

USING NEWSPAPERS TO MONITOR CONFLICT

**EVIDENCE FROM MALUKU AND NORTH MALUKU,
INDONESIA**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	4
CHAPTER 2: CHARACTERISTICS OF CONFLICT IN MALUKU AND NORTH MALUKU	7
2.1 Geographic distribution of conflict	7
2.2 Types, forms and characteristics of conflict	8
CHAPTER 3: DATA COMPARISON	16
CHAPTER 4: CONSTRAINTS AND CONSIDERATIONS: NEWSPAPERS IN A CONFLICT ENVIRONMENT	20
4.1 Polarization and Bias	20
4.2 Publication and archives	22
4.3 Urban/rural bias	23
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS	24
BIBLIOGRAPHY	25
ANNEX 1: CONFLICT CODES	27

TABLE OF TABLES

Table 1: Number of Cases, Violent Cases and Impacts by District and Province	7
Table 2: Primary Conflict Types	8
Table 3: Comparative conflict data (whole dataset) by source	19
Table 4: Comparison of Reported Impacts for three incidents in Ambon Express and Siwalima	21

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Distribution of Violent Conflict across conflict types: Maluku and North Maluku	9
Figure 2: Data Comparison over time: Violent Cases	18
Figure 3: Data Comparison over Time: Fatalities	18

TABLE OF BOXES

Box 1: Volleyball and Violence	10
Box 2: Terrorism in Maluku province, January-June 2005	11
Box 3: Low impact, high profile: citizens vs. the government over Babullah airport	14

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

The Support for Poor and Disadvantaged Areas project (SPADA) will work in a number of provinces which have experienced, and in some cases still are experiencing, high levels of conflict. The primary aims of the project are two-fold, namely, to bridge the gap between reconstruction and development in post-conflict areas, and to help prevent the onset of future violence. In order to assess the success and efficacy of SPADA, it is necessary to evaluate its impact on conflict.

This involves measuring levels and impacts from conflict before, during and after the project. However, few established tools exist for doing this. Household surveys, which are normally used to measure other variables that development programs seek to influence (such as economic welfare, etc.), are weak at measuring conflict. They are more likely to record perceptions of conflict than actual incidence, and sample sizes are prohibitively costly. Key informant surveys are also not suitable because of lack of incentives for reporting conflict, and incomplete information.

This pilot will test the use of an alternative methodology (*local newspaper conflict mapping*) for monitoring levels of conflict in project sites. Increasingly newspaper based approaches have been used for mapping conflict incidence and impacts, in Indonesia and beyond.¹ However, a major weakness has been that they have used newspaper sources far removed from the locations of conflict (at the national and provincial level) with the result that they miss many local conflicts and seriously under-report aggregate conflict impacts.

This study follows on from research conducted as part of the mixed-methods Kecamatan Development Program and Community Conflict Negotiation (KDP & CCN) study², which used sub-provincial level sources to track conflict in the selected districts in East Java and NTT. This methodology proved to be effective at capturing the conflicts and their impacts, and yielded particularly marked regional variation.³ Newspaper mapping of conflict has the additional benefit of creating an indexed database of *qualitative* information (the newspaper reports themselves), in addition to aggregate, quantitative data. However, although this data recorded significant impacts on human security, sometimes in unexpected and alarmingly high numbers, neither East Java nor NTT have experienced violence on the scale of places like Poso, Jakarta, Aceh or the Maluku.⁴

¹ In Indonesia, the United Nations Support Facility for Indonesian Recovery (UNSFIR) has developed two large-scale conflict datasets using newspaper reports (see Tadjoeddin 2002; Varshney, Panggabean, and Tadjoeddin 2004). Internationally, newspapers have been used, most influentially, in the work of Ashutosh Varshney who created a large n dataset to measure trends in violent conflict in post-independence India (Varshney 2002; Wilkinson 2004).

² Barron, Patrick, Rachael Diprose, and Michael Woolcock (2005); Barron, Patrick, Rachael Diprose, David Madden, Claire Q. Smith, and Michael Woolcock (2004).

³ Barron, Patrick and Sharpe, Joanne (2005).

⁴ Tadjoeddin 2002; Varsheny et al 2004, op. cit

Yet, using newspapers to describe conflict in high-conflict can be problematic for a number of reasons. Newspapers, especially local ones, may not be as free from bias in high conflict areas as newspapers in places like East Java and NTT. Indeed, in many areas experiencing high levels of conflict, including Ambon, Poso and North Maluku, news media has played an incendiary role (UNDP 2004). Damage and fatality figures are less likely to be reliable in large conflicts, particularly when journalists have limited access due to conflict. Local newspapers in high conflict regions are less likely to have complete archives for conflict periods, due to poor archiving or even destruction of newspaper offices.

In order to test the impacts of high conflict environments on newspaper data, this pilot collected conflict data using local newspapers in Maluku and North Makulu, two provinces that have previously experienced serious communal conflict and high levels of violence, for January to June 2005. Collective violence in North Makulu between 1990 and 2003 claimed 2,794 lives, accounting for 25% percent of the total deaths collected as part of that survey, and making it by far the most violent (in terms of fatalities) province in Indonesia. Maluku came in second, with 18.3% (2,046) of the total deaths.⁵

This pilot sought to establish the extent to which local newspapers accurately capture the incidence and impacts of conflict in the pilot areas, what biases exist in newspaper coverage of conflict and how these impact on the data. It also sought to identify and evaluate other sources of data that could be used as part of a conflict monitoring system.

Media in Maluku and North Maluku

Maluku and North Maluku provinces provide excellent case studies of the negative impact of conflict on a balanced and informative mediascape. The conflict in Maluku saw the proliferation of many kinds of new media, such as anonymous pamphlets (*selebaran gelap*), VCDs and newspapers, created or co-opted to serve competing interests and causes. These media were notoriously biased, partisan, and often actively inflammatory. In Ambon, the primary daily newspaper, *Suara Maluku*, became closely identified with Christian interests, leading to the creation of *Ambon Express*, set up to provide the Muslim perspective on the conflict. *Ambon Express* was initially established as a weekly publication in May 1999 and became a daily in April 2001. *Siwalima*, a third daily established in August 1999, was ostensibly established to provide more balanced reporting from the ‘middle ground’, but it quickly became known as a second Christian newspaper. Restoring balanced media coverage of conflict as well as promote ‘peace journalism’ were seen as high priorities for the creation of sustainable peace in Maluku.

By contrast, the conflict in North Maluku cut lines of supply for local newspapers printed in Manado in North Sulawesi, forcing their closure. A dearth of ‘official’ media in North Maluku meant that rumors could circulate unchecked; in particular, rumors about the treatment of Muslims at the hands of Christians, and vice-versa, in other parts of North

⁵ Varshney, Ashutosh, Rizal Panggabean, and Mohammad Zulfan Tadjoeeddin (2004)

Maluku and in Ambon, were a significant factor in the escalation of the conflict.⁶ *Ternate Pos* was the only newspaper published throughout the period of conflict, but it was only published as a weekly until 2003.

