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FIVE YEARS LATER, THE CHILDREN OF ACEH SMILE

Written by Ardi Sofinar on December 10, 2009

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1

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Editor's note: Ardi Sofinar is Communications & Public Relations Officer at the Indonesian Red Cross (Palang Merah Indonesia, PMI) in Aceh.

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100 smiling faces of Acehnese children are on display in Aceh to commemorate the tsunami that struck the country 5 years ago. Photo

Credit: Ardi Sofinar, Indonesian Red Cross

The Indonesian Red Cross, in collaboration with the Japanese non-government organization Merry Project, displayed hundreds of 'smiling umbrellas' in order to show the world that children in Aceh are smiling again after the tsunami struck the region five years ago.

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Umbrellas with Acehnese children are the result of the work of Merry Project, supported by Indonesian Red Cross (PMI) volunteers. These umbrellas could be seen throughout Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar at the end of last June.

During the project, there were no less than 850 pictures of children taken and the committee selected the best 100 photos, printed them on the umbrellas, and displayed them around the venue.

These umbrellas were also displayed on the ex-floating PLTD (or electric diesel power plant) ship in Punge Blang Cut, Banda Aceh, on Monday 8 November 2009. The floating electric diesel power plant ship has a dramatic story itself. On 26 December 2004, this 200-ton ship has been dragged away by a tsunami wave for four kilometres from Ulee Lhue Sea Port to the Banda Aceh inland, before it stranded on the village of Punge Blang Cut. The ship has remained there until now and **the government is planning to free this land from the owners** to build it as one of the country's tsunami memorial sites.

The chairman of the PMI Branch Banda Aceh, Qamaruzzaman Haqny said, **"This occasion is a symbol of Aceh's resilience after 5 years of tsunami.** This is a moment to deliver our gratitude to the world for the donors' assistances."

"Thank you for PMI's support through the youth volunteers for this event," said Koji Mizutani, head of the Merry Project. "We hope that we can spread those children smiles throughout the universe," he added. He also mentioned that the umbrellas will be handed over to the government for the 5-year tsunami commemoration in December.

