



Refugee

Jesuit Refugee Service Indonesia

Accompany, Serve and Advocate the Cause of Refugees and Forcibly Displaced People

www.jrs.or.id
No. 11, March 2006

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Preface

Commemorating 8 March, International Women’s Day, JRS dedicates this edition of *Refugee* to women. This edition shows how women in Aceh contribute fully to their communities, if steps are taken to ensure access to health, education, to employment, and to participation in decisions that affect their lives. The stories of women that dream about a new future for Lamno, or women in Kuala Simpang Ulin and Tapaktuan using their own strength to rebuild their own lives, they all show the power of women refugees. Still there is a long way to go, to ensure that women’s rights are fully acknowledged and integrated into the programs of JRS, but also of other NGOs and governmental agencies.

Waving the Unique Future

By Bambang A. Sipayung

“I look old, don’t I?” she asked me. My question seemed to have hit a sensitive issue. In her mid thirties, she hasn’t married yet.

“Many men proposed to me, but I refused. Now I have my own house. I live quite happy. I can cook my own food now, not like it was in the barracks. I can go wherever I want to. Even now, I really can enjoy me freedom since there are no more men asking me to marry them. My mother used to insist on me getting married. She drowned when the tsunami hit.” She paused for a moment, reflecting on this for a second.

Her name is Mak Bit. She is among the group of weavers in Meunasah

Mukhan (Mukhan Village), Lamno, Aceh Province. Together with nine other women, mostly widows, she set up a group of weavers. Maybe it was by coincidence, or maybe because of our closeness to the refugees, however, JRS staff found out that the women in the area wove mats using local material in their spare time. This material, called *barem*, is different from other traditional materials used to weave handicrafts. The motifs they weave are typical for the area. This activity provided a perfect opportunity for JRS to support these womens groups. JRS provides the material, buys the handicrafts and tries to find a market for it. The benefits are returned to the group and used to invest in new material. When the quality



A group of women from Lamno are waving bags

of their handicrafts improves, they will receive training to market their products themselves.

During their weekly meetings, the women also discuss their day-to-day problems. And although they speak little Indonesian and the JRS staff guiding them speaks little Acehnese, their communication works fine. They are connected by

a mutual understanding of each others good will. It shows in the improvement of their works quality and the diversification of motives. Thanks to the visitors and donors coming to see JRS’ projects, their products can be displayed and sold.

After working together for six months, they realized that the fact they are

(.....Waving the Unique)



Teaching each other to diversify & improve the quality of their product

survivors of one of the worst natural disaster in the world, makes them special in a way. Because of this, they want to diversify and improve the quality of their products to be able to sell more. Just because they are

different, they decided to use a mixture of modern and traditional motives. They might sell more now because of their tsunami background, but that reason will only last for a few years more. But they realize that

by producing quality products with different motives, their production will be more sustainable. They will be able to earn some money from it even after the NGOs will have left. They can make their spare time activities into income generating ones.

Behind their slow and tedious waving activity, there is more to this group of women than meets the eye. They not only weave mats, they also weave a new future. They are weaving the future of Lamno with a unique weaving souvenir. Before tsunami, Lamno was

unique because of their blue eyed inhabitants, descendants of the Portuguese. The whole village of these blue eyed people was totally destroyed. Is there anything unique left for Lamno?

These ladies are now creating a new uniqueness for Lamno with their weaving products. They want to build up a unique future for Lamno with their hard work. They are changing from survivors into persons with their own unique freedom and creativity.

Reproductive Health in Kuala Simpang Ulim

By Eva Fitriana

One of the important issues in life for women's development is reproductive health. This, however, is not always acknowledged so. In the middle of the reconstruction and rehabilitation process in the village of Kuala Simpang Ulim, women's reproductive health rights are still seriously neglected.

In all our efforts to reconstruct Kuala Simpang Ulim post Tsunami and after the Helsinki peace agreement, we seem to forget the issue of women's reproductive health. Governmental as well and non-governmental organizations rarely discuss the issue, let alone incorporate it into their programs.

For the women of Kuala Simpang Ulim, some of whom still stay in barracks

while most of them now live in temporary shelters, their reproductive health is a challenge they are facing alone. For us, humanitarian agencies, the challenge is how to fully integrate the issue in our future development programs. When we look at the needs for reproductive health to be fulfilled, some important issues are to be resolved as overall development is still not equal between men and women. If we only look at the barracks and temporary shelters, it is clear that primary conditions for personal hygiene and reproductive health are not fulfilled. Lack of easy access to clean water and the still limited facilities cause the people's personal hygiene and biological needs to be disturbed. Besides that, the specific needs of women are not sufficiently taken care of. Moreover, the limited access to information increases the

vulnerability of women within their social life even more.