Selection of sources

Archives for sources in both Maluku and North Maluku ranged from organized to chaos to non-existent. This is particularly true for the periods of worst conflict, partly because they have been lost in the intervening time, often because they have been pillaged by others researching the media's role in the Maluku conflicts. The completeness of archives has been a determining factor in the selection of sources to be used in this study. The provincial level, daily newspapers selected for inclusion in this study were *Ambon Express* and *Siwalima* in Maluku, and *Malut Pos* and *Ternate Pos* in North Maluku.

Unfortunately, there were very few sub-provincial level sources for both Maluku and North Maluku. In the past few years, several district and district-cluster level sources have appeared and then disappeared, making them unreliable and incomplete sources of data. *Seram Pos* in Maluku, covering the island of Seram and its three districts (West Seram, East Seram and Central Maluku) and *Halut Press* in North Maluku, covering North Halmahera district) were the only sub-provincial sources deemed useful for this study.

⁶ Again, donor response is an interesting indicator of the severity of this problem - USAID paid for the distribution of *Ternate Pos*, then a weekly publication, to IDP camps and remote parts of the province in order to combat these rumors.

Chapter 2: Characteristics of Conflict in Maluku and North Maluku

2.1 Geographic distribution of conflict

Despite both provinces' history of high conflict, and an almost equal number of conflicts recorded overall between the two provinces,⁷ current levels of violence in Maluku and North Maluku are markedly different. It is clear that violence has largely abated in North Maluku; just four conflict-related fatalities were reported over the six-month research period, three of them in the district capital. By contrast, conflict in Maluku province caused six times that number of fatalities, and these were scattered throughout five of the seven Maluku districts.

Table 1: Number of Cases, Violent Cases and Impacts by District and Province

PROVINCE	District	#Cases (total)	#Cases (violent)			
				KILLED	INJURED	PROPERTY
MALUKU	AMBON	62	33	7	75	36
	BURU	6	4	0	4	1
	CENTRAL MALUKU	20	12	3	10	9
	S.E. MALUKU	7	5	3	23	5
	WEST S.E. MALUKU	5	5	4	59	30
	WEST SERAM	9	6	7	6	2
	EAST SERAM	4	2	0	2	1
	Total MALUKU	113	67	24	179	84
NORTH MALUKU	WEST HALMAHERA	7	4	0	2	3
	SOUTH HALMAHERA	8	2	0	1	1
	CENTRAL HALMAHERA	4	2	0	1	1
	EAST HALMAHERA	1	0	0	0	0
	NORTH HALMAHERA	8	1	0	1	0
	SULA ARCHIPELIGO	3	2	1	0	4
	TERNATE	68	32	3	35	3
	TIDORE ARCHIPELIGO	10	3	0	6	1
Total NORTH MALUKU	109	46	4	46	13	
Total		222	113	28	225	97

Conflict and violence were overwhelmingly reported as occurring in the respective provincial capitals of Ambon (Maluku) and Ternate (North Maluku).

⁷ The definition of 'conflict' used by this study is broad – it includes communal as well as individual and state/society conflicts, criminal violence (where it is underpinned and motivated by conflict) and so on. However, in order to limit the size of the dataset, these conflicts had to meet one of three criteria for inclusion in this study. These were a) violence, as denoted by the presence of impacts (deaths, injuries, damage to buildings and other property), b) involvement of large group/s of people, as in a demonstration or a group clash and c) an act of terrorism, even where no impacts were recorded, such as the discovery of a bomb before it exploded, or a shooting that did not result in any injuries. The bulk of the analysis in this section focuses on the violent incidents.

2.2 Types, forms and characteristics of conflict

Conflict incidents were assigned one of five main conflict types (Table 2), as well as a sub-type further delineating what the conflict is over.⁸

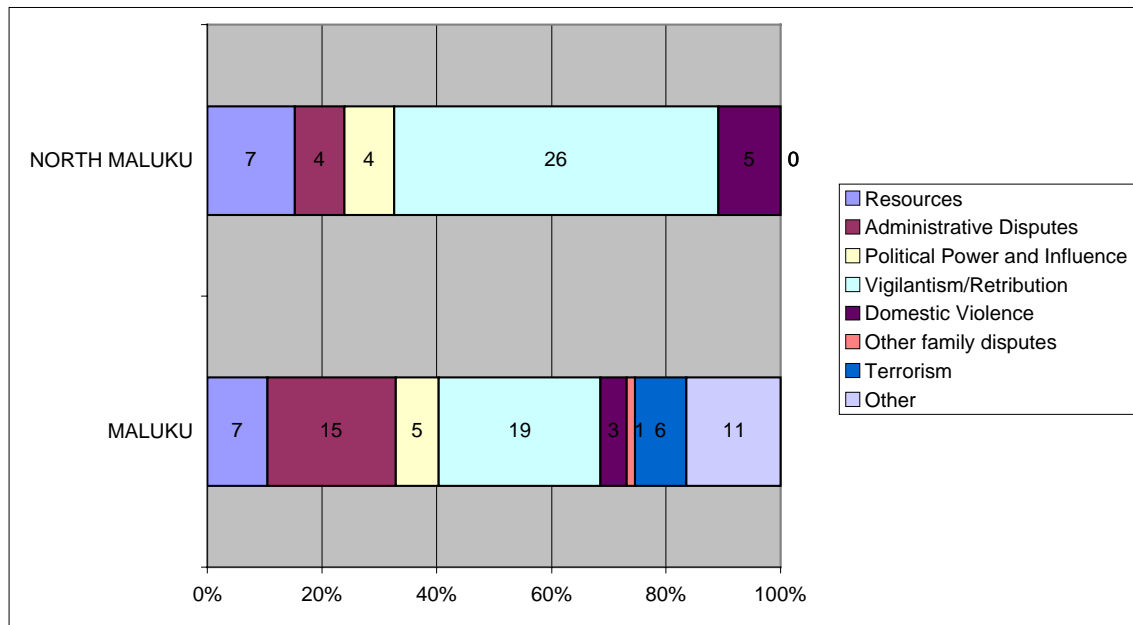
Table 2: Primary Conflict Types

1. Physical Resource	Disputes over ownership, access and use of resources (natural or man-made; private, public or communal), including 'economic resources' (access to jobs, markets etc)
2. Administrative Disputes	Disputes over management/procedure/service provision of government or donor-funded programs, and public or private enterprises
3. Political Position and Influence	Competition over political power in state/non-state, village/district level positions (usually relating to elections and political appointments)
4. Vigilantism and Retribution	'Mob justice' or lynching; interpersonal or group violence motivated by retribution and revenge
5. Other	a) Domestic Violence b) Other intra-family disputes c) Terrorism d) 'Other' residual conflicts not described by other categories (usually denoting conflicts where there is not enough information to ascribe them to the categories above.

