

Aceh Conflict Monitoring Update

1st – 28th February 2007

World Bank/DSF



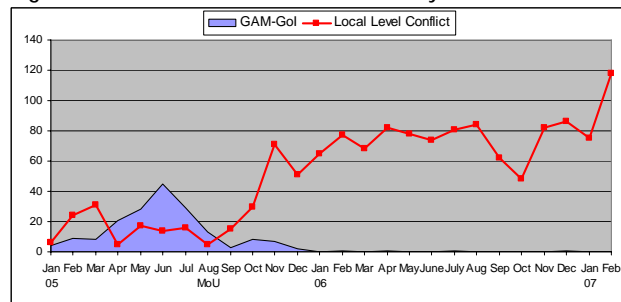
As part of an analytical support program to the peace process, the Conflict and Development Program, within the World Bank Office Indonesia, is using a newspaper conflict mapping methodology to record and categorize all incidents of conflict in Aceh as reported in two provincial newspapers (Serambi and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

While the absence of GAM-GoI incidents this month continues to show the success of the peace process, three incidents highlight tensions between organizations which have their antecedents in past vertical conflict cleavages. The distribution of reintegration funds has also led to tensions within organizations such as GAM and the former anti-separatist fronts. The February figures for local level conflict show a large jump to 118 cases, the highest recorded since the beginning of the dataset (January 2005). The number of violent incidents also increased to 20. This Update discusses three prominent forms of local level conflict. First, following the December *pilkada* (local elections), post-*pilkada* disputes have highlighted weaknesses in the implementation of the elections. Second, domestic violence and *khalwat* (suspected sexual contact between non-married individuals) arrests are highlighted, showing the need for efforts to protect women's rights. Third, aid-related conflicts continue, and this month a number of them had a religious aspect. This signals the need for more discussion on religious expression and its importance in Acehese identity.

No GAM-GoI incidents, but internal tensions visible among former armed groups

Following the pattern of the past year, no direct GAM-GoI conflict incidents were reported in February (see Figure 1).² Over the past several months, we have tracked new forms of conflict in Aceh that continue to manifest past conflict cleavages. This month three incidents involving the security forces and several former anti-separatist groups highlight ongoing tensions between these groups and the wider community, as well as within these groups themselves.

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



¹ 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, is available online at: www.conflictanddevelopment.org. The dataset is available for those interested; please contact Blair Palmer at bpalmer@worldbank.org.

² 'GAM-GoI incidents' are conflict incidents where members of the two sides clash violently in the course of their roles as armed forces.

- *Police challenge WH (Wilayatul Hisbah, or “shari’ah police”), Banda Aceh, January 29th*
Last month we reported that ‘sturdy men’ forcibly released two women arrested by a WH patrol. New information reported in February indicated that the perpetrators had claimed to be Banda Aceh police officers. WH officers told Serambi newspaper that they frequently face intimidation and often armed threats in their work, suggesting that there is resistance and opposition to the WH amongst security forces and/or former GAM combatants. The head of the Banda Aceh police said that he would impose severe sanctions if any of his staff had taken part in the attack, but it was not clear whether an investigation was in fact underway. A DPRD member later called on police to investigate, adding that “*those who feel uncomfortable and allergic to the implementation of syariat Islam*” should “*leave Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam immediately*”.
- *Youths attack anti-separatist office, Bireuen, February 2nd*
Serambi reported that a group of young men on motorcycles forcibly entered, vandalized and stole a computer and motorcycle from the office of FORKAB (Citizen’s Communication Forum), a former anti-separatist front in Bireuen.
- *PETA protest about reintegration funds, Takengon, Aceh Tengah, February 12th*
Hundreds of members of PETA (Defenders of the Homeland), a former anti-separatist front, demonstrated at the Aceh Tengah DPRD and demanded that the head of PETA, Syukur Kobath (who also ran in the recent district elections), manage reintegration funds for the anti-separatist members fairly and transparently.

