

# Aceh Conflict Monitoring Update

1st – 31st January 2006

World Bank/DSF



As part of an analytical support program to the peace process, the Conflict and Community Development Program, within the World Bank Office Jakarta, is using a newspaper conflict mapping methodology to record and categorize all incidents of conflict in Aceh as reported in two provincial newspapers (Serambi and Aceh Kita). The Program publishes monthly updates and analysis of the data, complemented by fieldwork where possible, in both English and Indonesian.<sup>1</sup>

2006 started on a positive note with no GAM-GoI incidents reported in January. This is testimony to the commitment of GAM and the GoI, and indicates just how far the peace process has come in the past six months. Koalisi HAM, a local human rights monitoring NGO, also released positive news; reporting that human rights violations drastically declined in 2005. Further, separate reports indicate that the IDP issues has stabilised in the Aceh highlands. Similarly, a sign that communities are increasingly confident in the peace process—but also that times have been worse—villagers excavated and reburied 23 unaccounted for corpses in nine separate locations. In contrast, local level conflict continues to remain high, with 65 incidents reported in January. This month, incidents relating to tsunami aid declined with most local conflict relating to fuel price increase subsidies.

### ***For the first time no GAM-GoI incidents are reported***

For the first time since the newspaper monitoring began last year, no GAM-GoI related conflict incidents were reported in January (see Figure 1). It starts the year on a most positive note and indicates just how far we have come in the past 12 months. Only in June 2005 our two data sources reported 45 GAM-GoI incidents that resulted in 62 deaths, 23 injuries and the destruction of one building. Communities around Aceh acknowledge the difference in their day-to-day lives and express confidence in the peace process continuing.

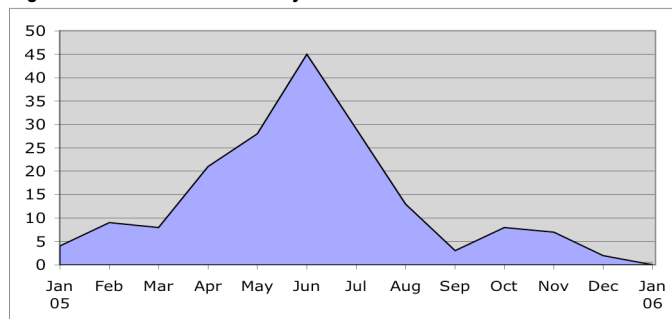
"Go to the coffee shop, and instantly you can feel the peace process is going on. Since the MoU, people like to sit in the coffee shop for 24 hours—from morning to late at night. [And] that's good for my business."

*Village Coffee Shop Owner, Alue Bu Jalan, Aceh Timur*

"This peace process is better then the last one. Last time, GAM members came back secretly. This time they are coming back publicly. Last time there were only promises on paper, however this time, both GAM and the Indonesian army have already exchanged information."

*Villager, Aceh Tengah*

**Figure 1: GAM-GoI incidents by month**



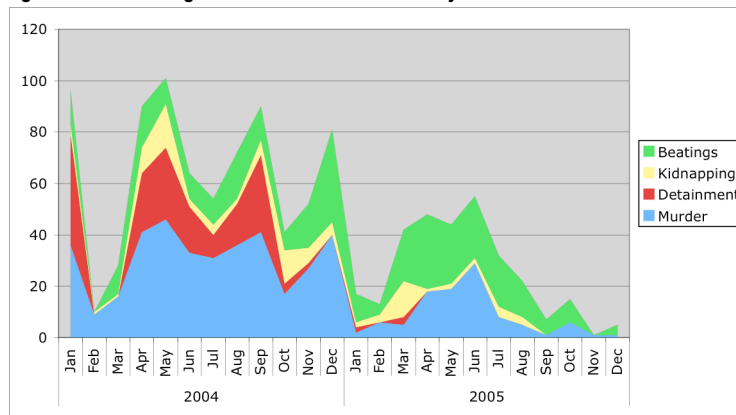
<sup>1</sup> There are limitations to using newspapers to map conflict: newspapers, particularly those published at the provincial level, do not pick-up all incidents, and there may be bias in reporting certain incidents. For more information see: Patrick Barron and Joanne Sharpe (2005). "Counting Conflict: Using Newspaper Reports to Understand Violence in Indonesia", *Indonesian Social Development Paper* No. 7. Jakarta: World Bank. This report, as well as the monthly monitoring updates, are available online at: [www.conflictanddevelopment.org](http://www.conflictanddevelopment.org). The dataset is available for those interested. Please contact Samuel Clark at: [sclark@wboj.or.id](mailto:sclark@wboj.or.id)

### ***Human rights violations have significantly declined in 2005 and since the MoU***

The local human rights NGO Koalisi HAM released more positive news in January. Their human rights monitoring network indicated that human rights violations significantly declined in 2005 compared to 2004 and have declined even further since the signing of the MoU in August (see Figure 2). They recorded 779 violent human rights cases in 2004 compared to only 311 in 2005, a decline of over 50 percent. Only 46 cases have been recorded since August 15.