As Figure 1 illustrates, causes of conflict and violence were far more varied in Maluku than North Maluku. The picture of violence in North Maluku is dominated by vigilante/retribution conflicts, but in Maluku violent incidents were more spread out across the different categories.

⁸ See Annex 1 for a complete list of conflict types and sub-types.

Figure 1: Distribution of Violent Conflict across conflict types: Maluku and North Maluku



Vigilantism/Retribution

In previous studies, acts of vigilantism and retribution have been the most frequently occurring type of violent conflict – conflicts in this category account for 87% of violent incidents in the East Java districts and 50% in Flores.⁹ Conflict in North Maluku and Maluku appears to follow this trend, with 26 of 46 violent incidents recorded in this category in North Maluku, compared with 19 of 67 violent incidents in Maluku. Vigilante and revenge conflicts in North Maluku also account for all recorded fatalities, and half the recorded injuries in that province. However, the actual impacts of vigilante/revenge violence in Maluku province are overshadowed by terrorist violence, followed by conflicts over natural resources.

The predominance of this kind of conflict in violence statistics is in many ways unsurprising, as this category captures a variety of behaviors that are generally inherently violent and often criminal in nature.

A typical form of retributive violence is ad hoc, in response to personal insults (in cases between individuals), or in response to contravention of local norms or laws (as in the lynching of thieves and other group-based violence). Conflict frequently arose out of insults and offence in Maluku and North Maluku. In North Maluku, 10 of the 26 vigilante/revenge incidents occurred in response to an offense or insult; three of the four fatalities were also captured in this sub-category. ‘Taking offence’ was also the most

⁹ Barron and Sharpe (2005) *ibid*, p 21 and p36-38

common cause of vengeance-motivated conflict in Maluku, accounting for seven incidents.

However, actor combinations party to vigilante/retribution-based violence in the two provinces differed. In North Maluku, vigilante/revenge violence occurred most frequently between an individual and a group, (in 39% of violent cases), then between two individuals (29% of cases). A typical case is that which occurred in Lekokadai village, Kecamatan West Manggoli in North Maluku. When a junior high school student spoke rudely to his teacher, the teacher was instantly offended and replied by attacking the student with a machete, killing him. Factors contributing to this conflict seem little more complex than the teacher's pride and intolerance, attributed by researchers to cultural factors, namely the high value placed on pride and self-worth.

Vigilante violence in Maluku was even more likely to contain a communal element. 39% of such cases occurred between an individual and a group, while over a quarter (26%) occurred between two groups. As in the Lekokadai village murder, group-based violence in Maluku was also triggered by seemingly trivial incidents.

Box 1: Volleyball and Violence

In Namlea on remote Buru Island, a friendly game between the wives of Police and TNI forces ended in violence after supporters became unruly and heckling got out of hand. When the TNI wives' team was defeated, a 'war of words' erupted between the supporters of both sides. A group of ten other police standing by stepped in to separate the supporters, at which point one of the ten allegedly punched one of the TNI supporters.

Seeing their colleague in trouble, other soldiers joined in the melee. A Brimob force arrived and fired gunshots in the air. This was ostensibly to break up the crowd, but locals reacted with panic. One police officer was reported to have suffered serious wounds from a beating. The matter was dealt with internally by local military command. (12 April 2005, Ref M2101)

The stakes were even higher in a regional final volleyball match between Walerang and Sofianin villages in Fordata Island, West S. E. Maluku. The Walerang team won the final point and there were general celebrations, but the Sofianin team disputed the referee's decision and a punch was thrown at a Walerang villager. Further fighting did not erupt at this point, but later that afternoon, a large group from Sofianin attacked Walerang village and set fire to 30 homes. An additional five were wounded, and one man killed with a homemade firearm. (31 December 2004, Ref M1000)

The second most common cause of retributive violence in both Maluku and North Maluku was 'clashing identities', with six cases in each province. This sub-type captures conflict where underlying causes are unclear, but where violence seems to erupt between members of different, distinct identity groups. Cycles of retributive violence, or violent incidents triggered by the smallest insults or transgressions committed by an historic or hereditary enemy, are most likely to be recorded under this category. These are conflicts

that may have started out as disputes over economic resources or access to power, but have been conflated with identity and the root causes forgotten.

The case of the Malukus provides striking evidence for why even seemingly random violence should be taken very seriously. The trigger incident that sparked off years of bloody communal conflict in Maluku was a casual argument between a minivan driver and a passenger that quickly escalated.¹⁰ This kind of violence is often indicative of serious underlying social problems, and where levels of this conflict are high, and as such, data reporting high number of conflicts with group and vengeance elements warrants particular attention.

How much vigilante violence in Maluku and North Maluku stems from, or is tied up with, legacies of communal conflict? Unfortunately, it is not always easy to tell from newspaper data once divorced from its social context. Newspaper sources today are purportedly committed to presenting stories in such a way as to not inflame further tensions between groups, and in practice this means that ethnic and religious identities of conflicting parties are not usually stated. In 19 cases in Maluku, a 'secular' cleavage was present in seven, while ethnic cleavage was only present in one case and there were no religious cleavages recorded at all. Similarly, in North Maluku, nine of 26 cases of retributive violence had secular cleavages.

Clearly, it is unlikely that religious cleavages were entirely irrelevant to Maluku or North Maluku, with its history of violence between religious and ethnic groups. The 'secular' cleavage is likely to be a proxy for other cleavages, as in the Walerang/Sofianin volleyball match where the 'secular' coding refers to the different supporter groups, despite the likelihood that a history of enmity along ethnic or religious lines underpinned this conflict.

Terrorism

The legacy of communal conflict in Maluku is clearly visible in the number of terrorist acts committed between January and June this year. These incidents most frequently involved attacks and 'mysterious shootings' committed by persons unknown, or persons named by newspaper sources as 'terrorists'. Several incidents also involved the setting of bombs and the throwing of incendiary devices. Of 16 cases, just six resulted in physical impacts, but these six incidents accounted for 9 deaths (37% of all deaths recorded in Maluku) and 40 injuries (22% of total recorded injuries), making this category responsible for the worst violence in Maluku province this year. By contrast, just two incidents were described as terrorist activity in North Maluku, and these had no physical impacts.

