

# Aceh Conflict Monitoring Update

1<sup>st</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> October 2006

World Bank/DSF

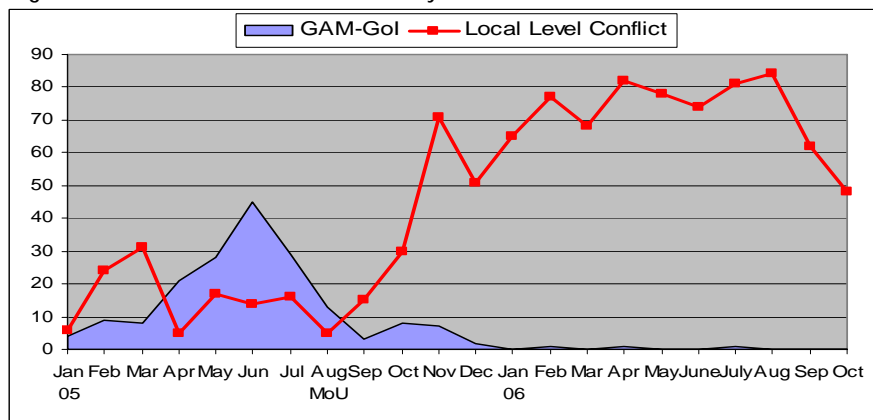


As part of an analytical support program to the peace process, the Conflict and Development Program, within the World Bank Office Indonesia, is using a newspaper conflict mapping methodology to record and categorize all incidents of conflict in Aceh as reported in two provincial newspapers (Serambi and 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>

No GAM-GoI conflicts were reported in October, however, GAM-GoI tensions continue to impact Acehese society through particular forms of local level conflict. Two recent reports also indicate that there has been a rise in violent crime rates since the signing of the MoU. As GAM-GoI conflict levels have dropped, this represents a transition from conflict to crime. One implication of this is that more work is needed on reintegration and livelihood programs to address former combatant needs. Up until the end of October, there have been no serious election-related conflict incidents and there is currently no alarming evidence to suggest that widespread conflict or violence is likely.<sup>2</sup> That said, latent tensions exist and isolated incidents are possible. These worrying trends with regard to reintegration combined with increased electoral-related competition indicate that the next few months will be a crucial test for the peace process.

More positively, local level conflict continued to drop, although this may have been primarily due to the fasting month of Ramadan. Despite this decrease, the number of violent incidents rose slightly to nine. Aid remained a primary issue in 20 of the 48 conflicts; one especially common grievance was the slow pace of aid delivery. This update also reports on vigilante incidents, a number of which were linked to the actions of law and order forces, and on the recurring cycle of conflicts regarding the government fuel subsidy.

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).

<sup>2</sup> Note that this Update does not cover the recent (22 November 2006) incident where Humam of the Humam-Hasbi gubernatorial candidature was attacked in Bireuen.

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

Since the beginning of 2006 only three incidents of GAM-GoI conflict incidents have been recorded. Again none were reported in October 2006 (see Figure 1). However, some incidents that do not involve the armed forces of GAM and GoI still reflect similar tensions. One example is a vigilante event from September whose victim died of his injuries in October.

- The *keuchik* (village head) of Limau Purut, in Kluet Utara, Aceh Selatan, died on 29 October, after having been beaten by about 50 people on 18 September. The mob also attacked another *keuchik*, who managed to escape, and rampaged through the houses of both men. Serambi reported that the attackers were “thought to be former GAM members”, and that the motive for the attack was that the *keuchik* had filled out a report for the District government using the word “separatist” to refer to former GAM.

Past GAM-GoI tensions are continuing to impact Acehese society, although in different forms – through certain types of local level conflict, and perhaps also through crime.

### ***Indications that crime is rising***

Two recent reports indicate that there has been a rise in violent crime rates since the signing of the MoU. As GAM-GoI conflict levels have dropped, this represents a transition from conflict to crime. The reports suggest that the increases in violent crime rates are concentrated in former strongholds of GAM activity. It is possible that prolonged and extensive unemployment of former combatants in these areas may be having some impact on the level of violent crime rates.

On October 18<sup>th</sup>, the Jakarta Post reported on data collected by Kontras-Aceh, suggesting that violent crime rates had risen, with 70 armed crimes since the signing of the MoU in August of last year. Koalisi HAM (the Aceh Human Rights Coalition) has also been collecting data on crime and human rights abuses, using mass media as well as reports from their legal aid and human rights posts in six districts. Their data shows that while human rights abuses have decreased since the MoU, crime has increased drastically, with the highest concentration in Pidie, formerly a GAM stronghold. According to Koalisi HAM, the reasons for the rising crime rate include GAM/KPA dissatisfaction with aid programs, internal dissension within GAM/KPA and the continued existence of illegal weapons.

