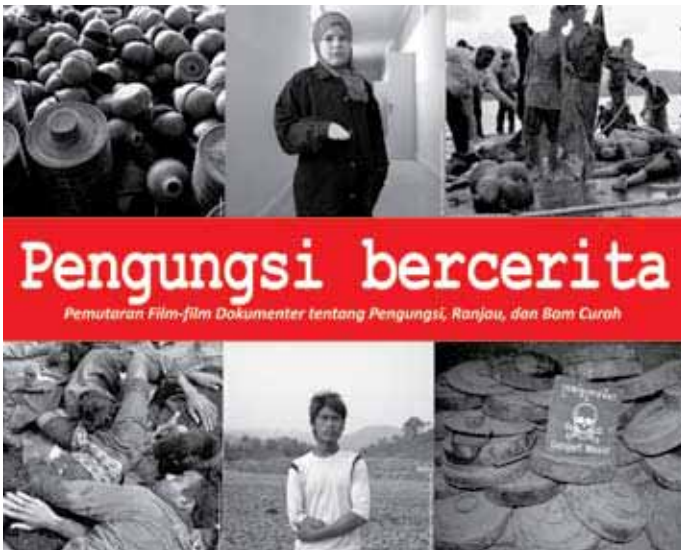
International Days

December

- 3 International Day of Disabled Persons
- 5 International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development
- 10 Human Rights Day
- 18 International Migrants Day
- 20 International Human Solidarity Day

² <http://www.lm.icbl.org/lm/2009/>

LISTENING TO THE WITNESSES OF REFUGEES THROUGH "REFUGEE STORIES"



By: Ayu Diasti

What does freedom mean to you? What does home mean to you? What would it mean if you lost both of them? No answer, not even a mutter, was heard from the participants. There was silence and all of them seemed thinking hard.

More or less, that was the situation when a few closing questions delivered by Taka Gani, who was the presenter of "Refugees Stories". In the end, the questions remained unanswered to be thought about on the way home.

"Refugee Stories" or "*Pengungsi Bercerita*" was an event held by JRS Indonesia in cooperation with Kinoki, a Yogyakarta film lovers' community that took place in Yogyakarta Cultural Centre on 12th and 14th of November 2009. Essentially, it was a film-screening event showing four documentary films recording refugees' experiences about their struggle to find a more secure place to live. The two films that were put on show at November 14th are *Running/Berlari* made by SUARAM (The Voice of The Malay People/Suara Rakyat Malaysia, an NGO advocating the rights of the refugee) and *Hope* which is directed by the Australian, Steve Thomas. *Running/Berlari* is telling us more about the experience of the Burmese in their search of a better life in Malaysia, while *Hope* covers the experiences of Amal Basry, an Iraqi woman who decided to search for asylum by getting on a rickety people-smuggling ship to Australia that sank in the sea between Indonesia and Australia territory leaving 353 people including many women and children dead.

About 50 people attended the event; most of them students from several universities in Yogyakarta including guest students from Australia with an interest on how the life of a refugee in Australia is portrayed by *Hope*. The high attendance and interest in watching refugee films can be explained by the recently increase on media attention on the issue in Indonesia. Until mid 2009, there have been

1,600 asylum seekers coming to Indonesia registering with UNHCR¹, with estimates that the real number including un-registered refugees actually might be a lot higher.

Looking at the recent increase in arrivals of asylum seekers one student raised his hand and asked, "What are the effects for Indonesia from receiving so many refugees or asylum seekers?" Answering this, Taka Gani the Program Officer of JRS Indonesia said, "It is true that Indonesia still has many problems to deal with that concern our people, so for instance, the high rate of poverty here. We fully understand these concerns and that is why we need to build a closer cooperation between government, IOM, UNHCR, and JRS in order to tackle this problem effectively. So that in the end, the burden will not be alone on government's shoulders."

Anti Personnel Landmines and Cluster Munitions

How do films about landmine and cluster munitions fit into this event? Landmines are known as a cheap military weapon that was be used in defensive missions to hamper intrusion or boarder crossings. In some countries of our region it was common for soldiers to plant landmines along border areas or in other civilian areas that might be passed by enemies affecting people trying to cross this boarders into safety or trying to return to their houses after the conflict quiet down. The experience of landmines is affecting the return and development in countries like Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Burma, which are the countries of origin of many refugees. A similar terrible effect on the civilian population have cluster bombs. When these air-dropped weapons spreading hundreds of bomblets with a high failure rate leaving thousands bomblets or submunitions randomly scattered on the ground contaminating the land and making very risky for people to return to farming activities even decades after the war ended. For refugees

¹Statement from the spokesman of Indonesian Directorate-General of Immigration, Maroloan Barimbing in 'INDONESIA: Tough laws needed to curb people-smuggling', downloaded on November 25th 2009 from <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=87096>

and internally displaced people the existence of these unexploded weapons in their land is only one of threats that hinder them to go back to their homes. But the threat of being maimed or killed for these people is real. In the film Disarm and Unacceptable Harm, screened at the first day of "Refugee Stories", that reality is told leading to a question raised by Elyzabeth "If there is already so much comprehensive information on how landmines create this enormous suffering to civilians, why are they still being used?"

Jody Williams, 1997 Nobel Peace Laureate, in the film Disarm touches on the bigger issue behind conflicts and the option of peace when asking: "What are the other ways that people and societies have chosen, to address a possible conflict without going to war. We have to educate ourselves and our children to different ways to deal with conflicts ... consider someone like Aung San Suu Kyi ... She has stood up to the Burmese dictatorship with her moral force. She has not picked up a gun. ... She stands with her moral power before that military fighting for the right of her people to a peaceful democratic future. Isn't that more courageous than someone picking up a gun?" By touching on the power of peaceful struggle and the role of a moral force in overcoming conflicts of interests we could be further inspired to look at what opportunities arise from the possibility in meeting and helping refugees from other countries. It was from listening to their stories that

we learned about the suffering from landmines and cluster munitions which lead to the most successful demilitarisation movements based on humanitarian grounds. Lets use this success of international solidarity as an example to not only ban dirty weapons but to take the opportunity to be with and listen to refugees to build and strengthen a campaign for peace. At the end the support and solidarity offered to them is a stepping-stone towards a better and peaceful world for us all.



*Your continued support makes it possible for us to help the internally displaced people in Indonesia.
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