Box 2: Terrorism in Maluku province, January-June 2005

The most serious case captured in this research was the attack of a troupe of *Brimob* (paramilitary police) originating from East Kalimantan at their post in Lokki village, Piru

¹⁰ ICG (2002)

sub-district, West Seram District, on 17 May 2005. A group described by police as the ‘Mujahadin’ attacked the post at three o’clock in the morning, resulting in the deaths of five Brimob officers, one attacker and one civilian working at the post. The remaining attackers escaped in a speedboat. Police were quick to act, however, and over the following days a series of arrests were made. (*Conflict ref M1054*)

The same group, who investigators described as being highly professional and organized, was also allegedly behind several other cases of terrorism that occurred between January and June this year. These included the mysterious shooting of a passenger ferry in the Leksula harbor from a speedboat which resulted in two serious gunshot injuries on 8 February (*M2065*) and the shooting in a karaoke café in Ambon a week later, (*M2065*) that resulted in two fatalities and two injuries.

All 16 terrorist incidents in Maluku were coded as occurring inter-communally, with ‘terrorists’ described as one group and ‘the public’ (or in two cases, including Lokki village incident described above, ‘police’ and or ‘military’) as the other. However, these lines are not necessarily clear – in Lokki suspicion arose when the dead attacker was found to be wearing military camouflage.¹¹

Newspaper sources are not always explicit in the way they report terrorist incidents – groups are not named, and actual motivations behind attacks are very rarely clear. In the Lokki case, the police chief for Central Maluku speculated that “it is possible that the people of Lokki village were the targets, but because there was a Brimob post there, it was attacked first”.¹² In fact, Loki is a predominantly Christian village that one of the captured attackers described as “‘a thorn in the side’ of Muslims”.¹³ It is likely that a Maluku readership would have recognized that the village was a Christian one themselves, but because newspapers did not make this explicit, cleavages were considered ‘not relevant’ to any of these cases. Reading between the lines, however, when the police chief came out and named the ‘Mujahaddin’ as being responsible for the Lokki, Lai-Lai and Kareoke cases, he was certainly tying the incidents to Maluku’s past of religious violence.

There is a widespread view in Maluku that these attacks are perpetrated by ‘provocateurs’ and outsiders. The police spokesperson for the Lokki case was quoted as saying, “for the time being, (we regard) the motive for the attack as being to throw Maluku into chaos”.¹⁴ In newspaper reports, “provocateurs” were explicitly blamed for Lokki and other cases. This interpretation was borne out when it emerged that of the eight attackers just three were from Maluku; three of the others came were from Poso, one was from West Java, and one was from Riau.¹⁵ While the links between these cases and past violence are clear, there is equally a sense that they are in some ways an artificial perpetuation by

¹¹ Ambon Express, *Lima Pelaku Penyerangan Lokki ditangkap*, 18 May 2005 (Article ref AM 2288, Conflict ref M2123).

¹² *ibid*

¹³ ICG (2005), p. 5

¹⁴ Ambon Ekspress *Motif Penyerangan Pos Brimob untuk Kacaukan Maluku*, 19 May 2005

¹⁵ ICG (2005), p. 4

groups and individuals with their own agendas. In this sense, refusing to acknowledge or report on religious cleavages is a way of rejecting these agendas on behalf of the people of Maluku.

Conflict over Natural, Man-made and Economic Resources

Conflicts over resources, defined here as natural, made-made or economic, resulted in violence less frequently, but occurred on a large scale and had significant impacts when they did. In Maluku, two dramatic cases saw inter-village clashes over marine resources. On May 20, 2005, Watmuri and Arma villages in West S.E. Maluku clashed over access to *teripang* (sea cucumber), resulting in three deaths and 51 injuries.¹⁶ Earlier that month, a clash between Debut and Dian Darat and Dian Pulau villages in S.E. Maluku resulted in 17 injuries.¹⁷ Again, conflicts of this type were more likely to contain group elements in Maluku than North Maluku. Of the seven cases in both provinces, four in North Maluku occurred between two individuals, denoting private property disputes, while in Maluku three cases occurred between two groups, and two between a group and an individual.

Administrative disputes

The great number of violent administrative disputes recorded in Maluku is anomalous and are largely the result of coding inconsistency. A number of incidents were entered into this category simply because a state actor (police, military, government official) was party to the conflict, but where the conflict did not actually arise over administrative procedure of funds and services, which is what this category seeks to capture. This data is currently undergoing revision, but it does highlight the interesting – and alarming – trend of police to be involved in violent conflict in Maluku as first and second party actors, in nine of 17 cases captured here. The most serious of these was the attack by around 20 district-level police troopers on students at Pattimura University on 20 April 2005, after one police officer felt he had been insulted when he was ‘swept’ for drugs and weapons as he exited the university. Seven students were seriously wounded in the attack.¹⁸

There was very little violence associated with procedure in North Maluku. These cases appear in this dataset because they resulted in the mass mobilization of people, mainly in political demonstrations. People in Ternate protested against high-profile cases of government corruption and mass layoffs. One particular case, involving land acquisition and access to jobs as civil servants, featured particularly prominently in newspaper reporting in the first half of this year. (see Box 3 below).

¹⁶ Conflict ref: M2124

¹⁷ Arma vs. Watmuri, Maluku Tenggara Barat (conflict ref M2124); Debut vs Dian Darat and Dian Pulau, Maluku Tenggara 4 May 2005 (conflict ref. M2117) A third significant case, in which 35 food kiosks were dismantled by the district government and the PT. Modern Multi Guna private enterprize, was also allocated to this conflict category because the eviction of the foodsellers deprived them of economic resources; this largely explains the large amount of property damage associated with this category.

¹⁸ Conflict ref: M1037. This is actually yet another example of disproportionate response to an insult or offense.

Box 3: Low impact, high profile: citizens vs. the government over Babullah airport

The Babullah airport case was a conflict of economic resources (land and jobs) as much as it was a long-running dispute about government management and procedure. The conflict began when members of four urban villages living within the vicinity of the airport demanded that their children be prioritized for positions with the North Maluku Airports office. They also sought compensation for the land compulsorily acquired for the expansion of the airport, having only reluctantly agreed to sell their land out of respect for the Ternate Sultan.

The villagers formed a team of community representatives and the North Maluku provincial government funded them to visit the General Director of Air Transport in Jakarta. An agreement was reached: nine residents of the four villages would be prioritized every time the airport recruited civil servants. The airport authorities would notify community leaders every time recruitment was to take place. Locals would also be involved in airport construction projects, and the Director General would himself visit Ternate to discuss land compensation. Locals were eventually awarded Rp. 21.8 billion in compensation.

However, the agreement threatened to come unstuck when the North Maluku Provincial Government refused to sign the MoU awarding the villagers compensation. Angry, the people vowed to demonstrate en masse before the governor's office. The case remains unresolved.

Access to power and influence (elections)

The District Head and Mayoral campaigns and elections (*Pilkada*) in North Maluku this year explain the number of cases (largely non-violent) relating to conflict over access to power and influence. *Pilkada* took place in South, North and East Halmahera, the Sula and Tidore archipelagos, as well as in Ternate city in June. Not surprisingly, parties to these conflicts were overwhelmingly public groups and the government. In Maluku, District Head elections were held in just two districts, namely West Seram and East Seram.