Although relatively minor, these incidents suggest that past conflict cleavages, such as between anti-separatist groups and those who vandalized the FORKAB office, continue to exist, with conflict between parties taking new forms. The last incident from Aceh Tengah indicates that the distribution of reintegration funds is causing significant tensions *within* eligible organizations as well. These tensions are not restricted to anti-separatist groups; in Aceh Barat Daya, for example, the distribution of reintegration funds appears to have resulted in a local leadership split within GAM. Distributing reintegration funds in a timely and effective manner will be an essential part of building a sustainable peace in Aceh, but the flow of such funds is leading to tensions within the organizations receiving the funds, as well as protests about the methods of distribution by BRA. This month there were several conflicts in Aceh Utara over the BRA-KDP distribution mechanism for assistance for conflict victims; next month’s Update will include a discussion of reintegration funding in more depth, including these events.

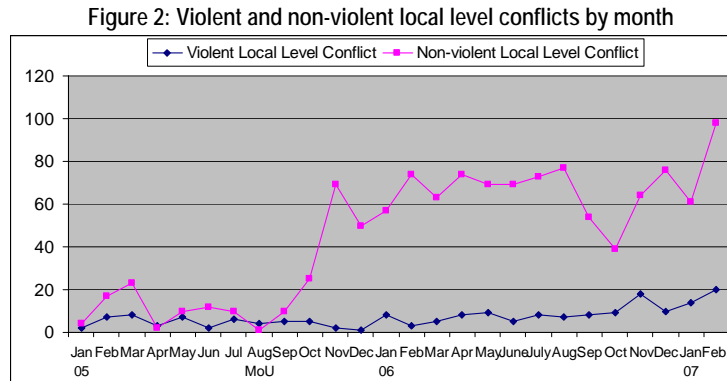
Huge rise in local level conflict

The February figures for local level conflict show a large jump to 118, the highest number recorded since the beginning of the dataset (see Figure 1).³ The distribution of conflicts between administrative, political, resource-related, and vigilante incidents remains very similar to last month, indicating a general rise in all forms of conflict this month. There are several possible explanations for this rise. One, following the *pilkada*, the newspapers have now turned to other news, including many reports of conflicts. Two, many conflicts not pursued during the *pilkada* period are now being dealt with. Three, the new political climate in Aceh has empowered citizens to contest various injustices that they see around them, leading to an increase in recorded conflicts. While coming months will provide a clearer picture of which explanation holds most

³ The January figures have been adjusted to include conflicts occurring in January but reported in February.

power, it is likely that the latter explanation will hold at least some weight, a sign of both the potential and the dangers inherent in Aceh’s post-conflict transition.

The number of violent incidents also increased this month, rising from 14 to 20 (see Figure 2). There were nine arrests for *khalwat* conducted by vigilantes⁴, two mob beatings of suspected thieves, three conflict-related fistfights, one kidnapping over debts, two cases of vandalism of offices, and three incidents of domestic violence.



The remainder of this Update discusses three prominent forms of local level conflict: election-related conflicts, the issue of domestic violence and women’s safety, and conflicts related to aid projects.

Pilkada conflicts: budgetary disputes, court cases dismissed, and Aceh Tenggara deadlocked

The December *pilkada* elections were certainly a success in the sense that political competition so soon after a peace agreement did not result in violent conflict. Although the elections were carried out mostly peacefully, the election implementation suffered from a number of weaknesses in its institutions, primarily KIP (the Elections Committee) and Panwas (the Election Supervisors). This month several disputes over budgets drew attention to problems such as the lack of socialization (caused by late delivery of budgetary funds) and poor performance or lack of neutrality on the part of election oversight officials.⁵

- On February 19th, 12 days before the second round *pilkada* in Aceh Barat Daya, the district head of KIP made a statement protesting that none of their Rp. 3.7 billion (approximately US\$ 420,000) budget had been delivered. He threatened that if the funds did not materialize in two days, the March 4th election would not be held. Even if the money arrived, KIP would not be able to carry out certain socialization and training activities.
- In late February, Panwas Aceh Tengah’s budget request to the local DPRD for a further Rp. 600 million (approximately US\$ 67,000) in funds led to a dispute. A DPRD member commented to Serambi that the request was improper, since, firstly, the *pilkada* was over and Panwas had completed its tasks, and secondly, “they used up much funding, but their contribution to the success of the *pilkada* was very small”. In fact, he went on to note

⁴ We classify ‘sweeping’ and arrests by vigilantes as violence even when the victims are not beaten, since the perpetrators do not have the legal right to invade homes and make arrests.

⁵ These problems and others were discussed in the *Pilkada Updates* (available online at: www.conflictanddevelopment.org), which were produced for the World Bank/UNDP *Aceh Elections Study*. This study has recently been completed and the final report will be previewed here when available.

that Panwas Aceh Tengah did not contribute *anything* to the *pilkada*, and that it was just a burden on the regional budget.