"As the current state of the barracks and temporary shelters does not meet standards for hygiene, it hampers the health situation for families, mainly so for women and children. I think I can say this, because I know that for most of the families of Kuala Simpang Ulim. All of them having 3 children or more, they do not have enough private space to rest. This lack of private space has its effect on the reproductive health of women and hampers the healthy development of children," recounts someone who wishes to stay anonymous.

Reacting on this, Ficky from Re-Kompak, the organization that will build permanent houses of 3x6m in Kuala Simpang Ulim, explains "The current

.....in the village of Kuala Simpang Ulim, women's reproductive health rights are still seriously neglected.

situations are indeed far from ideal architectural standards. When we start building the houses, we will certainly adapt them to meet health standards. We hope with these little adaptations we can provide what people really need." Re-Kompak is committed to build houses according to health standards in order to reduce the problems of reproductive health now faced by so many women in Kuala Simpang Ulim.

The JRS team in Langsa works together with the Health Centre of Simpang Ulim to set up a two-weekly information-health service

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Reproductive Health in Kuala Simpang Ulim....

program. On the 12th of April, this program will start with distribution of free medicine; The information-health service program will not only focus on women, but will be open for children, adolescents and men. For

some of its activities, the Health Centre of Simpang Ulim cooperates with the Satellite Health Service Unit.

The limitations of JRS in Langsa and the still growing dependency of the

communities in the barracks on material and financial assistance, does hamper our activities. All this is an impediment to the stability of the communities after the tsunami.

A Story about Tradeswomen from Kuala Simpang Ulim



By Daryadi

Two widows from Kuala Simpang Ulim, East Aceh, Mrs. Tilauyah, aged 38, and Mrs. Rosnilawati, aged 36, do not have an easy life. They struggle to support their children by selling crabs and wrapped meals. Tilauyah's husband died in 2001 during the armed conflict. Rosnilawati's husband lost his life by a bullet during the armed conflict as well.

On 26 December 2004 they ran from their village, ran from tsunami waves

and took refuge in Lampouh Rayeuk, about 12 km further inland. For months the villagers did not dare to return, even not for a while. Kuala Simpang Ulim has been blacklisted as a rebel area. For years there has been a military post of TNI Marinir (Marine of Indonesia National Army) in the nearest village, just before Kuala Simpang Ulim. The soldiers would scrutinize every person who came to the village or pass through it. After the signing of the Helsinki Peace Agreement in

August, the marines loosened their control. Gradually, the villagers of Kuala Simpang Ulim went back to visit and clean their village, and finally in January 2006, they returned for good to their home village. Mrs. Tilauyah and Mrs. Rosnilawati were worse off than before when they found out that their houses were totally destroyed.

Mrs. Rosnilawati lives in a 3 x 5 meter of wooden house with *rumbia* (palm

leave) roof. Mrs. Tilauyah is staying with her extended family, while waiting for her own house to be finished. It is being built on 2,5 x 5 meter land. She wants to earn more money to be able to buy *rumbia* (palm leaves) and timber for her own, small house.

With a loan capital she borrowed from a friend in Kecamatan Simpang Ulim, Mrs. Rosnilawati started her own business. She sells wrapped meals for fishermen in her village. She sells 25 wrapped meals a day for 3.000 Rupiah each. With a 50.000 Rupiah capital loan, she started her business from which she gets a benefit of 25.000 rupiah a day. Mrs. Tilauyah earns 20.000 rupiah a day from selling crabs to the *toke* (Fishbroker) in Kuala Simpang Ulim. Bare-footed she goes into the river or swamps in Kuala Simpang Ulim to trap the crabs. She puts in 50 *bubus* (crab-trap made from woven plastic thread) at 3 pm, and collects the crabs the following morning. She received the *bubus* from a *toke* as an incentive to start up her small business.

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...A Story of Tradeswomen from Kuala Simpang Ulim

Their lives are difficult when they have to pay their children's tuition fee. "My children haven't been to school for a whole week. We don't have a dime to pay for RBT (local transport)," said Ms. Rosnilawati. To reach the main town of Simpang Ulim Sub-district, where the high school is located, it is at least 8.000 Rupiah per person per day.

"We don't receive assistance any more from NGOs nor from government. Only occasionally we receive money for livelihood," said Mrs. Rosnilawati. Luckily, her business is running smoothly. Customers always pay their dues."