Tensions surrounding political elections run high throughout Indonesia, and the Malukus are no exception. Two of the four violent cases captured in this category in North Maluku involved internal party disputes over candidate selection. The head of the Golkar election team for the Ternate Mayoral election was injured in the party room by a member of a losing faction,¹⁹ while angry supporters of a losing candidate in the PDK (Persatuan Demokrasi Kebangsaan) pre-selection in West Halmahera set the PDK Head's house alight and ransacked the local election commission office.²⁰ In East Seram a group of villagers from Geser beat the head of the regional elections commission, after he

¹⁹ 30 May 2005, conflict ref N43

²⁰ 16 April 2005, conflict ref N 47

announced that a certain candidate was in the lead. The same group also threw ballot boxes into the ocean in protest.²¹

The Ternate Mayoral election offered a fascinating insight into the dynamics of elite-level politics and popular support. In a bid to ensure a royal presence in the mayor's office, the Sultan's wife, Nita, ran for Deputy Mayor. When it became clear that the Nita-Sujud partnership would not win the election, allegations were made of electoral fraud in support of the winning party, amongst them that vote cards had been falsified. In a series of demonstrations, thousands of ordinary villagers, including women and children, were mobilized from parts of Ternate where support for the Sultanate remains strong.²² The defeat of the Sultan's wife, as well as the strength of traditional supporters numbers, are two interesting if contradictory indicators of the state of the Ternate sultanate, which traditionally wields great influence in the North Maluku region. The Sultan's power suffered during the North Maluku conflict when his 'yellow forces', who were deployed ostensibly to keep the peace but also committed a number of human rights violations, were defeated by the 'white forces' and the Sultan's palace occupied.²³

²¹ 27 June 2005, Conflict ref: M 2135

²² 29 June 2005, Conflict ref N73, personal observation. Unfortunately, several demonstrations over this issue took place in early July (and probably onwards), and as such are not covered by this dataset.

²³ North Maluku researcher's report, p 4

Chapter 3: Data Comparison

In order to ascertain whether the newspaper data captured true conflict trends, as well as to compare the usefulness of newspaper data with other sources, both research teams collected police and hospital data, as well as data collected and logged by the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) as part of their routine Incident Tracking, for the six month research period. Maluku researchers also used data collated by the Maluku Inter-Faith Association in their comparisons.

Naturally, different organizations collect data for different reasons, using different categories. Lack of standard definitions made data comparison difficult.

Police data

In this study, we acknowledge the difficulty involved in truly separating crime from conflict; violent acts committed as the result of conflict are usually inherently illegal and criminal, while at the same time standard crimes can also lead to conflict when they provoke revenge or mob justice. At the same time, however, this study does not record incidents of a 'purely' criminal nature – which means no theft, fraud, rape or similar, unless it can be linked causally with conflict. Police data, on the other hand, does not make this distinction. Cases of fraud and theft are mixed in with incidents of beatings and lynching, and it is difficult to know which incidents fit the criteria of our study.

In North Maluku, police recorded 284 cases in Ternate alone, as compared with the 69 captured as part of this study. However, these 284 cases were recorded in 34 categories of crime, including everything from falsifying letters and public drunkenness to sexual assault and arson. Separating out the police categories that describe physical violence (public beatings, arson) gives us 104 cases, but there is still no way of knowing how many of these stemmed from conflict. Casualty and fatality figures for this data were unavailable.

Police data for Maluku province is given for a certain number of categories, selected so as to best match with the newspaper conflict types. Police data for all seven districts in Maluku captured twelve conflicts and twelve fatalities relating to terrorism, bombs and inter-village clashes. This compares with 113 cases (67 violent) and 24 deaths captured by the newspaper data. Another limitation of the Polda Maluku data is that it only records cases that were written up for formal processing. This means that a whole range of incidents where victims decided not to press charges (or indeed, perpetrators escaped charges through less official means) are not captured.

Hospital data

Hospital data was collected from RSU Chasan Boesoiri Ternate in North Maluku and RSUD Dr. Haulussy in Ambon, Maluku, each the primary hospital in the provincial capital. Data from both hospitals was even less informative, with conflict-related cases inseparable from cases of illness or accident. In Maluku, casualty figures refer to the

number of autopsy, or forensic, examinations, not the number actually treated or admitted.

UN Incident tracking

Although the DSS in Ambon is tasked with logging incidents with the potential to impact on human security in both Maluku and North Maluku, just one incident was reported in North Maluku in the first half of 2005. Data was far better in Maluku, and because the incident reports are narrative, the researchers were able to select the incidents that fit the criteria for inclusion into this study. After the local newspapers used as part of this study, the DSS reports were the best source of information, recording 14 conflict incidents and 17 deaths in five districts.

Conflict tracking by the Maluku Inter-Faith Association

The Maluku Inter-Faith Association similarly compiled its own incident tracking, although it is far less comprehensive than either the newspaper or UNDSS datasets. Inter-Faith reported 19 cases resulting in just four deaths. The difference between the newspaper figures and the Inter-faith figures is because the Inter-faith data focuses more on tracking the actors involved in conflict incidents, rather than their impacts.²⁴ Interfaith trackers cite 'local newspapers' as their primary source of information.

North Maluku data differs too greatly to be really useful. However closer examination of the Maluku comparative data yields some interesting comparisons.