- Infighting amongst members of Panwas Aceh Barat at DPRD hearings exposed the former's incompetence. The hearings, held in order to deliberate Panwas's Rp. 600 million (US\$ 67,000) budget request for the second round *pilkada* on March 4th, led to debate about why Panwas did nothing during the first round. In response, rather than describing what they did do, the head and members of Panwas blamed each other. Serambi quoted one Panwas member as saying "*I didn't want to discuss these internal problems...but since the head always blames the members, I am forced to reveal the head's failings...we have proof. But it is not good to reveal those mistakes, including the ones concerning funds, because this relates to the [name of the] institution of Panwas.*"

The member's quote above suggests that accountability over funds, or responsibility to voters to carry out their oversight tasks, is not taken seriously by many Panwas members; rather, the failure to act and the misuse of funds are considered "internal" issues which only become known if relations between staff break down. This kind of attitude corresponds well with allegations that in some districts Panwas was either inactive or partisan.

There is an apparent contradiction in the attitudes of election officials in their treatment of election "irregularities". On the one hand, there is widespread recognition (which is also shared by community members) that infractions occurred, but on the other hand investigations and action by KIP and Panwas have been very minimal. It seems that officials were concerned that investigating or condemning infractions might lead to conflict. Some officials operate under a "sacrificing justice for peace" mentality, to the point that almost no challenges or complaints are investigated energetically unless there is heavy political pressure to do so.⁶ While there are cases where such considerations are appropriate, it is questionable whether turning a blind eye to electoral abuses will in fact support long-term sustainable peace or simply sow the seeds of future dissatisfaction and political grievance. Further, the notion of sacrificing electoral quality for peace can be used as an excuse to enable partisan officials not to deal with certain incidents.

Perhaps related to the public perception that KIP and Panwas did not thoroughly investigate infractions, there have been a number of legal challenges to the results of the *Bupati* (District Head) races. So far, almost all court decisions have gone the way of the defendant; that is, no winning candidates have been disqualified, and no calls for a repeat election have been granted by the High Court in Banda Aceh. One by one the cases have been dismissed, for a variety of reasons, including lack of evidence, improper timing (charges relating to election day must be launched within three days), and incorrect jurisdiction (criminal cases like those involving money politics must be launched at the district level, while civil cases contesting KIP's *Bupati* results must go to the provincial level).

The two most highly contested districts have been Aceh Tengah, where a number of street-level incidents have occurred, and Aceh Tenggara, where seemingly partisan institutional wrangling has led to a deadlock. Indeed, the results in the latter have still not been released, and reports in February indicate that tensions remain high in both districts (see Box 1). The problems in these districts were likely exacerbated by the institutional weaknesses described above.

⁶ World Bank fieldwork for Aceh Elections Study, December 2006.

Box 1: Legal challenges in Aceh Tengah and legal confusion in Aceh Tenggara

The original legal challenge launched by losing candidates in Aceh Tengah was dismissed by the Banda Aceh provincial court on February 12th. The case had charged that the winning candidate Nasaruddin had involved government officials in his campaign, from village heads to *Camats* (Sub-District Heads) to higher level bureaucrats, and that ballots marked for Nasaruddin had been discovered before polling started. This case was dismissed on the basis that the plaintiffs had only mentioned the *Bupati* candidate Nasaruddin and not his running mate Djauhar Ali, and that the case was launched before KIP Aceh Tengah had 'officially' announced the results. On February 26th, the plaintiffs submitted another case against KIP Aceh Tengah, charging that the *pilkada* was not conducted according to regulations, citing pre-marked ballots, manipulated vote tallies, and vote tabulation without witnesses present.

Aceh Tenggara (Agara) is still deadlocked. KIP NAD pressured KIP Agara to announce the results, and in response DPRD Agara sued KIP NAD for Rp. 1 billion (approximately US\$ 108,000) for 'intervention'. In February a number of DPRD members protested this court action, saying that it was launched by the DPRD head alone, without discussion or their support. They cited a political conspiracy, and mentioned that the lawyer who launched the case is also the lawyer for 'one of the candidates' (implying the losing incumbent who desires a repeat election) and for KIP Agara. Meanwhile the Department of Internal Affairs issued a letter reminding KIP Agara and the DPRD not to break the law, and asking KIP Agara to announce the results immediately. The provincial DPRD has also pressured the provincial government to resolve the case.

