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By JRS Langsa Indonesia

On August 15, the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement (known as GAM) signed a historic peace agreement in Helsinki, Finland. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) brings hope that the 30 year war, which has caused much suffering and loss to the Acehese people, will come to an end. Many challenges lie ahead for the implementation of the agreement, and there are reasons for both optimism and skepticism. People are responding differently to the agreement. Below are some comments recorded by JRS staff in East Aceh.

"I'm optimistic that the MOU can create a peaceful environment in Aceh, at least until 2009. That is when we will see the consequences of local political parties and GAM's involvement in local politics,"

The Optimist and Pessimist



said a teacher at the Moslem boarding school of Nurul Ulum in Peureulak, East Aceh, referring to the part of the MOU allowing GAM to form a local political party in Aceh. Badliansyah felt concerned about how GAM will "play" politics.

Nevertheless, the teacher also felt optimistic on other accounts. "I saw Sofyan Daud hug General Major Bambang Dharmono; the leader of GAM hug the leader of TNI. This shows that they trust each other and signals that we may have peace and security in the region." He agreed with the economic concessions for ex-GAM members ensured in the agreement. Allowing demobilized GAM members a livelihood will deter them from depending on other people's businesses to make

a living.

Meanwhile, an official of the Health Department of Aceh was skeptical of the MOU. He thought that the agreement gave too many concessions to GAM members, which could arouse social envy in other (non-GAM) persons affected by the conflict.

"The implementation of the MOU for middle and lower class people may not be successful. Many GAM members are actually criminals, but they got amnesty and economic compensation," he explained further.

He thought that the MOU would have created a better and more peaceful future for Aceh if the government had made a just policy for all Acehese. "The government should not only pay attention to

ex-GAM members. The government should also be firm in maintaining and implementing law and order, especially for corrupt bureaucrats, both civilian and military," he added.

An elementary school teacher in Langsa expressed her doubts about the implementation of the MOU. She feels safe now, but she is not sure it will last because, she fears, no one can prevent GAM from conducting another terrorist attack amidst people.

"They (GAM) may take our belongings and continue to terrorize us," she said.

Living a simple life with serenity and peacefulness is all that Icut, ages 60, wants. She is an IDP from Kuala Simpang Ulim, currently residing in Lampoh Rayeuk, Simpang Ulim Sub-district, East Aceh. She hopes that her fellow villagers can return to their village of origin and back to their normal lives in the old fishermen's village. She admits that she knows nothing about the MOU. She only knows that TNI check-points are still there near her camp. □



Children from Bungong Kupulo group performing the Bungong Pala dance with JRS backdrop behind.

Dancing for Peace

By Nia Susanti

*Tanggal 15 Bak Buleun
Lapan
Perdamaian dua syedara
Lhee Ploeh toen lama dalam
tikaian
Jino hai arakan kadame sudara*

On August 15th
A peace agreement was
signed by two brothers
Thirty years at war
Hey friends, now we are
united in peace

The lyrics above were sung, accompanied by a Bungong Pala dance, performed by children of the Bungong Kupula group from the Negeri Trumon Timur Junior High school. Pak Fitrah, the head of the group, told JRS staff that the dance represented the life of

the Acehnese. The dance described the difficult situation faced by nutmeg farmers during the conflict between GAM and TNI. The thirty-year war only resulted in misery and sorrow for the Acehnese. A desire for peace was not voiced exclusively by the men attending the peace conference; children too pleaded for peace. Children in Tapak Tuan, for example, expressed their wish for peace by staging an art performance on 20th August 2005. Supported and facilitated by JRS, the children spread a banner saying "Stop hostility. Don't plant seeds of hatred and revenge in the young generation. Welcome Peace."

"We organized this event to implant in

children the values of peace and friendship and to end the circles of violence and revenge. The event is especially for children living in conflict-affected areas such as Trumon, Kluet, Labuhan Haji and Rantau Binuang in South Aceh," Guruh Pranowo, the field coordinator of JRS Tapak Tuan, explained.

Besides, the art performance was intended to provide for trauma healing and to build hope and optimism in the aftermath of the December tsunami. JRS invited children from SMP Negeri Trumon Timur, MIN Rantau Binuang, MIN Air Pinang, SD Negeri 9 Tapak Tuan, SD Negeri 4 Tapak Tuan, SD Negeri 3 Tapak Tuan, SD Negeri 10 Tapak Tuan and IDPs children

from Lhok Bengkuang camp to participate in the performance.

"I hope that the MOU between the government and GAM will bring eternal peace and that we will see our children perform more often," Mrs. Rafizah from Sanggar Nurul Husna said.

"Together in Lhok Bengkuang camp we watched the signing of the peace agreement between GAM and the government. Now Aceh is safe and peaceful. We can go back to our village in Koto Indarung. *Alhamdulillah* (Thanks be to God!) We plan to return home in November or December. I cleaned my house and my garden and cut the grass. Our house has been vacant for a long time. *Insya Allah*, we can return home after Ramadhan (fasting month)," said Mrs. Rosna, a dancing instructor of IDP children from Lhok Bengkuang camp, expressing her optimism about the peace agreement signed in Helsinki.