²⁴ See Maluku researcher's report

Figure 2: Data Comparison over time: Violent Cases

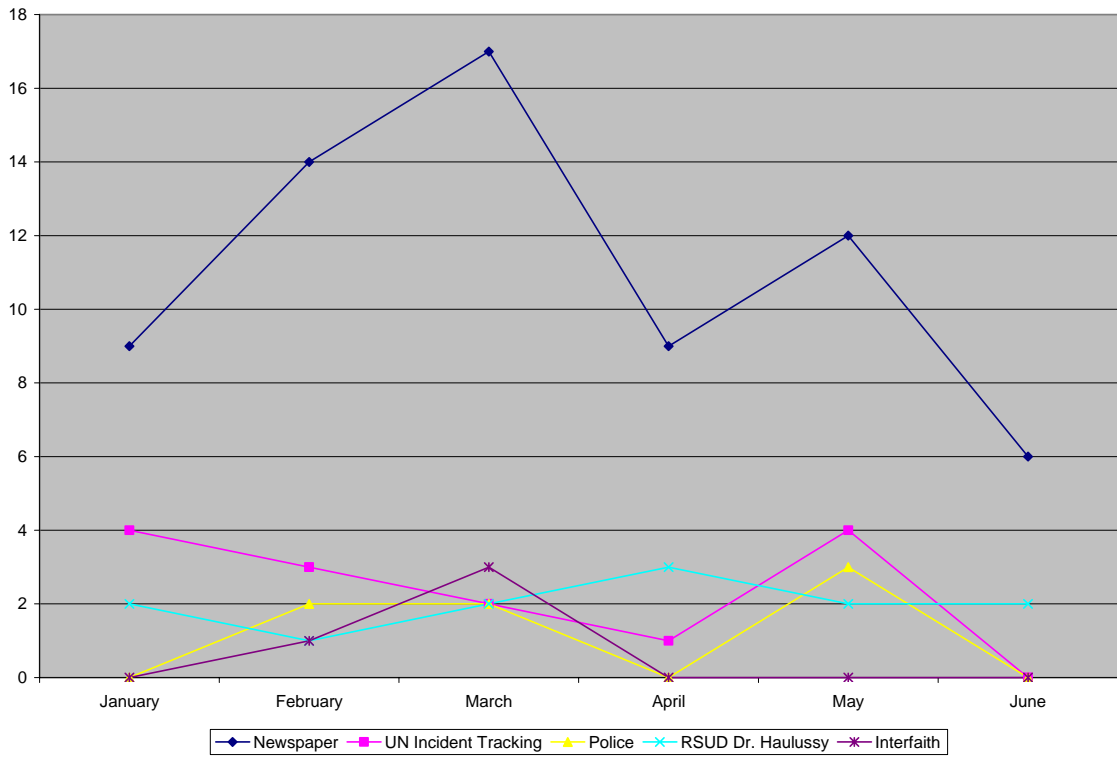
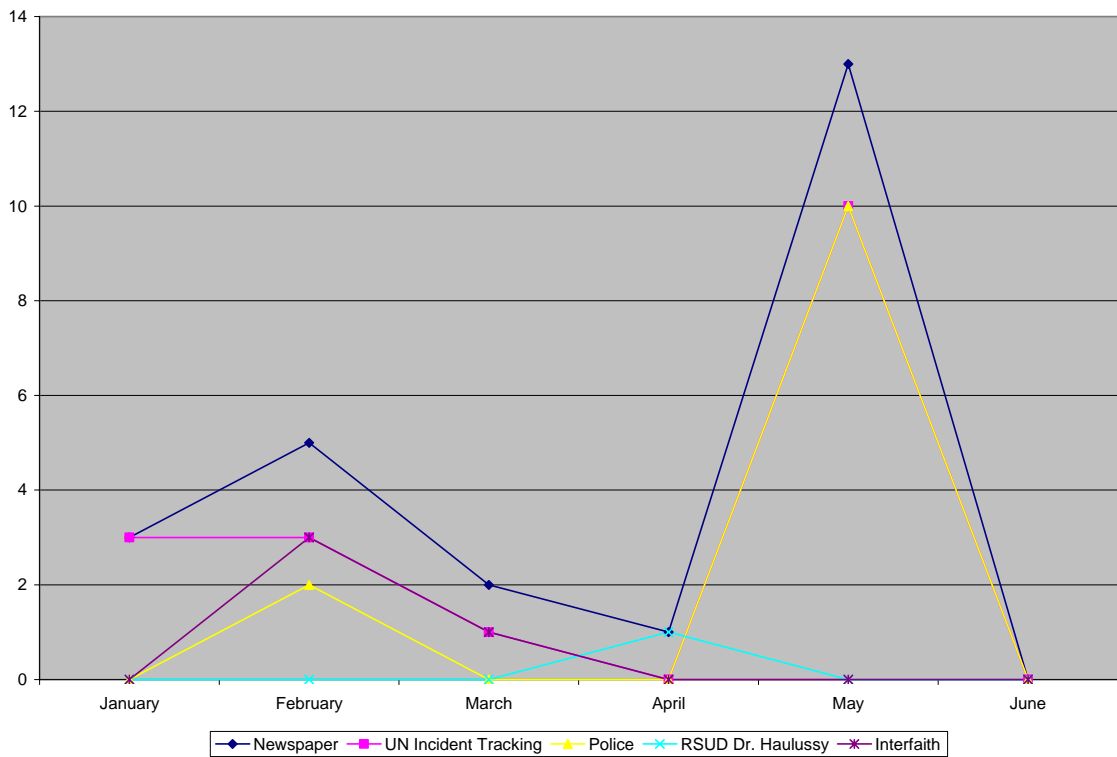


Figure 3: Data Comparison over Time: Fatalities



The different comparative sources of data track one another, suggesting that the newspaper data is capturing real, or at least widely observable trends in local conflict. High points of violent conflict in March and May do not seem to be related to any specific phenomenon; the majority of incidents during these periods were run-of-the-mill lynchings and fights recorded under the ‘Vigilantism/Retribution’ category. Spikes in fatality numbers in February are due to the Karaoke Villa shooting incident, that killed two, and in May from the Lokki shooting incident, that killed five.

Another notable feature of the newspaper data in comparison to other sources in Maluku is that it captures more conflict in the districts beyond Ambon.

Table 3: Comparative conflict data (whole dataset) by source

District	Source									
	Newspaper		Police		Hospital Dr. Haulussy Ambon		UN Incident Tracking		Maluku Inter- faith Association	
	# cases	# deaths	# cases	# deaths	# cases	# deaths	# cases	# deaths	# cases	# deaths
Ambon	62	7	10	2	12	1	28	5	16	2
Central Maluku	20	3	1	0	No Data		2	1	2	2
S.E Maluku	7	3	1	0			1	0	0	0
West Seram	9	7	1	7			1	7	0	0
Buru	6	0	2	3			2	0	1	0
West S.E. Maluku	5	4	0	0			2	4	0	0
East Seram	4	0	0	0			0	0	0	0
TOTAL	113	24	15	12	12	1	36	17	19	4

The newspaper data captures violent conflict and fatalities in regions more effectively than any other source. Notably, only newspapers recorded any incidents in East Seram. Both these incidents were captured by the sub-provincial news source *Seram Pos*, illustrating the value of using news sources at the most local levels possible.

Chapter 4: Constraints and Considerations: Newspapers in a Conflict Environment

4.1 Polarization and Bias

In Ambon, by universal admission, newspapers at the time of *kerusuhan* (conflict) were polarized. As noted earlier, this led to highly partisan and biased reporting on the conflict as it unfolded. Newspapers abandoned their role as objective record-keepers and instead became mouthpieces for disaffected communities.

Initially, at least, this was due largely to environmental factors. The 'Muslim' publication *Ambon Express* split off from the older 'Christian' publication *Suara Maluku* following the segregation of the city. As *Suara Maluku* offices were located in a Christian part of town, Muslim journalists and staff were physically unable to go to work. As the conflict progressed, lack of access to the 'other side' meant it was difficult to cross check reports and thereby present a balanced view. The three newspapers operating in Ambon at the time of the conflict also reported being subject to pressure to report news according to the interests of their own camps. Equally, newspaper journalists were themselves caught up in conflict and 'took sides' for personal reasons. An additional element was the acknowledged lack of professionalism or awareness of basic journalistic principles, due to a lack of experience and training of young journalists hired to meet the soaring demand for local news - in addition to the division of *Suara Maluku* into two publications in early 1999, the new daily *Siwalima* also appeared later that year.

