

## **PsychoPolitical Peace Foundation**

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### **"CAN COLLECTIVE VIOLENCE BE PREVENTED?"**

A PsychoPolitical Action Project

#### **ACEH, INDONESIA**

"Can Collective Violence be prevented?" is a step-by-step approach to the long-term prevention of violence in post trauma and pre-crisis areas. It is applicable nationally and internationally within multi-ethnic- and multi-religious contexts, in post trauma situations and areas of high tension. It employs a new approach, where the groups and communities involved agree on incorporating the values of **consciousness of joy, empowerment, empowerment to choose, choice and self help** (an indirect psychological intervention) as basic values for various hands-on projects, chosen by the participants.

#### **The project consists of two major components:**

**One:** The actual hands-on project, on location involving and training key persons, bringing the project into the community, groups or camps and engaging others to participate. The community or group in cooperation with the key persons choose the type of support desired. Psychological and skills training, financial and material support will be provided.

**Two:** In-depth psychological assessment and evaluation of survey statistics. The purpose of this component is to demonstrate how the combination of value and psychological principles with financial and material support and skills training leads to the raise of self esteem, self reliance, self help and prevention of violence.

#### **THE THEORY**

This model can be used to prevent individual and collective violence as well as working with traumatized populations. It consists of a combination of direct and indirect psychological interventions, material, and financial support as well as skills training leading to empowerment to choose, choice, and self help.

**Psychological processes:** The aim is to approach collective or group psychological behaviors, such as depression, apathy, fear, aggression, loss of self esteem, etc., using the values of **consciousness of joy, empowerment to choose, choice and self help**. By modeling such an inner attitude, the collective tensions or traumata can be approached through acceptance. Emotions connected can be made conscious and expressed and the related belief patterns eventually transformed. This in turn allows the underlying potential life energy, temporarily paralyzed, to be redirected and released. More, it empowers the individual as well as the group to translate this potential into creative action (communal activities, rebuilding, small business).

**Catalyzing** both, the individual and collective life energy, means to empower the individual, groups, as well as the community, and ultimately leading to self help, the **improvement of self esteem** is mandatory. The individual, groups and community are supported to choose to develop the projects appropriate to their needs of the moment.

**The actual projects** are based on the psychological principles outlined above which are modeled by the initiators. Their attitudes and values modeled determine the depth of the transformation the target group's collective may reach. **Initiators and participants work as**

**equals empowering one another.** This creates the foundation for healthy cooperation based on mutual respect and regard. And thus will affect the quality and depth of the various project processes. It facilitates empowerment, which precedes the reemergence of self esteem, individual and collective, and catalyzes both, social and economic growth and allows to say no to violence.

**Each action taken by the initiators or group is complemented by an equivalent input on the part of the individual, community or group.**

**Psychological assessment:** Once the life energy of the collective has been stimulated and redirected, the initiators can slowly withdraw from their involvement with the group. A continued support can be handed over to the appropriate local organization.

After the Tsunami in Aceh, a long term support, the rebuilding of every day life is needed. This project, supported by women's groups in Switzerland aims to develop small businesses in Aceh, with and for women.

How can the true needs of the traumatized women in Aceh, be honored and a long term support be given? How can the women take their own future in their hands? They know best what their needs and wants are. Therefore, several meetings will be held with several groups in which they can do brainstorming, bring their ideas and communicate already existing know how.

It is necessary, in addition to the emotional support provided (post trauma treatments) to engage the women in developing their own small business. They may choose their project and will be given financial support and know how. Self esteem increases and the result is self respect. Self reliance leads to a long term independence. The quality and values of joy, empowerment, choice leading to self help is the basis of all projects. Each participant, trained and supported by us, commits to pass on the gift she receives. Once her own small business is running, she can support with her know how, and if possible, financially another women, independently of us, to build her own small business.

Since the women choose their projects, they will be adopted to the locale. The production of environmentally friendly, natural products using local resources is emphasized.

The following projects, chosen by women in other areas of Indonesia, could be used:

A Coop, presently developed in Tanggayuda, Bali, produces soaps with flower, fruit and spices scents, in a carefully produced attractive package. The soap consists of coconut oil produced in homes, rice milk from fields around the village, honey from local bees and etheric oils.