Mashudi, a member of the Policy Research and Analysis team at Koalisi HAM, noted that as well as a reduction in numbers, the MoU has brought about a socio-political context that is more open and amenable to the investigation of human rights violations. However, he went on to express disappointment that despite this context, “not one case has been legally processed by the state.”

**Figure 2: Human Rights Violations: 2004-2005 by month**



Source: Koalisi HAM, Banda Aceh.

### ***The IDP humanitarian situation in Bener Meriah and Aceh Tengah stabilises***

In last month's Update we noted the return of conflict-affected IDPs to Bener Meriah and Aceh Tengah. Since then, the situation appears to have stabilized but concerns remain. Local governments in the two districts have encouraged IDPs to move from the camps to their villages of origin. A large number appear to have done so. There have been some reports of tensions over this return. In a number of cases in Kesol sub-district, there has been fighting between local youths and returning IDPs, and local leaders have refused to provide security guarantees. However, these cases have been isolated and remain small in scale. In most cases, IDPs have returned without incident.

However, a number of concerns remain. *First*, while initial needs have been met, it is unclear how long these will last. The Government's plan is to replace initial assistance with longer-term livelihoods programs and with a house building program. However, development programs relating to other parts of the peace process, such as the reintegration of GAM, have not progressed beyond design stage; it is unclear that programs for IDPs will be operational any quicker. *Second*, data for targeting purposes is poor. The situation is complicated by the fact that the IDP population is very fluid—many have returned to Pidie and Bireuen, and other newcomers have arrived. Further, while the December returnees were predominantly ethnic Acehnese, other Gayonese and Javanese IDPs have been arriving more quietly, and will also need to receive benefits. *Third*, tensions in central Aceh remain higher than in other parts of the province. Returnees and villagers express a strong desire for *peusijek* (traditional ceremony of welcome or forgiveness) to be held, but local elites have yet to organize these. While concerns about a humanitarian or security crisis have subsided, ongoing monitoring of the situation is essential.

### ***In January, villagers uncover 23 corpses in nine separate locations***

In January, Aceh Kita reported nine separate incidents of villagers uncovering a total of 23 unaccounted for corpses in four districts. As indicated in Table 1, the majority were uncovered in

Aceh Utara. That communities are willing to uncover mass graves is a further sign of community confidence in the peace process. The vast majorities of the corpses were found close to TNI posts and therefore it is not uncontroversial that communities excavate such graves. However, it was reported that in a number of locations, villagers were only prepared to uncover the graves with the presence of AMM representatives.

**Table 1: Corpses uncovered by villagers in January**

Kabupaten	Kecamatan	Village	Corpse(s)	Location
Aceh Utara	Paya Bakong	Alue Bungkoh	1	TNI post (100m)
		Blang Seupeng	2	Warehouse
	Matangkuli	Lueng Jalo	1	-
Lhokseumawe	Kuta Makmur	Bevak	2	TNI post (200m)
		Blang Mangat	Mane Kareeng	2
	Syamtalira Bayu	Lancok	11	TNI post (100m)
Aceh Timur	Rantau Seulamat	Bayeun	1	Plantation
Bener Meriah	Timang Gadjah	Timang Gajah Dua	2	Coffee plantation
		Kuala Relo	1	-
			<b>23</b>	

The Aceh Kita reports did not indicate whether communities hope for the prosecution of what are ostensibly human rights violations. Rather, most seem more concerned with providing their family members with proper resting places. A GAM representative claimed that there over 40 families in Aceh Timur alone who wish to uncover graves and provide a proper burial for family members lost during the conflict.

***Some tensions over interpretation of the MoU***

Although not sufficient to count as a conflict incident, Aceh Kita reported an argument between GAM and GoI over interpretation of the MoU at a socialization meeting held in Muara Tiga, Lhokseumawe. The Mayor accused GAM of “swerving” (*melenceng*) from the contents of the MoU. In response, GAM spokesperson, Ilyas Pase, apologized for any mistakes in their speech. Similarly, field research over the past few months has found that, unsurprisingly, there are various and often conflicting interpretations (and misunderstandings) amongst the community.

“The people don’t want to know too much about the MoU because afterwards they will have lots of thoughts. However, now there are some that say the MoU means independence. Some say it means federalism. Some say that if we can pick local political parties later, Aceh can be free.”

