

Rum'eh: Using Film as a Way of Strengthening Peace in Aceh

About "Rum'eh" (Smile of Peace)

"Rum'eh" (Smile of Peace) aims at discussing issues related to the sustainability of peace in Aceh in the light and entertaining manner of the comedy genre. Most of all, it illustrates the importance of conflict resolution mechanisms in order to prevent community-level disputes to escalate and compromise the benefits of peace – economic development, improvements in infrastructure and living conditions etc. The starting point of the story is a dispute between Joni and Mando (two village thugs) on one side, and Raja and his gang (city thugs) on the other. When Raja is splashed as Joni and Mando ride through a puddle, a brawl breaks out. This small incident soon evolves into a more complex situation as other actors intervene. The conflict between the two gangs affects the living conditions and economic activities of the village.

The film promotes the use of traditional wisdom in resolving conflicts, as illustrated by the final hand shake between the two gang leaders (*peumat jaroe*). Through the lens of comedy, "Rum'eh" also goes over a number of key issues related to the peace process, such as the shortcomings of the reintegration effort and the ongoing difficulties in the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (KKR). The seriousness of its subject is nonetheless tempered by parallel storylines, such as the comical efforts undertaken by Joni to win the heart of the beautiful Yusniar (the female leading role), a relationship disapproved by the girl's father.

Rum'eh aims at reminding its audience of (i) the various positive aspects of peace, (ii) the many tragic consequences that even small-scale disputes can result in if not managed properly, (iii) the importance of mobilizing traditional wisdom in resolving conflicts, and (iv) the remaining items on the peace agenda that need to be implemented in order to ensure continued stability.

The project, commissioned by the World Bank's Conflict and Development Program and implemented by the Aceh NGO Forum (*Forum LSM Aceh*), stars the very popular Acehnese comedian troupe Empang Breuh.

An assessment of the movie's impact

A survey was conducted during the launching ceremony of "Rum'eh" in order to study the demographics of the audience and measure the impact and effectiveness of the movie. Of a total audience of 1,500 to 2,000, one thousand viewers were handed out questionnaires before the screening. After the screening, a total of 701 (70%) questionnaires were returned by the audience to the survey team, of which 652 were complete and properly filled out.

Respondents Profile

The selection of Syiah Kuala University as the launching venue resulted in a high level of homogeneity in the profile of respondents. Sixty-four percent of respondents were students in university, college or Islamic boarding school.

- Gender: males were dominant among the audience (74%).
- Age and Education: the majority of the respondents were educated young people. Eighty percent were 15 to 30 years old (Figure 1). Forty-four percent of respondents had graduated from high school and 33% were holders of university degrees (Figure 2).
- Occupation: apart from students (64%), the audience was mostly comprised of local government and other public servants (22%) and 6% were NGO/Donor agencies staff (Figure 3).