All people are hoping and praying, as expressed in the song accompanying the Bungong Pala dance:

*Talake doa bak Tuhan Sidro
Damai Aceh nyo bek tinggai
nama
Bak lagee pakat di Lua
Nanggroe
Teumpang jih sideh di
Finlandia*

We pray to God
Peace in Aceh is hopefully
not just a word
Like the agreement signed
abroad
In Finland ☐

The Neglected Voices of IDPs in Sei Lengan Camp, North Sumatra

By Nia Susanti

Pak Dharmo, Pak Sareng, and Ibu Suyani have spent the last five years in displacement camps in Sei Lengan, North Sumatra. They recalled and retold their story about how they first went to Aceh to seek a new life, but then later were forced to leave owing to conflict. They left Aceh between 1999-2001 when there was an escalation of tension between the separatist GAM and the Indonesian military, and an increasing amount of racism (Acehnese vs Javanese). Born in Java, they migrated to Aceh in the 1980s. They

never imagined that they would end up as IDPs in Sei Lengan.

When I asked whether they would return to Aceh after GAM and the Government of Indonesia signed a peace agreement, all three of them said no. They are still traumatized.

"I don't want to return to Aceh because I'm still traumatized. I will go there for a short visit only," *Pak Dharmo* expressed.

Returning to Aceh is not *Pak Sareng's* wish. "Going back is impossible for me, therefore I beg for the government to give me land compensation. I used to own farmland, but the conflict forced me to leave

it," said *Pak Sareng* sadly.

"I was born in Aceh and my parents lived there for a long time. Yet, the Acehnese consider me as their enemy. I don't want to go back to Aceh. I will remain in Sei Lengan Camp, because people here are very welcoming," *Ibu Suyani* stated.

They prefer residing in the Sei Lengan camp, which is situated around the Gunung Leuser area. The status of the land, whether or not it is within the conservation area, is yet to be determined and the IDPs living there are waiting for the government's decision on whether they are to be allowed to live there. They

also hope that the promised termination fund from the local government will be given to them in full. So far they have only received 10% of 8,750,000 rupiah (USD 875). The IDPs in Sei Lengan invested in a community palm plantation to add to the daily earnings they obtain as carpenters, small traders and laborers in private palm plantations. They have established community schools for their children and a board of agriculture for farmers. They collectively cultivate a palm tree plantation and five hectares of apothecary herbs to support their children's education. □



Accompanied by JRS Medan team, *Pak Dharmo, Pak Sareng and Ibu Suyani* were being interviewed by a journalist from the Guardian.

Mrs. Janati Wants to Earn Living from Ummi Chips



Mrs. Janati from Padang Reube Village, Kuala Sub-district, Nagan Raya District is making chips assisted by her neighbours.
Photo taken by Bang Tapun

Seven months after the earthquake and tsunami on 26th December 2004, it seems unwise to continue to cry about one's fate and the suffering of the Acehnese. "Life goes on," stated Janati, a woman from Padang Reube, Kuala Sub-district, about 15 km to the south of Meulaboh, Nagan Raya District. She lost her wheat chips business to the Tsunami. Before the Tsunami Janati's wheat chips, labelled 'Ummi' were sold throughout West Aceh and Nagan Raya districts. Previously, the business was a family business employing female neighbours with salaries of 10,000 rupiah (USD 1) per day per person.

"Only one stove is left; all the others were thrown out

behind the house," said the mother of five children.

For six months, Mrs Janati has been rebuilding her life. She is lucky since all her family members are safe. However, some of her properties and her house were swept away by the waves. She asked 11 women from her neighborhood to join her business. Mrs Janati received a 6,000,000.- rupiah (USD 600) capital loan from JRS Meulaboh through a JRS Income Generating Activities (IGA) program.

Janati and her colleagues spent 1,500,000.- rupiah (USD 150) for basic tools, such as roasting zinc, stoves and drying racks. She bought wheat flour, soda and spices for 1,250,000.- rupiah (USD125) The rest of the

money she used to establish a warehouse. Janati manages 11 of her colleagues for the morning and afternoon shift, making chips from flour dough in the morning, drying and frying in the afternoon. The profit from their business will be divided fairly and some of it will be used to pay off the loan.

For each production batch they use five sacks of wheat flour. One kg of wheat soda 'cap ayam' (hen brand soda) is used for each sack of wheat flour, salt and cooking spices. They need 25 liters of petroleum for the stove, both for toasting and frying. "We won't use common frying oil, because with this the chips would only stay fresh for five days. By using palm oil they can

last for three weeks," Mrs. Janati explained.

A problem develops when the product has been accumulated: for five sacks of wheat flour, 150 plastic packets are needed, costing 7,000 rupiah (USD 0.7) per packet. Each plastic packet contains 100 packs of plastic weighing 0.25 kg. The chips will be distributed to the stalls or shops in school complexes, or market-places in Meulaboh and other cities nearby.