*Village Head, Aceh Utara*

“If you meet the community and especially GAM you need to explain to them that the true meaning of the MoU is that Aceh will remain part of Indonesia and that the NKRI (nationalist unity ideology) is accepted. If you tell them that they’ll listen. Some GAM refuse to acknowledge this and have been saying that the MoU does not necessarily say that.”

*Youth Leader / Anti-Separatist Leader, Aceh Selatan*

That people have varying opinions is not in itself a problem. More crucial is that those holding opinions have spaces and places to peacefully express and debate their opinions. The incident reported in Aceh Kita is an example of this; the AMM facilitated socialization forum provides an opportunity for GAM and GoI, as well as the community, to express and debate their views of the MoU. As the elections draw near it will be important to monitor these differences and potential cleavages, particularly if the election becomes a pro-GAM versus pro-GoI run-off.

***Vigilante incidents remain low in January***

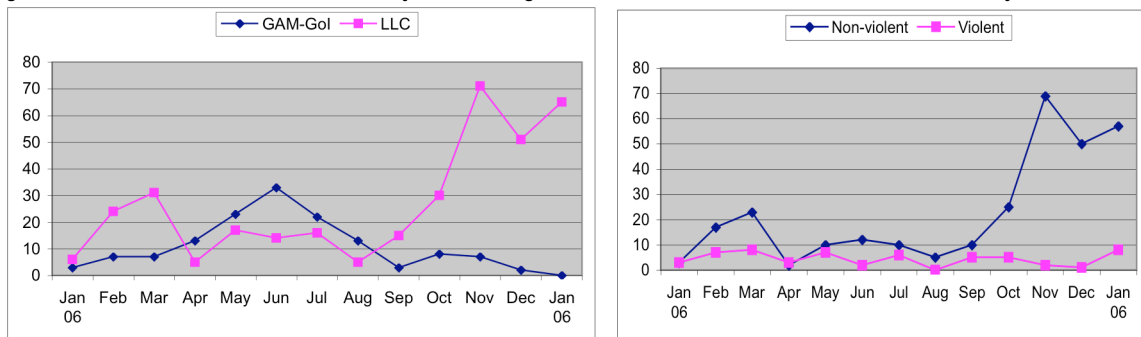
Two vigilante incidents were reported in January. This continues a positive trend of low vigilante incidents after a post-MoU spike in September. The incidents occurred in Lhokseumawe and Aceh Timur and resulted in three injuries. They both involved mob attacks on suspected criminals caught in the act. In Lhoksumawe, two would-be mobile phone thieves were caught and beaten when their

motorcycle overturned as they were making their getaway, while in Aceh Timur, a young man was mugged as he was allegedly kidnapping a child.

### Local level conflict increases

In January, local level conflict increased on last month to 65 incidents (see Figure 3). Like previous months, the majority of disputes were administrative in nature (70 percent), involving the distribution and provision of government services as well as humanitarian assistance. The number of violent local conflict incidents was slightly up to eight (see Figure 4), two of which were vigilante incidents (as described above).

**Figure 3: GAM-Gol and Local-level conflict by month** **Figure 4: Violent and non-violent local level conflict by month**



Source: Newspaper dataset

Of the 65 incidents, 45 were administrative-type disputes, 12 disputes related to the provision of tsunami assistance; 16 were incidents of corruption; and, 17 to other administrative services. There were no incidents related to the provision of post-conflict assistance. The administrative issue that most often resulted in conflict is the provision of assistance related to the increase in fuel prices; 13 incidents, nine of which involved (accusations of) corruption, were reported.

As the two cases examples below indicate (see Box 1), many local level conflict incidents relating to both the provision of tsunami assistance as well as government programs are the result of community dissatisfaction with local leaders. This highlights the importance of ensuring programs are socialized to the whole community and create, as far as possible, space for community participation in transparent delivery mechanisms. It also highlights the importance of complaint handling mechanisms.

#### Box 1: Case examples of violent local level conflict

- *Idi Rayeuk, Aceh Timur, 16 January 2006*

Serambi reported that the *Idi Rayeuk Panglima Laot* (customary fishing leader) was punched by a villager during a local government visit to a government-funded jetty construction project. The incident occurred as the *Panglima Laot* made a speech before community members and the government visitors extolling the project and stating that no one had been disadvantaged by the construction. The villager, who was engaged in a dispute over the value of compensation for land claimed by the project, violently disagreed. The two were quickly separated and no further action was reported.

- *Mutiara Timur, Pidie, 21 January 2006*

Serambi reported that a disgruntled villager attacked the *Geuchik* (Village Head) of Reubat village because he had not been registered to receive the government's direct cash assistance (BLT) as part of the fuel rise compensation program. The *Geuchik* later explained that the man, aged 30, was still considered the responsibility of his parents (who were receiving the fuel subsidy) as he did not have separate status as the head of his household. The man was quickly restrained by nearby villagers, and the matter reported to the police.