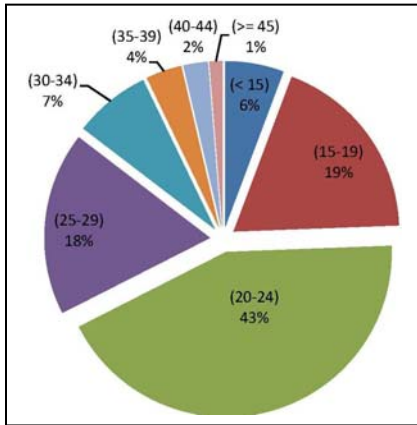


Figure 1. Age

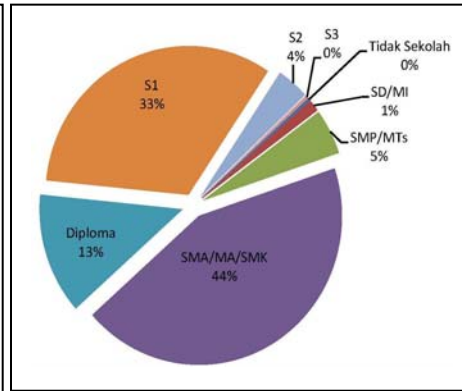


Figure 2. Education Level

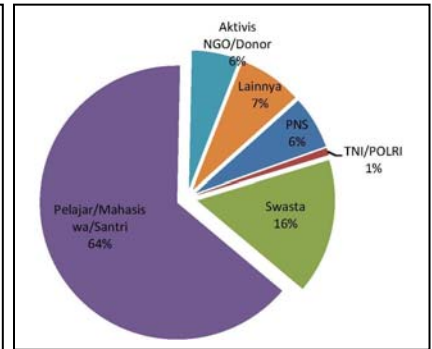
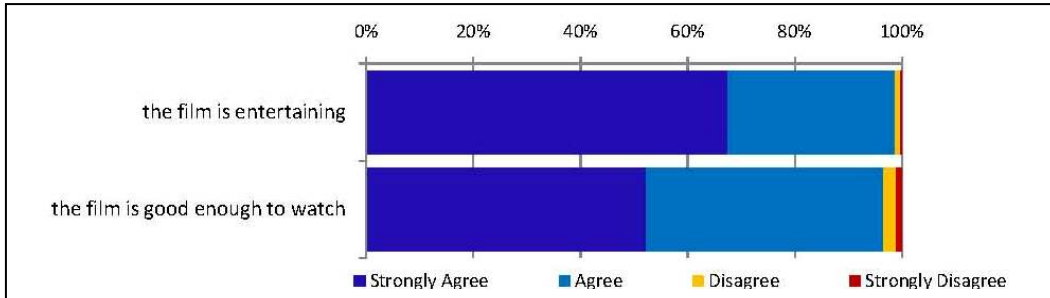


Figure 3. Profession

Survey Result

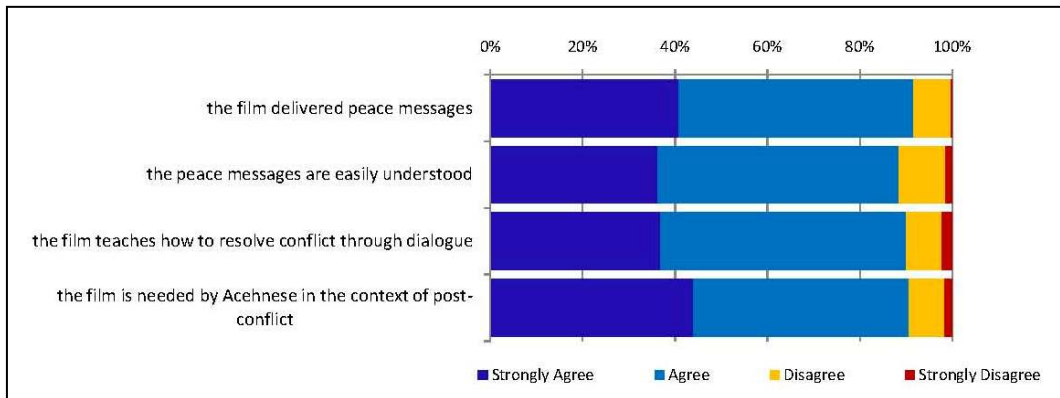
The survey was divided into three components: (i) cinematographic quality, (ii) message and substance, and (iii) the impact of the film on the viewers.

1. Cinematographic quality



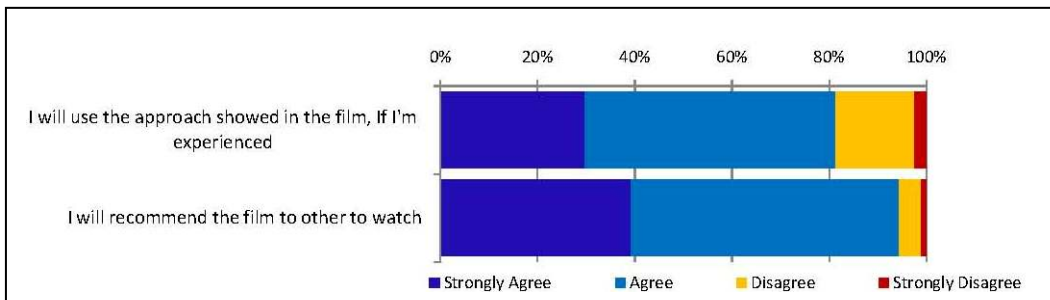
Almost 100% of the respondents thought the movie was entertaining and worth viewing.

2. Message and substance



Ninety-two percent of respondents understood that the movie conveyed a message about peace, and 88% thought the message was delivered in a way that is easy to understand. Consistently, about ninety percent identified the main purpose of the movie as teaching how to solve a conflict peacefully, and acknowledged that such films are needed in a post-conflict society such as Aceh.

3. Impact of the movie



Eighty-one percent of respondents said they were willing to apply the approach shown in the movie if they had to solve a conflict. Ninety-four percent said they would recommend the movie for others to watch.