The increase in the crime rate in former GAM strongholds indicates that reintegration needs have yet to be adequately addressed. Proper reintegration, though, necessitates addressing not only the economic needs of individuals (through ensuring that sustainable livelihoods opportunities exist), but also social and psychosocial needs (see Box 1). This suggests the need for holistic reintegration strategies.

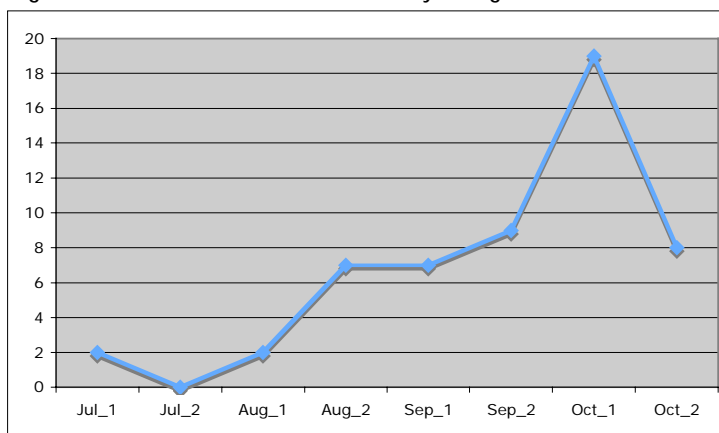
#### **Box 1: Social Healing**

Thirty-five ex-combatants in Pidie have been documenting their daily lives with cameras and pens, as part of the Peace Diaries pilot project (run by the Aceh Cultural Institute and the World Bank). Through providing creative channels of expression for the ex-combatants, this initiative hopes to facilitate their reintegration and to build trust between the returnees and their communities. After initial training, participants have been meeting every two weeks to share their peace diaries with one another and with their communities. The participants took pictures and wrote about the physical and social impacts of the conflict, portraying burnt houses and mosques, conflict victims with chronic illness, conflict orphans, and other topics. Their work will be exhibited in Pidie from November 25<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> and in Banda Aceh on December 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>.

### ***Pilkada-related incidents rise and drop in October***

To date, there have been no serious election-related conflict incidents and there is currently no alarming evidence to suggest that widespread conflict or violence is likely. In October, the number of *pilkada*-related incidents rose to a high of 19 in the first half of October but then dropped dramatically to eight in the second half (see Figure 2). Similarly to local level conflict numbers generally, this is most likely due to the Ramadan holiday and Serambi's publishing break (see below).

Figure 2: *Pilkada*-related conflict incidents by fortnight



Source: UNDP/WB Pilkada dataset

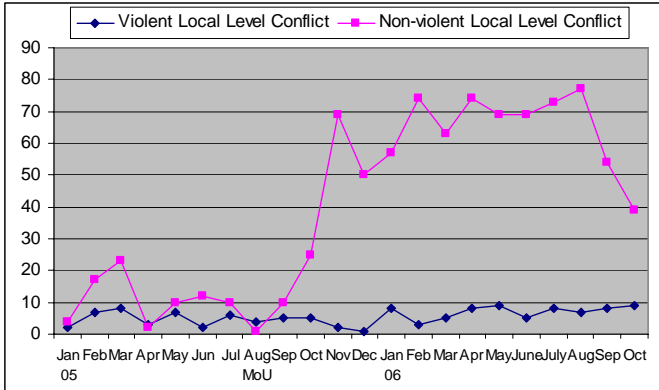
However, latent tensions exist and isolated incidents are possible. For example, in Bener Meriah, electoral competition is magnifying ethnic, GAM and anti-separatist divisions, and tensions are increasing amongst candidates from these different elements of society. Less drastic, non-violent conflict incidents suggest disputes have been predominantly amongst three groups: parties/individuals and the state; within political parties; and between various government agencies. These disputes flag specific institutional weaknesses. Funding delays and shortfalls for electoral institutions, particularly KIP (Independent Elections Commission) and *Panwas* (Election Supervisory Committee), have led these agencies to focus on core logistical and administrative activities at the expense of establishing mechanisms and relationships to prevent and manage conflict. Similarly, the lack of socialization and voter education activities has meant the electorate is aware of the election but has little information about how it will work. These weaknesses are unlikely to prevent the implementation of elections, but they could diminish their quality and potentially delegitimize the elections if serious problems do occur.

