

# Aceh Conflict Monitoring Update

1st – 30th September 2006

World Bank/DSF



As part of an analytical support program to the peace process, the Conflict and Development Program, within the World Bank Office Indonesia, 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>

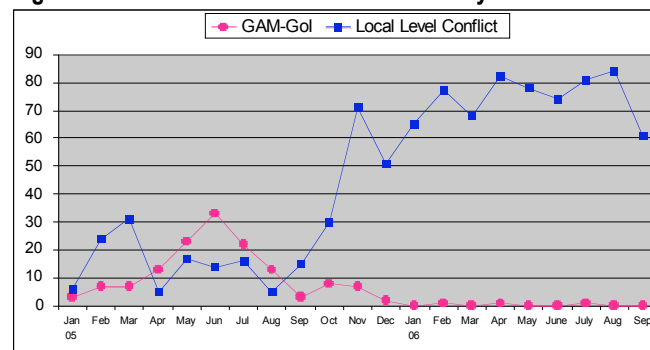
Continuing the positive trend of very low GAM-GoI-related conflict, no incidents were reported in September. However, preliminary fieldwork conducted by UNDP and the World Bank indicated significant *pilkada* (local election) tensions, particularly in Bener Meriah where elite politics, GAM, ethnic, and anti-separatist allegiances are combining in potentially dangerous ways. A new IOM-Harvard-Unsyiah psychological assessment of certain high-conflict communities highlights the high levels of violence experienced and the resulting mental health impacts, suggesting profound policy implications.

This month's update includes a special focus on local level conflict relating to aid projects. Local level conflict declined to 61 incidents, of which 27 related to aid programming. Most disputes involved the selection of aid recipients, land ownership issues, contractor problems, or allegations of corruption. It is worrying that five of these aid-related conflicts involved violence, the highest monthly total on record in our database. The number of demonstrations rose to 19 in September. With the exception of the BRR protests, which are summarised below, all were peaceful. Most positively, vigilante incidents dropped to two.

### ***There were no GAM-GoI incidents reported in September***

No GAM-GoI incidents were reported in September (see Figure 1). Since the beginning of the year only three GAM-GoI incidents have been recorded. Indeed, one year after the MOU GAM-GoI incidents are no longer a prevalent form of conflict in Aceh, although tensions remain. It will remain important to monitor this form of conflict for its potential to interact with and co-opt local level conflict.

**Figure 1: GAM-GoI and local level conflicts by month**



<sup>1</sup> There are limitations to using newspapers to map conflict, for more analysis of the methodology 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 Blair Palmer at: [bpalmer@worldbank.org](mailto:bpalmer@worldbank.org).

In the June/July Update we reported on a serious incident between GAM and GoI in Payo Bakong, Aceh Utara.<sup>2</sup> The issue was discussed at the 40<sup>th</sup> and 41<sup>st</sup> CoSA (Commission on Security Arrangements) meetings. At the 42<sup>nd</sup> meeting on 16 September the case was wrapped up with the following outcomes: the police will undertake a standard criminal investigation; support of disciplinary actions already taken; and, the GoI will provide appropriate compensation to the victims and community by way of reconciliation.

***Preliminary fieldwork indicates highest pilkada tensions in central Aceh highlands***

Preliminary fieldwork carried out in September identified a number of *pilkada*-related challenges and tensions that are beginning to emerge. Most seriously, tensions are mounting between candidates and their supporters in the Aceh highlands. These tensions are most pronounced in Bener Meriah where the history of GAM-GoI conflict, ethnic distinctions, and personal grievances are converging and being magnified by electoral competition.<sup>3</sup> Two of the candidates are widely known to be former anti-separatist leaders who cooperated during the vertical conflict but are running separately, finding separate bases of support within the former anti-separatist groups. In addition, one GAM/KPA-supported candidate is running. This has resulted in high tensions within anti-separatist groups as well as between these groups and GAM/KPA. Facilitated dialogue may be required to diffuse tensions; one anti-separatist candidate has threatened to murder those former colleagues supporting the other anti-separatist candidate.