According to Janati, in order to increase the speed of the chips' distribution, she needs a motorbike-taxi that can take them to stalls and shops. "We have to pay 30,000 rupiah (3) per day, but we don't think we're capable," said the slender Acehnese woman. Janati's group admitted that they cannot buy their own means of transportation because only 2,000,000 rupiah (USD200) is left of their loan. "This is our problem that still can't be solved: Bang Umar only can carry our accumulated products to nearby places, around this region," Janati explained. Actually, from the beginning, the only person who has helped them distribute their production is Janati's husband. However, because Umar has his own work as a carpenter, he can't spend much time distributing Janati's "Ummi Chips". □

Translated by Silvester

Moluccas

The First Laughter of Iha People

Ambon was bright and colourful, with red and white flags and variegated banners hoisted or attached to the main roads, offices, and housing complexes, to celebrate the 60th anniversary of Indonesian Independence Day and the 60th anniversary of Maluku Province. Various games, competitions and attractions were prepared everywhere, drawing people to participate in the celebrations. On August 17, 2005, students, members of the military, civil servants and officers packed into the fields to join the flag hoisting ceremonies.

JRS staff also celebrated these special days with hundreds of IDPs in Lengkong. Lengkong is a relocation site, 35 km northeast of Ambon accommodating about a hundred families of



Smiling happy faces of Iha children on Indonesian Independence Day

Iha who previously took refuge in Hurnala Port, Tulehu. They fled from Saparua Island five years ago because of religious conflicts in Ambon. Since relocating to Lengkong, they had never celebrated Independence Day, even on a small scale. However, on that day, JRS brought back the happiness of the

national day by organizing various games for the IDPs children in Lengkong.

Children and teenagers were happily participating in various games, i.e. eating crisps, sitting on rubber balloons and blowing them up, balloon partner dancing, a nail inside a bottle, running and moving pebbles, biting a spoon with

a marble on it and towing ropes. However, even happier were the spectators who encouraged and cheered to the participants. At first, JRS organized all of the events by themselves. However, later on the leader and some of the teenagers were involved in organizing the games, since JRS staff were overwhelmed with the enthusiastic participants and spectators.

There were winners and losers, those who showed happy faces or disappointed ones. In the end all the children went home smiling with candy in their hands. *Pak Gafur*, a prominent leader of the Iha community graciously concluded the event by exclaiming, "After five years of being exiled from Iha, today the Iha people laugh for the first time." □

One Saturday Afternoon

By Monica Supriyati

At 11.00 am, the JRS Ambon team went to Kariuw and was met by tense faces and police barricades. Kariuw is the name of a Christian village and community on Haruku Island, Maluku Province. The Kariuw people fled to Tinihitu on February 14th, 1999, when the religious conflict broke out in Maluku and just returned to Kariuw on 6th June 2005.



Reconciliation meeting between returnees (Kariu people) and receiving communities (Pelaup & Ori)

JRS staff saw some Kariuw people run to the border bridge which separates Kariuw and Pelaup.

"What happened?" JRS asked one of them.

"People from Pelaup tried to cut off the head of Grandpa Ako Tupalessy," he answered briefly. Pelaup is the Moslem community that had just experienced the return of

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..... One Saturday Afternoon

their neighbors, Kariuw people.

When a motor bike from Pelauw passed along the road where the Kariuw people were gathering, a JRS staff member stopped him and hitched a ride to the Pelauw's side to see what was going on there.

On the other side of the border, Pelauw people had gathered very alert as well, guarded by police members. However, the incident did not get any worse. People from both sides were appeased and dispersed back to their houses to carry on their daily activities.

JRS staff visited *Opa* (Grand father) *Ako Tupallessy*, aged 74, who was assaulted by an unidentified man when he was working in his field. The old man received bad injuries on his head, but he did not want to make the matter worse.

"I don't want to fight back or take revenge because I remember that we, Kariuw people just returned recently from exile. I don't even hate my attacker. I just felt sorry and wondered why the attacker chose such an old man like me," *Opa Ako* expressed his feelings to JRS staff.

On the same day, in the house of the Kariuw chieftain, there was a meeting attended by local government officials and JRS staff to discuss the reconciliation and reintegration



The *Opa Ako* who was injured by an unidentified man

of returnees (Kariuw) and the receiving community (Pelauw). The recent assault was also included in the discussion. The participants agreed that the provincial government should do more to mediate problems of land ownership between Kariuw and Pelauw, as this has caused some problems, especially economically for the Kariuw whose

land are taken over by the Pelauw. The second Malino Agreement mentioned that the government would ensure that the return of the IDPs is accompanied by the return of people's rights over their land. However, after the return, the land of the Kariuw people still remained occupied by the Pelauw. This problem of land will challenge the peace process and reconciliation between the returnees and the receiving communities.

JRS accompanies both communities for

peace and reconciliation programs. Besides, JRS also provides education assistance, seeds, family kits, kerosene lamps, health assistance, advocacy, peace building and income generating activities to both communities. □

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