This study attempted to test the question of how a truly biased media affects the way conflict is reported, and so how useful this data will be in terms of constructing a conflict mapping system. According to a range of sources in Ambon, bias manifested itself in two main ways. Primarily, in the way newspapers proportioned blame for attacks, emphasizing the illegitimacy and viciousness of the opposing side's actions, while stressing their own side's suffering and right to act. Clearly, this has serious impacts for the framing and perpetuation of conflict, but this kind of nuance will not necessarily be captured, or affect, the kind of quantitative data being collected by this type of study.

This study attempted to identify discrete incidents, or series of incidents, that occurred between 1999 and 2001, for which archives are present, and compare the quantitative 'pictures' of those incidents that emerge through two diametrically positioned sources. However, ultimately it proved difficult to find enough many incidents covered by two sources, mainly because newspapers rarely reported on the same events. Typically, *Siwalima* would report on events occurring in the Christian zone, while *Ambon Express* would cover stories from the Muslim zone.

The following example illustrates (albeit in a very limited way), the disagreement of data and coverage of conflict between two polarized sources. Table 4 compares the impacts

reported by Siwalima and Ambon Express for three incidents that took place in May 2001.

Table 4: Comparison of Reported Impacts for three incidents in Ambon Express and Siwalima

Date	Description	Source					
		Ambon Express			Siwalima		
		# deaths	# injuries	# properties damaged	# deaths	# injuries	# properties damaged
May 14	Shooting in Ambon Bay	3	2	-	3	2	-
May 22	Invasion in Mardika and Soya by group wearing military clothing	6	17	'Dozens'	6		-
May 31	Another hail of bullets in Batu Merah	2	3	-	2	1	-

In interviews conducted in June this year, newspaper editors and journalists in Ambon explained that during the high conflict period, partisan reporting meant that quantitative information could differ between sources. Generally, reports would roughly agree on death tolls, but injury and property damage estimates, harder to quantify, could vary far more wildly.²⁵ This is borne out by the figures in this sample, which show that the two sources agreed on fatality figures, but not on the numbers of injuries or property damage.

The May 22 reports describe a series of 'invasions' and shootings by masked Muslims²⁶ into Christian suburbs Soya and Mardika. According to national level news sources, the week-long invasions resulted in eighteen deaths.²⁷ The May 31 reports describe a clash between Christians from Soya and Mardika with neighboring Muslims in Batu Merah, which were perceived as being retaliatory. It is telling in and of itself that although these invasions occurred over a week-long period (starting on 20 May), Ambon Express did not report them further between 22 and 31 May.

The obvious difference between the May 22 reports is that Ambon Express reports significant injuries and property damage, while Siwalima does not. Following the logic of sources having better access and more detailed information of incidents occurring on their respective sides of town, the Christian *Siwalima's* interpretation of events should be the most reliable. Yet, it is just as likely that *Siwalima* chose to downplay the impact of these attacks, or simply decided to focus its coverage on the fatalities as the most dramatic aspect of the story. Observers in Ambon report that newspapers were sometimes inclined to downplay or overplay tolls, 'depending on the moment'.²⁸

²⁵ Interviews with Achmad Ibrahim, Ambon Ekspres Editor-in-Chief, 29 June 2005 and Novi Pinontoan, Suara Maluku Editor-in-Chief, 30 June 2005.

²⁶ ICG's account of these incidents state that the perpetrators were Muslim (ICG 2002, p 12). The researcher responsible for this section emphasized only that they were dressed in military garb.

²⁷ ICG (2002), p 12

²⁸ Brass (1997) discusses the way conflicts can be constructed, arguing that opposing sides in a conflict may overstate and inflate conflict and its impacts in the construction of 'grievance myths' that seek to

Newspaper respondents argued that this distortion came from the sources journalists used for their information, not from the journalists themselves, but once again a lack of cross-checking meant that these distortions were printed without qualification.

The Batu Merah attack occurred in a Muslim area and two of the three injured were Muslim, the other Christian. Siwalima only reported the Christian injury, while Ambon Express reported all three. This may have been a function of Ambon Express' superior access to the story, so that Siwalima was unaware of Muslim injuries, or perhaps simply wasn't interested in reporting them. Newspaper accounts appear to agree on casualty figures in the Ambon Bay incident, persons in a speedboat fired on a Christian passenger ferry traveling to Galala, a Christian area. However, Siwalima's coverage goes into more incidental detail, reflecting that publication's better access to the Christian zone.

Thus, newspaper biases can significantly affect the qualitative summary of conflict collated by the newspaper mapping methodology. Essentially, however, this just means that researchers should not rely on one publication for information; wherever possible, several sources should be combined to build up an aggregate picture of conflict.

As conflict in Maluku has subsided, and community divisions have become less marked, the polarization of media in Ambon has also lessened. Journalists from both sides (as well as from North Maluku) were brought together in Bogor in April 2001 to discuss the importance of non-biased reporting, and the Maluku Media Center (MMC) was created to facilitate the training and transfer of information between journalists, as well as to teach them the principles of peace journalism. Today, while newspapers are still stamped 'Christian' and 'Muslim', most observers agree that reporting from both sides is far more balanced than it was during the conflict. Newspaper editors argue that they are now much more rigorous about cross-checking information between various sources, including police, so that conflict tolls no longer vary between publications. Editors also talk about their moral obligation, as well as the commercial incentive, to report both sides. However, reluctance to identify groups as belonging to specific ethnic or religious categories, to be explicit about motivations and underlying issues in conflict have impacted on some of the data we have collected as part of this study, as noted earlier.

'Bias' in Maluku is still present, however, most notably in the angles and ways of 'packaging' news the various papers use. A commonly cited example is that 'Christian' papers are more explicit about detailing 'terrorist' (read Muslim) developments, such as the recent discover of international terror connections to Maluku conflict, while 'Muslim' papers are more likely to play up Republik Maluku Selatan (RMS, associated with Christian elements) separatist stories. Nevertheless, both kinds of news are newsworthy, and as such appear in both publications.

4.2 Publication and archives

garner wider support for a cause. A biased media could contribute to this process, distorting true pictures of conflict.

It has already been noted earlier that conflict in North Maluku closed down newspaper sources and archives do not exist for that period. Today, daily newspapers have proliferated in both Maluku and North Maluku, but many remain under-resourced and unreliable. While *Malut Pos* (North Maluku) was published routinely for the six month research period, *Ternate Pos* (North Maluku), *Ambon Express* and *Siwalima* (Maluku) were printed more sporadically. Most notably, *Ternate Pos* did not print for almost two months due to the Managing Director's political commitments with the Tidore district head election. Where possible, gaps in archives were filled by local dailies (*Aspirasi* and *Mimbar Keiraha* in North Maluku, *Info Baru* in Maluku.)