Less drastic, a number of more technical problems are delaying preparations for the elections. In almost all locations *Panwas* (the Election Supervisory Committee) and in some locations KIP (the Independent Election Commission) have not yet received funds from the local government. In most locations these crucial electoral institutions are currently using the private funds of commission members in order to begin their activities. However, in Aceh Tenggara the local *Panwas* commissioners have refused to begin operations with their own funds. All offices are confident they will be ready for elections, however these funding delays will put pressure on what is already a tight timeline and could create more serious problems should the legitimacy of the elections be challenged over their hasty implementation. Lastly, there is strong evidence that voter education and election socialization is lacking, particularly in rural areas. Most socialization activities are yet to get underway and the electorate seems largely unprepared to critically navigate the rhetoric of campaigning, leaving them potentially vulnerable to money politics and other more dubious means of mobilization.

***New IOM-Harvard-Unsyiah report highlights significant psychosocial impacts on population***

The IOM, Harvard Medical School and University of Syiah Kuala psychological assessment of Acehese communities indicates that people have experienced high levels of violence and traumatic events.<sup>4</sup> The study of selected high-conflict sub-districts in Pidie, Bireuen, and Aceh Utara found this was the case for both men and women, although the types and intensity of events vary. 56% of men and 20% of women report having been beaten, 36% of men and 14% of

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<sup>2</sup> See Aceh Conflict Monitoring Update – June/July, available at [www.conflictanddevelopment.org](http://www.conflictanddevelopment.org).

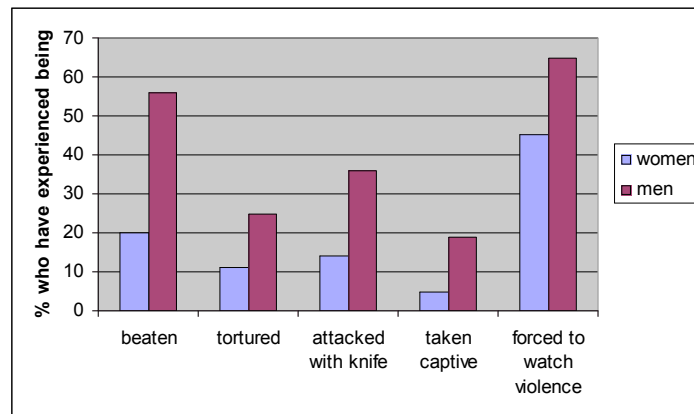
<sup>3</sup> Unlike others parts of Aceh that are mostly ethnically homogenous (i.e. Aceh Besar, Pidie) or ethnically heterogenous (i.e. Aceh Tamiang, Aceh Tenggara, Aceh Selatan), the highlands are divided into three ethnic groups: the Gayo, the Javanese and the Acehese. These ethnic distinctions became hardened during the conflict and tensions have intensified since the MoU, most notably when thousands of ethnically Acehese IDPs began to return in December 2005. See the Conflict Monitoring Update for December 2005, available at [www.conflictanddevelopment.org](http://www.conflictanddevelopment.org).

<sup>4</sup> For those interested in obtaining the full report titled *Psychosocial Needs Assessment of Communities Affected by the Conflict in the Districts of Pidie, Bireuen Aceh Utara*, please contact Marianne Kearney from IOM at: [mkearney@iom.int](mailto:mkearney@iom.int).

women report having been attacked with a knife, 25% of men and 11% of women report having been tortured, 19% of men and 5% of women report having been taken captive, and 65% of men and 45% of women report having been forced to watch violence against others (see Figure 2).