"Although our income less than before, we fishermen, will always prioritize the rice sellers. If

we owe some money to a rich oil businessmen, that's a common thing. If we owe money to a little vendor that's a big deal," said Mochammad Ali, aged 64.

Mrs. Tilauyah's daily routine is a different story. She has to walk 6 km to and from Alue Lhok, every afternoon and morning. "If I had money, I would buy a small boat or a bike. It's

tiresome to carry the *bubu* on foot," said Mrs. Tilauyah with a look of exhaustion.

These two single parents bare their similar bitter memories of losing their beloved husbands during the conflict and losing all their belongings because of the tsunami. However, both of them have never ceased to hope for a better future, especially for their children.

Zahra Cultivates Her Field on Her Own



Zahra is walking with a JRS volunteer along the bank of Kluet River in Koto Indarung village, South Aceh

By : Zulaeny (JRS Tapaktuan)

Zahra, a sweet lady of 33, lives with her parents. Her mother is sick. Her father, 75, too old to farm their land. Zahra, a childless woman, toils their land, located along the border of Gunung Leuser National Park, Kluet Sub-district, South Aceh, all by herself. She lives in an isolated

village, 30 km off the western coastal road of Aceh Province.

In april 2004, Zahra left the village of Kota Indarung together with the other villagers, scared by the frequent armed encounters in the village. They lived in the refugee camp of Lhok Bengkuang from April 2004 until April 2005. Kota Indarung was blacklisted by the Indonesian army as being a rebel area. At least

eight young men of Kota Indarung and Siuarai-urai lost their lives in the violent conflict. After the signing of the MoU and the situation was considered conducive enough to return, all refugees returned to their hometown Kota Indarung on September 19th 2005. Ready to start a new life in their place of origin, which had been deserted for 20 months, they started cultivating their fields again. To support

herself and her parents, Zahra farms her parents land.

Zahra divorced her husband while she was still in the Lhok Bengkuang camp, in Tapak Tuan. Her ex-husband used to beat her up frequently. In 2003, when she was 6 months pregnant, her husband beat her up so badly she lost her unborn child. When he asked her permission to marry a second wife, she filed for divorce. She preferred to stay alone, instead of sharing her husband with another wife. She earned a living washing clothes of her neighbors in the refugee camp, making about Rp. 70.000 a month. When living in the refugee camp, the refugees received food from the Social Service, the Indonesian Red Cross and JRS.

Zahra dropped out of junior high school to farm a field of 10 *rantai*. *Rantai* is a traditional-local measurement used in Aceh, similar to 400 square meters. Returning from the refugee camp, she found her land covered with weeds, elephant grass and bushes. When she just came, she saw tall grass and bushes filled

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...Zahra cultivates her field on her own

her land. They used to grow nilam, corn and peanuts. Her parents also own 3 *panggung* where they used to grow rice (1 *panggung* = 324 square meters).

"I have to do it all by my self. My mother is not well. My father is too old to hoe," explains Zahra. Besides clearing and cultivating her field, she also has to support her family. That is why she clears her neighbors land as well,

earning Rp 6000 for half a day of work. The money is used to buy groceries in the main town of Kluet Tengah Subdistrict, in Menggamat, where she also buys her seeds. She has to walk 4 km along the river to reach the town.

After we returned to Kota Indarung, we had Rp. 200.000 left, barely enough to start up our lives and buy some corn and nut seeds", Zahra recounts. After six

months she harvested the corn, but never sold it.

"Since we no longer received any food, the corn we harvested became our daily food, replacing rice," she explained. To be able to eat something, she grows spinach, long beans and chili. Sometimes they get some fish her older brother catches from the nearby Kluet River.

Enjoying the life of her peaceful village, Zahra is an optimistic woman. As

Induk Galih (head of the young womens group), she encourages the girls and women of the village to take part in sports and art activities. Her small body does not discourage her to do all the hard work in the field.

"I want to be independent. I don't want to depend on my brothers' assistance. They have their own live with their family" Zahra looks into the future confident..

JRS Field Report

AREA I

Banda Aceh

Health.

Because other organizations are providing medical service to patients in Pustu Ateuk Pahlawan, Meunasah Keude, Malahayati camp, Tanah Merah camp and MIN Durong, JRS decided to stop its medical activities there. JRS still provides health service for patients in Pesantren Abu LamUandLhuBok.TheJRSmedicalteamtreated79patientsinFebruary.

Education.

JRS will pay 3 religious teachers for 3 months. JRS provided informal education for children in Lhok Meh, Meunasah Keudee, Meunasah Mon and Kulam.