Women endangered by both domestic violence and khalwat arrests

In conflict and post-conflict situations women are particularly vulnerable. This month we highlight two issues which demonstrate this vulnerability in post-MoU Aceh: domestic violence and vigilante arrests for *khalwat*.

Domestic violence is a conflict issue in that first, conflicts often place women in situations where they are more vulnerable to domestic violence (as well as other forms of abuse), and second, conflict is associated with stress and with unemployment, and both of these factors can contribute to high levels of domestic violence. Domestic violence usually remains largely unreported to legal authorities and the media, and is thus notoriously difficult to measure. However, given the high levels of trauma among the Aceh population⁷, the increased vulnerability of women in places like IDP camps⁸, and the high level of unemployment in Aceh currently, it is likely that the incidents described below are only the tip of the iceberg.

Box 2 describes three cases of domestic violence this month, plus two incidents at Muslim boarding schools (*pesantren*) involving violence experienced by young live-in students. Women are not the victims in all of these cases. However, the variety of expressions of domestic violence should serve to demonstrate that it can affect anyone, and that women are especially vulnerable. Donors should consider supporting NGO efforts to reduce domestic violence through education campaigns, victim support, and legal empowerment.

⁷ See the results of the IOM psycho-social survey, described in the September Conflict Monitoring Update.

⁸ A 2006 report by the National Commission on Violence Against Women, entitled *As Victims and Survivors: Experiences and Voices of Aceh Refugees on Abuse and Discrimination* (Special Rapporteur for Aceh, April 2006), describes a number of forms of abuse faced by women in IDP camps, including domestic violence.

Box 2: Varieties of Domestic Violence

- *February 19th, Longkip, Aceh Singkil.* Serambi reported that an 18 year old man attacked his father with a machete. The perpetrator said he wanted to protect his younger brother from his father, who was hitting him with a spoon. He tried to intervene but failed, so he went and got a machete and attacked his father, leaving him in critical condition. Another son in the same family is currently in prison for killing his own wife during an incident of domestic violence.
- *February 6th, Lhoksukon, Aceh Utara.* A domestic worker reported to the police, complaining she was beaten by her employer.
- *February 20th, Jeumpa, Bireuen.* Serambi reported that a 25 year old man beat up his mother because she wouldn't give him money to buy marijuana.
- *February 7th, Sabang.* Serambi reported that a religious teacher at a Muslim boarding school (*pesantren*) was arrested on for having molested eleven female students. (The head of the Aceh branch of Rabithah Thaliban later called for a punishment of *rajam*, where the accused is half buried in earth and then stoned to death.)
- *February 10th, Langsa.* A group of about 20 students at a *pesantren* beat up two of their teachers. The students had covered their faces with cloth to hide their identity before attacking their teachers in the middle of the night. According to Serambi, the students had complained about being beaten by their teachers in the past.

A second issue which continues to place women in dangerous situations is *khalwat* arrests by vigilantes. This month there were nine such reported incidents, which thankfully occurred without beatings. Nevertheless, these vigilante arrests often render victims, and especially women, vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse. On January 30th, a soldier wandering in a forested area in Meulaboh arrested a couple for *khalwat*. The 19 year old high school girl was then apparently subjected to a physical inspection by WH staff, who found a red mark on her 'chest area' – which then constituted evidence of her offense. Another couple caught together in a warehouse in Lhokseumawe on February 24th were "bathed" (subjected to a cleansing ritual) by their captors before being turned over to police. Allowing vigilantes (i.e. whoever so desires) to patrol quiet areas, arrest couples found together, bathe them, 'inspect' them, and so on, carries serious risks of these powers being abused. In such situations there is little protection for women, who are at high risk of sexual assault. Even arrests carried out by WH raise questions about the legal rights of victims and the procedures involved in their interrogation and physical inspection.

Aid-related conflicts continue; issues of religion arise in several

Aid programs were implicated in 27 out of 118 local level conflicts this month (see Figure 3). The primary issues in these aid-related conflicts are the same as those in past months: problems with contractors, the slow speed of aid delivery, the selection of aid recipients, and allegations of corruption of aid funds (see Figure 4). Some of these disputes were related to the distribution of reintegration funds; as mentioned above, this issue will be a focus of next month's Update.