Perhaps most significant is the finding that people are still suffering from significant mental health problems as a result of their experiences and their current struggle to find livelihoods and meet basic needs. Using internationally accepted protocols, the assessment found that 65% of the population ranked high on depression symptoms, 69% on anxiety symptoms, and 34% on PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) symptoms. These are very high figures. Indeed, the report concludes that psychological symptoms in the Aceh population rank on par with the likes of Bosnia and Afghanistan. Given that little programmatic attention has focused on addressing psychological problems, these findings have serious policy implications. They indicate not only the need to expedite the provision of economic and livelihood programs in order to reduce today’s burden, but also a clear need for mental health services to address the psychological effects of past traumatic events.

**Figure 2: Self-reported exposure to violence among Aceh population**



Source: IOM Psychosocial Assessment.

***Local level conflict declines in September***

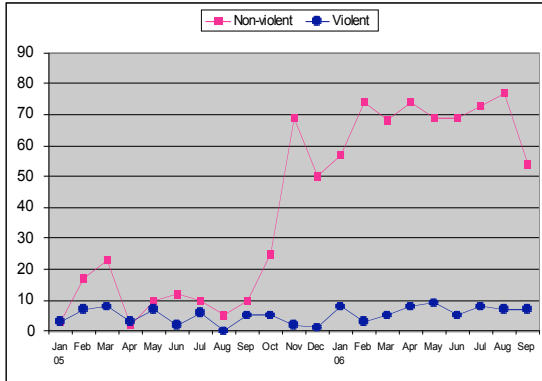
Local level conflict declined to 61 incidents in September, the lowest level for 2006. It is difficult to determine whether this decline is an exception or indicative of a positive trend; it did not seem to be due to the beginning of Ramadhan as cases occurred throughout the month. The number of violent incidents remained constant with seven cases (see Figure 3). These included two vigilante attacks, a rampage by “former GAM members” dissatisfied with undelivered housing assistance, a violent demonstration at BRR (Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency) (see Box 1), a brawl over a micro-credit project run by a local NGO, and several arson cases involving the destruction of buildings built with tsunami aid assistance.

***Almost half of local level conflict incidents are related to the provision of aid***

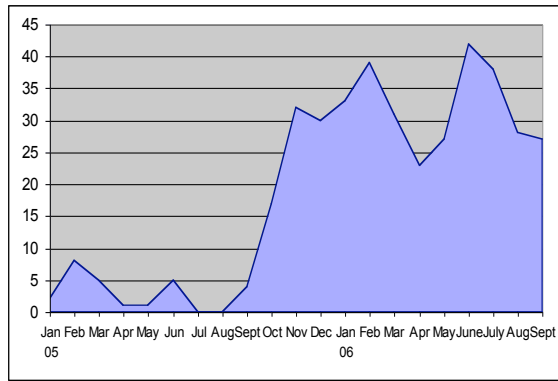
Of 61 incidences of local level conflict, 27 (44%) were related to aid programming (see Figure 4). These relate primarily to tsunami assistance (22 cases, 80%), but also to post-conflict reintegration and other government assistance programs. More worrisome, this month’s aid-related conflicts account for the majority (five of seven) of violent incidents. This is a significant

increase in violent aid-related incidents as only eight have been recorded since data collection began last year.<sup>5</sup>

**Figure 3: Violent and non-violent local level conflicts by month**



**Figure 4: Aid-related conflicts by month**



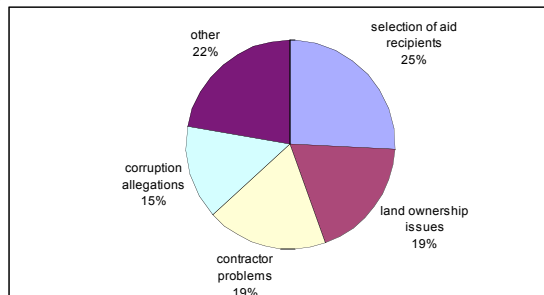
**Box 1: IDP demonstrations at BRR result in violence**

Both Aceh Kita and Serambi reported two related demonstrations at BRR in Banda Aceh. On 11 September the Inter-Barrack Communication Forum (FORAK) coordinated a demonstration of about 1000 IDPs. The FORAK director, Panji Utomo, reportedly distributed leaflets outlining 13 demands for IDP assistance and warned BRR that if they were not addressed within two days, a larger demonstration would be held.