Restoring Life.

JRS together with the beneficiaries of the Jambo Rebus program held a meeting to discuss the obstacles they encountered with the Jambo Rebus finishing process. The main obstacles were a shortage of timber supply for *ampak* and a shortage in *mata kompor*. JRS facilitated a meeting for the women sewing group to discuss their internal problem, as one of its members has difficulties paying back the monthly installments.

EDITORIAL

Editorial Responsibility

Edi Mulyono SJ

Editors

Els Coolen

Lino Sanjoyo,

Dedy Kristanto,

Yeni Kristanti,

Design

Slamet Riyadi

JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE INDONESIA

Gg. Cabe Dp. III/No.9 dn. 13
Puren, Pringwulung, Condong
Catur, Depok, Sleman,
Yogyakarta 55283, INDONE-
SIA, Phone/fax: +62 274
517405

Email: indonesia@jrs.or.id

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Ampaks for fishermen in Krueung Raya from JRS

Support Local Groups.

JRS did an assessment of the place where the office of Panglima Laot (local commander for sea activities) will be built on. JRS and ATMI will support the reconstruction. JRS, ATMI and SEFA (a local group) also visited the site where the Pesantren Raudatul Wustha will be built on.

Shelters.

The process of the reconstruction of the Meunasah (small mosque) in Lamsenia is almost finished. JRS still encountered some problems concerning the land certificates for the people of Lamsenia. The area of Pesantren Abu Lham U and Pesantren Batoh, both supported by JRS, has been leveled.

Advocacy.

All JRS staff received training in SPHERE standards, accountability towards vulnerable groups and advocacy from the Advocacy and Information Manager.

Pulo Aceh

Restoring Life.

28 numbers of houses have been finished and 78 houses are still in the stage of finalization.

Before tsunami Meulingge was known as a ginger production location. Many of our beneficiaries asked JRS to support ginger seedling instead of chilly. After an assessment of the local capacity to grow ginger (concerning land cultivation and knowledge of growing ginger), JRS has decided to support 40 families with ginger seedlings. Each family received 50 kg ginger seedlings on 26 February 2006.

JRS provided financial support for 3 women of Meulingge to develop their small businesses such as a small grocery store and a small bakery.

Health.

JRS and OBI (Obor Berkat Indonesia) joint forces on the 19th of February by conducting a free consultation clinic. Throughout February JRS mobile clinic team treated 48 people from Meulingge and Rinon. JRS provided supplementary food for 40 children, 6 breastfeeding and 5 pregnant mothers.

Education.

JRS signed an MOU with the District Government of Aceh Besar on the reconstruction of the State Elementary School in Meulingge. For the time being, 27 pupils are still receiving basic education in a makeshift tent. The temporary school is run by 4 volunteer teachers and a head principle. JRS supports one student from Meulingge with a scholarship.

Aid.

In February, JRS distributed 936 kg of rice, 156 kg of sugar, 156 kg of frying oil, 312 packs of biscuits, 8 liters of kerosene, 2 kg of green bean, 2 kg of coffee and 4 packs of cereals for 78 families of Meulingge.

Support Local Groups.

JRS supported 500.000 Rupiah for PASE, a local organization that in the future will replace JRS's role in community accompaniment.

Advocacy.

All JRS staff received training in SPHERE standards, accountability towards vulnerable groups and advocacy from the Advocacy and Information Manager.

Lamno

Advocacy.

All JRS staff received training in SPHERE standards, accountability towards vulnerable groups and advocacy from the Advocacy and Information Manager.

Restoring Life.

JRS held weekly meetings with the womens handicrafts group from Mukhan and Meunasah Tutong, discussing capacity building, marketing and obstacles. JRS conducted a basic assessment to decide which beneficiaries are to receive a capital loan for tailor businesses. Basic training was conducted for a group of carpenters, repair shops and small restaurants before they receive their loans. JRS also distributed some barber tools/equipment for a group of barbers.

Shelters.

By involving *santris* (Islamic boarding school students), the reconstruction process of Pesantren Budi is nearly finished. 90% of the houses for the students are finished. The dike construction to protect the girls houses is 40% finished. 30% of the houses are painted and about one third of the toilets are up.

JRS and ATMI surveyed the relocation sites for people of Gunung Meulinteng and Gleu Putoh in Calang. JRS, ATMI and FFI drew up a plan for the reconstruction process in Calang. JRS, ATMI, FFI held a meeting with community leaders and some representatives of MUSPIKA to discuss the follow up of the assessment and the technical parts of the reconstruction process. JRS staff has assessed the area to find office space.