

## "CAN COLLECTIVE VIOLENCE BE PREVENTED?"

A PsychoPolitical Action Project in Indonesia

October 2005

**BANDA ACEH, SUMATRA, "Women empowering women"** The plane missed the landing strip and had to pull up again in the last minute. I only saw green below us and the strip on my left. It had to try a second time, and, much to the relief of the passengers landed this time on the strip. - We arrived in Banda Aceh, just shaken by another major earthquake and were welcomed by the aftershakes the same night, a wavelike feeling of the earth, very disorienting.

The women's group (women empowering women) in the first camp was invited to expand the small business projects we initiated in April. This time, in order to encourage and empower the women to work in groups rather than as individuals, we invited them to try to form small groups. Thus more trust could be built and a larger amount of money was available. Three small businesses emerged. One, a local gas station, with drum and bottles, where the gasoline (the price this week doubled) is sold by the liter for the motorcycles in the camp area. Since no gas station is to be found within the vicinity this seems to be a very profitable business. Two, fabric, material, thread, zippers, for the already existing sewing shop, now expanding to five people, sewing clothes on order. Three, a small kiosk, this new capital supplying the necessary goods for sale

We also asked the village leader to sign an written agreement to share the profit equally with women employees at the brick factory in construction. 80% of the workers should be women participating in this project. The donated money was used for the next step, building the kiln to fire the bricks. More financing is needed for completion. Prices here have gone up 50% since our last visit in July.

The women in the second camp accompanied us into town, so that we could purchase together the mattresses requested during our last visit. We were able to purchase eight, enough for only half of the participants, due to our funding restrictions. The happy receivers were quickly chosen by the group by lottery. We were able to purchase high quality mattresses filled with kapok, very much appreciated by the smiling owners. Now they don't have to sleep on the hard floor anymore. The rest of the mattresses will be purchased on our next visit.

**MEULABOH, SUMATRA:** The month of Ramadan, with its daily fasting from before daybreak to nightfall, is observed throughout Aceh as it is in all of Indonesia. In Aceh, however, where Sharyiah, Islamic law, is observed, this means that everyone gets up to have an early breakfast before the sound indicating the beginning of the daily fast is broadcast by the mosque at dawn. All restaurants are closed until after the breaking of the fast at night and the visit to the mosque. Then, around 9 pm every one eats very special food. We decided to follow the same daily rhythm.

We left Aceh and went on the eight hour drive through mud, stone and earthquake damaged roads to Meulaboh, where I held a training on small business and values organized by a local NGO. Thirty-five people were present, all young people from various NGO's, training others in

establishing small businesses which are to be established in the earthquake and tsunami battered Meulaboh, and are sponsored by various international Foundations.

**JAVA, INDONESIA, Children's prison:** the purpose of this visit was to hold a two day workshop with the prison employees, wardens, security, rehabilitation and social workers. The first day was dedicated to presenting the developmental issues of teenagers to the prison employees so that they might better understand the emotional problems and challenges the youth are confronted with. This was facilitated in the prison setting by my colleague Yusti, Department of Psychology, Surabaya University.

The second day of the workshop took place outside of the prison in a hotel setting, where I facilitated an experiential workshop with my colleague Tiwi as a translator. The thirty-five seminar participants were open to this new approach of experiential learning. We began with relaxation exercises, then the participants expressed their needs in order to be more open to the children's needs. We worked with empowering language, and closed by thanking the heart. The two day seminar was warmly received and a need was voiced for further training.

A follow-up evaluation is planned for our December visit and possible seminars for employees and youths are envisaged for the future. Our ability to realize this project will depend on future sponsorship.

At present the children's prison houses eighty-five boys and three girls. One of the girls is replacing her brother, that is, she is serving his prison sentence. He is the only provider for a large family, and was sentenced to a jail term. She was allowed by the judge to take his place.

Three boys tried to escape, and are now in solitary confinement. Wounds on their backs looked like cigarette burns. Questions were met with silence.

**BALI, INDONESIA, Tanggayuda Youth center:** A twice-weekly computer class at the Lagu Damai youth center is being facilitated by Artawa, one of the students we sponsored,. There are now two computers available to the students. In three months, a telephone line should provide the long sought internet connection.

Our high school sponsored students from very poor families each received a pair of shoes. Two of them are excelling in school. We are looking now into the possibility of finding sponsors for possible future study for them at a university.

The pingpong table becomes very active on weekends, when the youth music band trains as well.

Indrawati is now doing her medical internship in a hospital in Surabaya, and Hendra has established a motorcycle repair shop. Artawa found work at the end of his studies. Martini, trained as office manager, is doing a great job at the Lagu Damai office. Siwi, Andika and Suartini are studying.

**BALI, INDONESIA, Banjar Bindu, Jiwa Damai meeting- , workshop retreat- and healing center:** In a beautiful natural environment amidst jungle and tropical flowers, with natural springs, at the end of a Balinese banjar (village), it is an ideal setting. Sixteen people can be

accommodated comfortably. The heavy rains caused some landslides which were cleared by the combined effort of our students from Tanggayuda and the Jiwa Damai team. A little kitten, abandoned, joined the team, as well as two puppies which are now the center of attention.

Thank you for your continued emotional and financial support.

Dr. Margret Rueffler

PSYCHOPOLITICAL PEACE INSTITUTE INC., Non Profit Organisation, 150 West 80<sup>th</sup> Street, Apt. 6C,  
New York, 10024-6342, USA, tel +1 212 362 6915 fax +1 212 877 9626,

e-mail: found@pppi.net www.pppi.net

PsychoPolitical Peace Foundation, Gehrenhof im Geren 5, CH 8712 Staefa, Switzerland

Tel +41 (0)44 926 8182 Fax +41 (0)44 926 8110 email: found @pppi.net www.pppi.net .

USA: Please send your contributions by check in \$US to: PSYCHOPOLITICAL PEACE INSTITUTE  
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Konto 16 1.265.252.00, Swiftcode LINSCH 23, BC 8731

Germany: PsychoPolitical Peace Foundation - Dresdner Bank, D 10971 Berlin, BLZ 100 800 00,

Konto 0301352202, Swiftcode DRES DE BB

Indonesia: Lagu Damai – Song of Peace - Bank Negara Indonesia, BNI, Ubud Branch, Denpasar

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