Figure 3: Aid-related conflicts by month

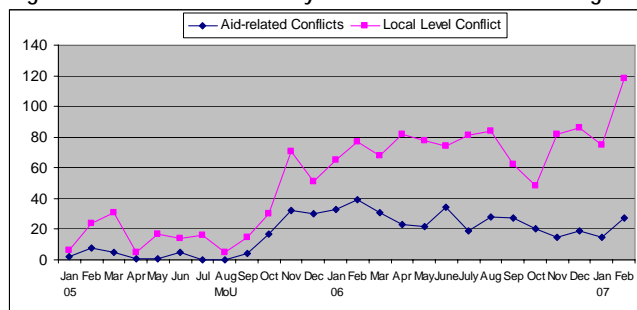
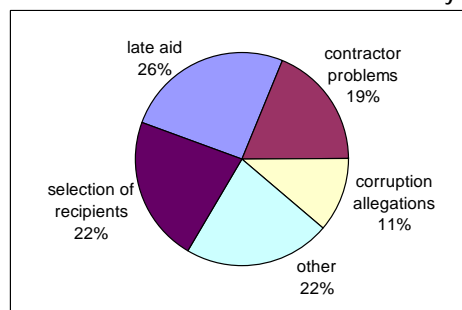


Figure 4: Breakdown of aid-related conflicts for February



A number of the aid-related conflicts this month were related to religion (see Box 3).⁹ These incidents signal a need for more public debate on issues of religious expression in Aceh, and on women's participation in political debates and policy formation. In a discussion at the International Conference for Aceh and Indian Ocean Studies conference this month, John Bowen, an anthropologist who has researched Aceh for decades, discussed the issue of Acehnese identity in this era of increased autonomy and heightened foreign involvement. He argued that an inclusive and tolerant Acehnese identity would support peace and development, while an identity based on one religion or on ethnicity would lead to division and conflict.¹⁰ Donors should consider supporting opportunities for more public debate on these issues, in order that the people of Aceh can determine how best to realize their political and religious aspirations while supporting a long-lasting peace in Aceh which respects the rights of women and of ethnic and religious minorities.

Box 3: Religious Conflicts

- Residents in Kampung Paya Tumpi I, Aceh Tengah, demanded that the BRR mess be moved elsewhere, since the staff did not respect local culture and *syariat* Islam. In particular, their celebration of Valentine's Day on the evening of February 13th was deemed to have broken local cultural norms as well as *syariat* Islam. The village head reported that hundreds of youths had gathered at his house, preparing to attack the party, but he had restrained them. The party ended at 10:30 p.m. without violence.
- The head of the MPU (Ulama's Association) called on the government to evict NGOs who try to weaken belief in Islam in Aceh. This was after residents in Lemteumen Timur, Banda Aceh, had received pills with 'Jesus lives' printed on them from Yayasan Peduli Bangsa (YPB). Villagers complained to the Dinas Syariat Islam, and Serambi reported that the head of YPB as well as two American citizens were being held at the local police station.
- The DPRD was investigating another case of symbols, after a number of primary schools in Banda Aceh received copies of a dictionary which had 'symbols of a certain religion' on it. A DPRD member told Serambi that this aid, from an international NGO, should be suspected of having "other" purposes.
- A heated discussion about the current implementation of *syariat* Islam in Aceh occurred at the ICAIOS conference in Banda Aceh on February 25th. Acehnese participants questioned the nature of the implementation of *syariat* Islam in Aceh, whether women had been involved in the formation of the *qanun* (provincial legislation), and whether it was true that all Acehnese desire the implementation. The next day, a former DPRD member criticized the debate, saying he was embarrassed to see Acehnese people conducting this dispute in front of foreigners, who 'are not Muslim'. The discussion indicated that there are dissenting opinions about *syariat* implementation in Aceh, that there are women with strong views who feel excluded from such debates, and that public discussion of such issues has been lacking.

⁹ The 'heated discussion' mentioned in Box 3 was not coded as a conflict; it is included since it is relevant.

¹⁰ On this issue, see also Patrick Barron and Samuel Clark (2006). "Decentralizing Inequality? Center-Periphery Relations, Local Governance, and Conflict in Aceh". *Social Development Paper No. 39*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank. The report is available online at: www.conflictanddevelopment.org.