On 19 September a follow-up demonstration was held. Through negotiations between BRR and IDP representatives, a statement was prepared committing BRR to improve barrack conditions. However, the negotiations broke down when BRR reportedly refused to channel funds to IDPs through FORAK's bank account. The demonstrators stayed overnight at BRR and the next day, when police attempted to move them, violence broke out. Police later arrested Panji Utomo; he was subsequently charged with anarchy and inciting hatred, and jailed. The Banda Aceh police chief said this case is a reminder that it is commendable to struggle for people's rights, but not to exploit the people for undesirable ends.

Given the primacy of this type of local level conflict and its increasing propensity for violence, it is worth highlighting in more detail some of the grievances raised (see Figure 5). For the month of September, the most common issues raised included: selection of aid recipients (7 cases), land ownership issues (5 cases), contractor problems (5 cases), and corruption allegations (4 cases). Several of the more illustrative examples of each type are given below.

**Figure 5: Breakdown of aid-related conflicts**



<sup>5</sup> In response to these significant developments, the World Bank will, beginning next month, carry out in-depth qualitative research on the interaction between tsunami aid and conflict, the results of which will be summarised in this Update.

### **1. Selection of aid recipients**

- *20 September, Samudra Geudong, Aceh Utara.* Serambi reported that two cattle corrals were burned down, allegedly due to dissatisfaction about who was selected to receive the BRR-funded assistance.
- *15 September, Labuhan Haji Timur, Aceh Selatan.* Serambi reported that over a dozen people (identified as former GAM) went on a rampage, looting seven houses, allegedly due to their disappointment at not receiving housing assistance themselves.
- *29 September, Jangkabuya, Pidie.* Serambi reported that a brawl erupted over a project offering credit for business capital – at least five were injured, and the office of the implementing NGO was damaged. Dozens had gathered for training related to the project, but when it was revealed that only five people would receive credit in the first round of implementation, tensions mounted, a heated argument ensued, and violence erupted.

Tensions regarding the selection of recipients are likely to be widespread, but need not escalate into violence. Selection procedures should be transparent and thoroughly socialized. Conflict-sensitive program planning, community participation in selection of recipients, and robust complaint-handling mechanisms will all help to prevent such escalation.

### **2. Land ownership issues**

- *13 September, Panga, Aceh Jaya.* Serambi reported that a villager claimed that four aid houses built by a foreign NGO had been erected on his land without his permission, and demanded that they be removed.
- *24 September, Meuraxa, Banda Aceh.* Serambi reported that four aid houses were built on top of a cemetery, with another 24 houses due to be added. The claimed owner demanded that the houses be removed. This case was further complicated when another family came forward claiming that the cemetery was theirs.
- *25 September, Leupung, Aceh Besar.* Both Aceh Kita and Serambi reported that a group of villagers blockaded the Banda Aceh-Meulaboh road, demanding to be paid the compensation for their land which had been promised them by the district government.

Land issues are ubiquitous and complex, and it can be expected that they will continue to delay aid projects, increase budget needs, and become sources of conflict. Risks can, however, be minimized. For example, projects should follow standard procedures for dealing with land claims and conduct thorough public consultations prior to implementation.