A women's group, consisting of twenty, chose to develop individual projects. Each woman received a starting capital and a business training to develop their "small business", such as foodstall, roasting peanut, cooking food for the school children . a small shop selling cooking utensils carried on a bicycle, making rice cakes for the market, selling rice etc...

Another group of twelve women, wanting to engage in small business, created an association and chose to pool their initial capital and deposit it into a bank account. This money is lent to a woman with a good business idea and she must return it within a fixed period of time. Then the next woman receives the loan.

The women in Aceh will receive the space and possibility to use their own creativity, knowledge and potential to realize different projects. The duration of the project and the support of the women, will take place within the defined period of time.

The Aceh project is embedded in "Can Collective Violence be prevented?" which was initiated in 1999 in Bali, Indonesia, by the PsychoPolitical Peace Foundation, Switzerland.

The Aceh project is planned to be a cooperation of PsychoPolitical Peace Foundation, Switzerland, University of Surabaya, Java, the women's crisis center Savy Amira, Surabaya, Java.

### **Aceh, Sumatra, Indonesia "Women empowering women"**

#### **March – April 2005**

Our visit to Aceh began with an earthquake of 7,6 magnitude in neighbouring Padang. Aceh is a multi-ethnic muslim society. In Indonesia it is the only province that practices Shariah law. The word Aceh stands for A – Arabic, C – Chinese, E – European and H – Hindu.

The heat was unbearable. The dust, left over from the Tsunami, still covered many areas. The buildings which remained standing after the incredible wave of fifteen meters and the flood, were flattened by the latest earthquake of 9,0 magnitude. Most things built by human hands have been destroyed -- they are in pieces, the debris visible over a huge area. Much had already been cleared from the roads by the military which came from all over the world. On higher ground, the downtown area was busy and bustling with life, while the old flooded markets were empty.

Of the initial 250'000 inhabitants of Aceh, an estimated half of the population perished in the gigantic wave which engulfed an area of ten kilometres depth inland. Heavy boats were carried by the power of the water into residential areas where they seem totally misplaced.

The spirit of the Acehnese is remarkable. Known to be very proud people, they are showing incredible strength in dealing with this collective trauma affecting each and every family.

A young Acehnese, told us (Tiwi, my Javanese colleague and myself) he has the recurring post-trauma experience of hearing the incredible thunder and noise with which the wave swallowed all and everything. Most of the dead bodies were carried by the wave into the centre of town. With the other survivors, he was surrounded by thousands of dead bodies. He had to wait four days before help arrived bringing food and water. This first help came from American soldiers from the Abraham Lincoln airplane carrier. The city was drowning in one meter of mud when the wave receded.

Now, three months later, the initial tent camps are being replaced with wooden barracks where each family has one room.

Our project "women empowering women" took us first to camp Kajhu, in an area a few kilometres out of town, where a village once stood. We met with a group of fifteen women, to engage them in small business projects, applying an empowering approach. They work daily in the surrounding areas to clean the debris from the Tsunami.

We began with some relaxation exercises, then we invited the women to share what they wished to do, and tell us how they wanted us to support them. We introduced the photos of the Swiss valleys given by a sponsoring organization and tried to establish an emotional relationship between the two women's groups.

In spite of the total destruction of their village and its surroundings, the Acehnese women expressed a strong wish to remain in the place where they had roots and had lived before the event.

Eventually the women developed a plan for small businesses. The money was handed directly to the women, to empower them to purchase what they needed. There were many excited and happy faces. We also asked whether the men would allow them to keep the money. In Aceh, a conservative Muslim province practicing Shariah law, women's rights are not in the foreground. Women are subject to the decisions of men. The women were sure that they would keep the money and use it in the way they felt appropriate.

Some new ideas were introduced, including the notion that their small businesses could enable them to do something nice for themselves. This concept was new to the ladies and they needed time to reflect upon it.

Each of the women who received a financial gift made a commitment, in turn, to support another woman outside of the family at a later date.

The projects that we agreed upon were: selling fried banana, kiosk, several goats, including one male, ducks (salted duck eggs are considered a delicacy), a sewing machine and sewing materials for three girls, selling fish, selling clothes.