### ***Local level conflict continues to drop***

There has been a dramatic decline in local level conflict over the past two months; we found 48 incidents of local level conflict reported for October (see Figure 1 above). The number of demonstrations and corruption-related incidents also declined this month. There are several possible explanations for this decline. First, during most of October (up until the 24<sup>th</sup>) it was the holy month of Ramadan. Failing to control one's emotions constitutes a breaking of the fast, and therefore perhaps some grievances were either resolved or postponed. Second, it is possible that *coverage* of local level conflict has declined. Serambi halted publication from the 24<sup>th</sup> until the 26<sup>th</sup> (reducing our dataset by about 10%). Also, extensive news coverage of *pilkada* may have led to reduced coverage of local level conflict. Although these explanations are particular to October, and thus suggest that levels could rise again next month, it is noteworthy that a consistent decline can be seen over the past two months.

Violent incidents of local level conflict rose slightly to nine recorded cases (see Figure 3). These incidents included two stonings of public vehicles and several vandal attacks on buildings or other property. Several of the other violent events—a kidnapping over government aid entitlements, and two “moral vigilante” incidents—are described below.

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



**Aid-related conflict remains high**

Aid (including that related to the tsunami, to post-conflict reintegration, and to other government programs, such as for the fuel subsidy) was a factor in 20 of the 48 local level conflict incidents recorded this month (see Figure 4). In last month’s Update we highlighted four issues that were often a feature in aid-related conflicts. Three of those remain important this month: the selection of aid recipients, problems with contractors, and corruption allegations. Land issues in aid projects have been less prominent in the news, although are surely still ongoing (as shown in a non-aid related land dispute this month that involved the burning of the fence around contested land). This month, 30% of the conflicts about aid were based on grievances about the slow pace of aid delivery (see Figure 5).

All but one of these ‘late aid’ conflicts were related to tsunami aid. The slow pace of aid delivery is and will continue to be a source of widespread tension. Although implementing well designed projects does take time, and people sometimes have unrealistic expectations, these tensions need to be dealt with more effectively. Implementation schedules which are transparent and socialized to recipients, along with clear explanations of delays in delivery, will help to reduce these tensions.

Figure 4: Aid-related conflicts by month

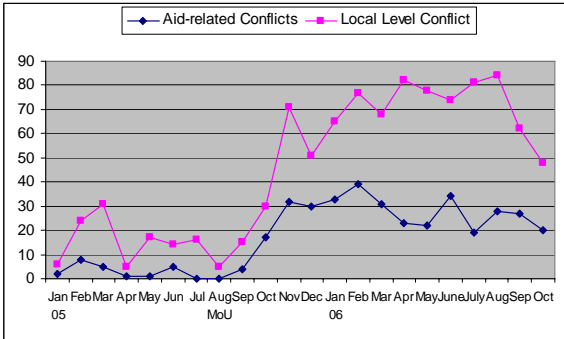
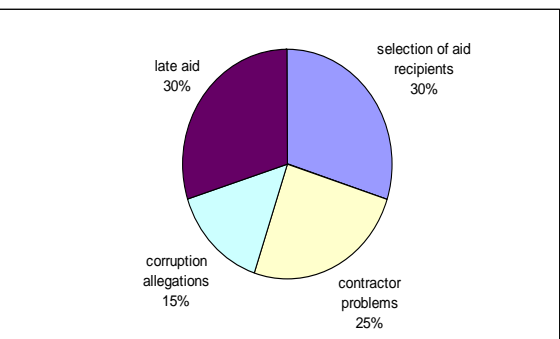


Figure 5: Breakdown of aid-related conflicts for October



**Demonstrations decrease**

The number of demonstrations fell to 12 in October (see Figure 6), but it is likely that this drop is related to the fasting month and that the number of demonstrations will rise again in November. Seven of the demonstrations were about aid—five of which were specifically about the handling of the fuel subsidy payments (BLT). Four demonstrations were demanding that unpaid wages or benefits be paid by the government agency responsible; only one demonstration was about a law

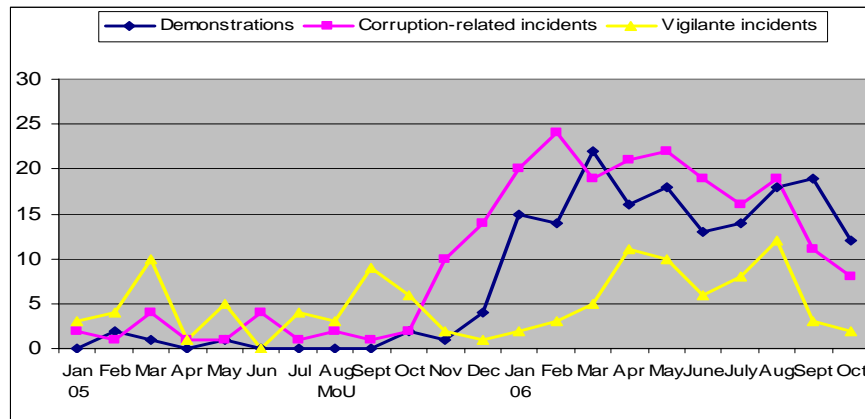
and order issue (see Box 2). Only one of the demonstrations turned violent, and resulted in some damage to a subdistrict head's office.