### **3. Contractor problems**

- *29 September, Rusep Antara, Aceh Tengah.* Serambi reported that villagers protested the presence of PT Gayotama, a contractor due to build a road in their area. The protesters stated that the contractor had a very bad reputation for quality, and asked that BRR reconsider the allocation of the tender.
- *2 September, Trienggadeng, Sigli.* According to Serambi, villagers claimed that their signatures were forged in order that the contractor could receive its payment. Their houses were unfinished and the contractor had left the area.
- *Lhokseumawe.* In September Serambi published several articles regarding an ongoing dispute between Save the Children USA (STC-USA) and three contractors who they hired to build aid houses. The contractors were reportedly pursuing legal avenues against STC-USA in order to claim the remainder of their payment, while STC-USA refused to pay unless the contractors completed the construction according to the contract.

Beyond ensuring that proper contracts are in place, there needs to be better information coordination between BRR and other parties involved in development assistance in Aceh, regarding how to conduct business with contractors and the performance of particular contractors.

#### 4. *Corruption allegations*

- *10 September, Muara Batu, Aceh Utara.* Serambi reported that 19 tsunami-affected households were required to pay Rp.250,000 each to the National Electric Company (PLN) after having their electricity installed, even though according to a public information campaign there were to be no costs to the public.
- *22 September, Baitussalam, Aceh Besar.* Aceh Kita reported that a local police chief had allegedly asked villagers for a share of the beef they had received as aid from the Canadian Red Cross; the villagers protested by bringing three live cows to the police station. Notably, Serambi reported that on the next day the police chief in question was removed from his position, and the villagers received an official apology.

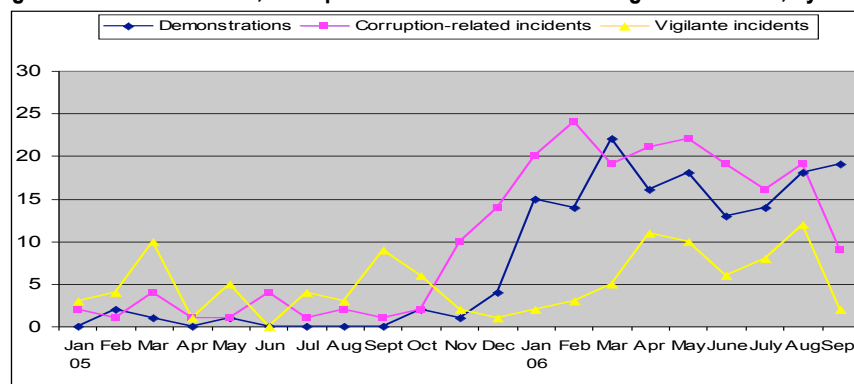
Aid recipients should be encouraged to report cases of corruption to the appropriate authorities for further action, and projects should include a socialization component regarding specific mechanisms for dealing with such grievances.

#### *Demonstrations on a range of issues increase in September*

Demonstrations were held on at least 19 occasions in September (see Figure 6). The reasons for the demonstrations varied from villagers demanding the dismissal of their village head to factory workers demanding minimum wage from their employer, demonstrations over corruption, law and order, and dissatisfaction over the pace of aid delivery. Demonstrations were largely aimed at government agencies, including the local parliament, Governor's office, the police, and BRR. Most were conducted peacefully, with only one (at BRR) turning violent.

The number of demonstrations may increase in the near future; it is quite possible that a liberal political climate will facilitate an increase in this method of pursuing grievances. Labor disputes may increase as employees organise in ways not possible during the pre-MOU political climate. An increase in demonstrations would not necessarily be a negative development. Peaceful demonstrations, as non-violent expressions of disputes, can facilitate the resolution of conflict. However, if a higher proportion of demonstrations turn violent, this would signal a lack of trust in responsible authorities and suggest that disputes were not being taken seriously.

**Figure 6: Demonstrations, corruption-related incidents and vigilante attacks, by month**



#### *No “moral vigilante” attacks reported in September*

Last month we drew attention to “moral vigilante attacks”; no such incidents were recorded in September. This is a positive development. In fact only two vigilante attacks of any type were recorded in September (see Figure 6). If this figure remains low, it can be taken as an encouraging indication that personal grievances and moral differences of opinion are being pursued through other means.