Insari, a local Acehnese field coordinator will be in contact with the women until our return in June.

The fifteen women in Camp Lampsenong underwent a similar process. I introduced relaxation and breathing exercises as a tool to relieve some of the stress and tension from the group trauma. Their chosen projects were similar to the other group.

The camps and barracks are a sober affair, set in land still full of debris, with water coming by truck and sanitary facilities not yet installed. We agreed to return to continue to expand the small business projects.

During this visit I was invited by a male peace maker circle to share my knowledge and views on prevention of violence and peace training. My presentation was received warmly and another meeting on the next trip is planned.

The need for support is immense, so many people having lost their loved ones and all their possessions.

You, too, can help with your contribution to support other groups of women and men beginning their own small business projects.

### **June – August 2005**

The journey by car to Meulaboh, from Medan on the East coast of Sumatra took over fourteen hours. It is a beautiful scenic drive through rubber plantations past gorgeous untouched beaches to Meulaboh, where the tsunami created havoc, reaching many miles inland and along the beaches.

Every small village I passed had its wooden shacks with military personnel and further down the road the police station. Each house as a sign of its faithfulness to the Indonesian government has to hoist the flag. Cars are stopped many times by each post at gunpoint and have to pay their toll, to be able to continue on their way.

Meulaboh was initially not accessible, due to the destruction of its only access road by the tsunami. After its repair, the latest earthquake made the Northern access impassable.

The project "Women empowering women" led to the IWAPI, an Indonesian business women association in Meulaboh, Aceh. Its president, Ibu Rosni, was twice elected as a member of the local parliament and decided she could be more effective outside of politics. I was welcomed warmly by her and her co-workers. The need for **small grassroots business** financing is immense. So many people who died took their skills of making handicrafts with

them. The aim now is to support those who are left to rebuild their lives. A midwife training center, Bumi Sehat, and its makeshift clinic, run by a Philippine-Canadian woman, is very popular. People were lining up to get acupuncture treatments.

We met with various women who produce marvellous Acehnese gold and silver embroidery and other products.

Two main interests crystallized: Information about health care and small business training and financing. Our contribution is a two day workshop on health issues for women, to be held next month by Tiwi – my colleague, a lecturer at Ubaya University, Java - in Meulaboh, with the members of the women's organisation and the tsunami survivors. I will train a group of women to run small businesses based on the values of Consciousness of joy, empowerment, choice and self reliance, during my next visit in October.

Banda Aceh, smoldering in 40 degree heat, was dusty and noisy. Our visits to the camps were well received. In **Lamseunong and Lambateung**, we gave our group relaxation and breathing exercises to reduce the post trauma stress they experience when hearing sudden noises and when being in strong winds, which bring about flashbacks and memories of the tsunami.

The **brick factory**, very much needed, is in its beginning stages and will eventually employ ten to fifteen women, who will share the profits.

Sanitary and water conditions are abominable. Tiwi presented the group with simple methods for making drinking water out of the unclean water that is not fit for consumption. The need for a water purifying system is of highest priority.

In **Lamseunong**, Miotia, a ten year old girl had severely twisted her arm. The camp women had made a compress of ingredients, which upon our arrival had hardened and could not be removed. It took over one hour to gently water and release the hardened compress. The child needed urgently to be treated. I searched for a doctor, but none was to be found. We arranged for Insari, our field coordinator, to get a doctor from the city the following day. The girl was in great pain whenever she was moved.

The women had requested a **volleyball court** where they could release some of their tension. I promised to provide volleyballs and a net. The men were charged with flattening the earth to provide a dusty court.

Finally we had some time to visit our **small business projects**. The four girls had purchased a sewing machine and a buttonhole machine and presented proudly their products and clothes. One goat had already had a baby and another one is pregnant. The other twelve goats seem healthy and growing nicely.

In the camp **Lambateung** (Katju) the women were waiting for us. They gave us a generous gift of duck eggs on a bed of salt. The ducks had several ducklings, the goats were pregnant, and the kiosk was stocked with what was needed.

The women received an additional sum of money. They asked if we could provide mattresses for them. We promised to do our best. They will enjoy going shopping together next time. The women were joyful and laughed heartily with us.

We left with a deep feeling of appreciation for one another.