**“Moral vigilantism” returns but overall incidents are down**

In October “moral vigilante attacks” returned, with two incidents recorded (see Figure 6). Also described here is a previously unreported vigilante beating from September (which was mentioned in a report about a demonstration this month).<sup>3</sup>

- *October 17<sup>th</sup>, Syamtalira Bayu, Aceh Utara.* Serambi reported that villagers in Beunot village badly beat two men who were found alone with women at an orphanage. After the assault, the two couples were taken to the police station by the villagers. One of the victims was a soldier. The Lhokseumawe police chief said that he would investigate both the *khalwat* offence (suspicious proximity with opposite sex) and the assault.
- *October 25<sup>th</sup>, Banda Aceh.* Serambi reported that a security guard at the Social Affairs office in Banda Aceh raised the Indonesian flag upside down. That night he was severely beaten by a police officer, and died two days later. A witness reported that it was not the victim but another security guard who had raised the flag that day. The case has received substantial publicity, as a failure of police discipline and a test of their impunity. The 21 year-old police suspect has been detained pending prosecution.
- *Mid-September, Kaway XVI, Aceh Barat.* According to Serambi, last month in Mugo Rayek village, a police officer was mobbed after confiscating wood villagers had cut. The victim filed a complaint, and police summoned several of the villagers for questioning. On October 2<sup>nd</sup>, several hundred people came to the district parliament to protest the summoning of those individuals, saying that 60-70 people had beaten up the officer. They also complained that the officer had been trying to extort money from them over the wood (see Box 2).

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



**Box 2: Tangled Challenges**

The Kaway XVI vigilante case shows how a variety of challenges in Aceh are interconnected. The Aceh Barat police chief said that the villagers had been cutting what may have been illegal wood. This is linked to challenges in livelihoods as well as corruption in law enforcement—the police officer was said to be involved in extortion attempts. The villagers then carried out a vigilante attack on the officer in retribution for his extortion attempts. When the police attempted to investigate, they were faced with a large demonstration. There are links here between unemployment, illegal logging, extortion, vigilantism, and partial justice, reminding us that it is difficult to address one without addressing the others.

<sup>3</sup> We have added this event to the database, so the figures for September have changed slightly.

The vigilante cases this month highlight the role of the security forces. The *khalwat* case involved a soldier, the upside down flag murder was allegedly committed by a police officer, and the Kaway XVI case involved a police officer being beaten for extortion. These cases suggest that in order for the police to improve their reputation with the public they need to clamp down on human rights abuses and reduce extortion by police officers. On the other hand the fact that members of security forces were beaten by civilians in two cases shows that civilians are not as fearful of reprisals as before the MoU.

**“Fuel subsidies” fuel conflict**

Nine conflict incidents this month were related to the government’s fuel subsidies (BLT) for poor families. The protests were generally about (or by) people who had not received their payments, or related to allegations of corruption in payment distribution. There were five demonstrations (one of which turned violent), three complaints, and one kidnapping. Serambi reported that on October 19<sup>th</sup> a worker at the Geudong post office in Meurah Mulia, Aceh Utara, was kidnapped by angry villagers who claimed that he had deceived them. The victim had allegedly collected BLT cards from 128 villagers, promising to help to get their BLT funds released more quickly. A few days later he had still not produced the funds, and the government was distributing the BLT payments in the area. The villagers, however, could not collect since they had given their cards to the postal worker. They realized they had been duped and kidnapped him, but eventually turned him over to the police for investigation.

Although the BLT amount is not large at Rp. 300,000 (\$33), it is an on-going program and thus the subject of numerous struggles over who should receive BLT payments as well as the target of numerous attempts to corrupt the funds. The payments are made every three months, and conflicts about BLT payments roughly follow a three-month cycle (see Figure 7). Procedures for recipient selection should be more transparent and better socialized, and allegations of corruption should be dealt with promptly. Some scams are themselves quite transparent. On October 2<sup>nd</sup>, Serambi reported that villagers in Pantonlabu, Aceh Utara, complained about their payments being cut by Rp. 5,000. They had each been given a letter for them to sign saying that the Rp. 5,000 was a “thank you gift to the president”. A villager explained “we couldn’t do much about it. If we didn’t pay, we wouldn’t receive our BLT next time.”

Figure 7: Fuel subsidy conflicts by month