Just as during periods of high conflict, there was little overlap in the conflicts reported by the daily sources, largely due to the erratic publication noted above. Of the 109 cases reported in North Maluku, just 10 were covered by two daily newspapers. In Maluku, of 113 conflicts overall, a proportionately higher but still small 23 cases were reported by both daily newspapers. In both Maluku and North Maluku, one publication was clearly superior to the other both in terms of numbers of conflicts captured as well geographic coverage (*Malut Pos* in North Maluku, *Ambon Express* in Maluku), but the other publications still captured conflicts that these two did not. Again, this underlines the necessity of using more than one newspaper in this kind of research, not just to combat potential bias but to cover any shortfalls.

However, in Maluku, more *deaths* were reported by both sources than by just one – 13 fatalities covered by two sources, versus 11 only covered by one of the two. Naturally, deaths make stories more newsworthy, and these stories are therefore likely to attract the attention of more than one publication. The corollary of this is that newspapers tend to cover non-violent conflicts less evenly, which is why non-violent conflict was largely excluded from this study.²⁹

4.3 Urban/rural bias

More than half of the conflicts in each province were recorded as occurring in provincial capitals. This is almost certainly not a true reflection of reality, but at least in part a function of the limited access newspapers have to the more remote regions, in combination with the relative lack of interest regional conflict (unless it is very serious) holds for the largely urban readership. Unfortunately, the sub-provincial sources used by this study were not able to add a great deal to the picture of conflict in each province. Both *Halut Press* and *Seram Pos* are weekly publications and they tended to be printed sporadically. However, as noted in the previous section, the only conflict data at all recorded for East Seram came from *Seram Pos*. Where sub-provincial sources exist, it is worth including them in datasets.

²⁹ This is discussed in more detail in Barron and Sharpe (2005)

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Using newspapers in Maluku and North Maluku to record and map conflict provides us with an interesting and varied picture of conflict and violence in those two provinces. In Maluku, which has experienced longer and more-drawn out conflict than North Maluku, significant levels of violent conflict was recorded across several categories, most notably as the result of ‘terrorist’ acts, as well as resource disputes. In both Maluku and North Maluku, violence associated with retribution and vigilantism accounted for the most violent incidents, as well as significant impacts.

Conflict in Maluku was more likely to contain communal elements than conflict in North Maluku, which on the face of it would seem to indicate the continued presence of communal conflict in Maluku, whereas in North Maluku it seems to have declined. However, the extent to which cleavage was present in either province was unclear from newspaper data, which purposefully glosses over and blurs religious or ethnic divisions.

The incidence of conflict presented by the newspaper data would seem to tally with data obtained from other sources. Newspaper data gave richer and more nuanced account of conflict in both provinces than comparative information collected from police, hospital, UN and NGO sources.

At the same time, a number of factors limited and constrained the extent and contexts in which this kind of data should be used. Newspaper publication and archives during both high and low periods of conflict can be sporadic and unreliable. Further, the extreme bias and polarization of news sources during high periods of conflict can materially affect the way tolls and impacts are reported by newspapers and captured by this dataset. Both these facts underline the importance of using multiple sources to cover shortfalls.

As previous studies have shown, the newspaper methodology is less reliable at capturing conflict occurring outside of cities, or of non-violent, local level conflict. As ever, newspaper mapping should be done in conjunction with more in-depth qualitative research to arrive at the fullest understanding of conflict incidence and patterns.

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Annex 1: Conflict Codes

Conflict Types

1. Resource Conflicts: Ownership, Access and Use

- a) Natural Resources: Publicly-owned
- b) Natural Resources: Privately-owned
- c) Natural Resources: Communally-owned
- d) Man-made resources: Publicly owned
- e) Man-made resources: Privately owned
- f) Jobs
- g) Markets

2. Administrative Disputes: Management and Procedures

- a) Procedure/management of other government development project or government funds
- b) Procedure/management of government services
- c) Procedure/management of company (public)
- d) Procedure/management of company (private)
- e) Procedure/management of Donor program

3. Political Position and Influence conflicts (*competition over political power*)

- a) Village-level state position
- b) District-level state position
- c) District-level non-state position
- d) Other position _____ (write in)
- e) Political party influence dispute

4. Vigilantism and Retribution

- a) Theft
- b) Sexual indiscretion
- c) Murder
- d) Identity clash
- e) Damage to Property
- f) Accident causer
- g) Humiliation/face loss
- h) Witchcraft/Ninja
- i) Other deviant removal
- j) Other _____ (write in)

5. Other

- a) Domestic Violence
- b) Other Intra-family arguments
- c) Terrorism
- d) Residual

Levels

1. Intra-household (people living in same household)
2. Other intra-village (people living in same village but not same household)
3. Inter-village (people living in different villages)
4. Extra-village (beyond just village conflict)
5. District (conflict specifically originating from, or somehow inherent to, the district level)

Weapons

1. Hands/fists (and other body parts)
2. Sticks
3. Stones
4. Sharp weapons (knives, sickles, swords etc)
5. Guns
6. Petrol Bombs/grenades (thrown)
7. Bomb (stationary)
8. Fire
9. Other _____ (write in)

Type of Actors

1. Individual (or household).
2. Community (non institution, include informal group)
 - a) Student groups
 - b) Worker groups/unions (including farmers groups)
 - c) NGOs
 - d) Informal 'massa' (not otherwise classifiable)
 - e) Other _____ (write in)
3. State
 - a) Police (at all levels)
 - b) Military (at all levels)
 - c) Government institutions (at all levels)
 - d) Other
4. Enterprises (private and public)
5. Other (write in)

Cleavage

1. Communal (ethnic)
2. Communal (religious)
3. Communal (secular)
4. Not relevant

Intervention (Who)

1. Security/Justice sector
 - a. Police
 - b. Army
 - c. Informal security group
 - d. Courts/Prosecutor
2. Formal Government
 - a. Village Executive (Kepala Desa, Sekdes, Kepala Dusun, Ketua RT/RW)
 - b. Village Legislative (BPD)
 - c. Camat/Kecamatan
 - d. Bupati/Kabupaten
 - e. Governor/Provincial government/government department
 - f. National government/government department
3. Informal leaders (tokoh masyarakat)
 - a. Tokoh Adat
 - b. Tokoh Agama
 - c. Leader of conflicting groups
 - d. Other kind of community leader
4. Other informal intervention
 - a. Family of Actor
 - b. Passerby
5. Program Staff
6. Other (write in)
7. No-one

Success of Intervention

1. Very successful (conflict resolved)
2. Moderately successful (violence stopped, conflict being processed, looks likely to be resolved)
3. No more violence, but not resolved; could become violent again
4. Unsuccessful
5. Not sure/no information