

The Politics of Going Home: The Future of North Moluccan Internally Displaced Persons¹

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Abstract

The numerous conflicts that swept Indonesia before and after the fall of Suharto in 1998 displaced over 1.3 million people throughout the country. These included refugees from the post-election violence in East Timor, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the various internal conflicts, such as North Maluku, Kalimantan and Poso. In October of 2001 the Indonesian government introduced a policy that was aimed at resolving the problem of displaced people throughout the archipelago by the end of 2002. The government's plan contained no details on how this was going to be accomplished other than providing three options for displaced populations: 1) return home; 2) empowerment in their place of refuge or; 3) relocation. After this date the IDPs would be handled by the "usual channels," essentially losing their status as IDPs. This policy affected the approximately 220,000 people displaced by the violence in North Maluku to varying degrees. Some were forcefully returned to their homes, while others were simply ignored. This paper looks at the effects of this policy and its implementation in North Sulawesi and North Maluku. Additionally

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this paper looks at the politics of returning home for IDPs in this part of Indonesia, examining issues such as reconstruction, reconciliation, and the continuing military presence in the region.

1 Introduction

The numerous conflicts that swept Indonesia before and after the fall of Suharto in 1998 displaced over 1.3 million people throughout the country.¹ These included refugees from the post-election violence in East Timor, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) from various internal conflicts, such as Poso and North Maluku. In October of 2001 the Indonesian government introduced a policy aimed resolving the “problem” of displaced people throughout the archipelago by the end of 2002. After this date the IDPs would be handled by the “usual channels,” essentially losing their status as IDPs. The government’s plan contained no details on how this was going to be accomplished other than providing three options for displaced populations: 1) return home (*pemulangan*); 2) empowerment in their place of refuge (*pemberdayaan*), or; 3) relocation (*pengalihan*) (Sosial, 2001). This new policy was greeted with confusion by many IDPs, because it was announced at a time when people were still fleeing from ongoing violence in Poso and Ambon (Duncan, 2003b). The policy also stipulated that all government aid to the displaced would cease on December 31, 2001. The government was no longer willing to provide aid specifically for displaced people because a “sizeable amount of funds” had been disbursed to IDPs/refugees that should have gone “for other poor communities, who represent a larger percentage” (Sosial, 2001).

The central government in Jakarta had come to the realization that a failure to deal with the continued presence of displaced people throughout the nation would “threaten government per-

¹This figure was obtained by the World Food Program by compiling figures collected and provided by the various government agencies in each province or affected area. One problem with this figure is that there was a clear tendency and incentive for each province to inflate the IDP number so as to receive more money from the central government. (F. Kok, pers. comm.).

formance and national development” (Sosial, 2001). Furthermore, the government’s increasing awareness of jealousy and dissatisfaction between IDPs/refugees and local communities was spurring it to action. The government’s concern with local/IDP relations was well placed, as conflicts between indigenous communities and migrants were, in part, what had initially created many of these IDP situations. While it is clear that a policy response to the IDP situation was warranted, it is rather unclear whether Jakarta’s strategy took sufficient account of return and reintegration realities at regional and local levels.

In Halmahera, for example, regional officials considered reconciliation and the smooth return of IDPs as pivotal in their local redistricting process. They worried that a poor handling of the IDP situation, or a return to violence would affect this process and possibly cost them their hoped for autonomy as new districts (*kabupaten*). There were also political concerns about the continuing presence of IDPs and its implication for the 2004 general elections. Some officials in North Sulawesi and Ambon thought that a large number of IDPs could have a negative impact on elections since IDPs would be easy to manipulate and their votes would be inexpensive to purchase (Maluku Media Centre, 2003a). Others accused government officials of slowing the return of IDPs for just this reason, to increase their constituency for upcoming elections (Manado Post, 2003a). Many IDPs were aware of the power of their votes and in several instances threatened to boycott elections if promised aid packages were not delivered (Sinar Harapan, 2004). As discussed below, sometimes interests differed from region to region and occasionally led to conflicting agendas. In addition to these directly political concerns, there were other “political” factors affecting government efforts and IDP decisions, including the continued presence of the military in North Maluku, or local government concerns about gaining access to natural resource exploitation opportunities.

To what extent was national IDP policy formulation politically reactive? How significantly was regional and local policy imple-

mentation politically driven? In what ways did these dynamics influence IDP decisions to return to their homes in North Maluku or stay in their place of refuge? This paper looks at the effects of IDP policy and its implementation in North Sulawesi and North Maluku. With the IDP issue still not fully resolved and national elections imminent, such an examination is timely. How the government handles the return of 220,000 people in North Maluku, and a further one million elsewhere in Indonesia, will directly impact prospects for social and political stability—especially in regions recovering from conflict.

2 The Causes of Displacement in North Maluku

The IDPs from North Maluku were displaced by 10 months of ethno-religious conflict that lasted from August 1999 through July 2000.² When violence broke out in January of 1999 between Muslim and Christian communities in Ambon, the provincial capital of Maluku, the northern part of the province (what would soon become the new province of North Maluku) remained peaceful.³ It was not until mid-August of 1999 that violence erupted on the island of Halmahera in northern Maluku in the sub-district (*kecamatan*) of Kao between Makian migrants and indigenous populations. These clashes focused on plans by the regional government to create a new sub-district of Makian Daratan, with its capital at Malifut, from the southern half of the Kao sub-district. This new administrative division would consist of all of the Makian villages that were established in 1975 when the Indonesian government resettled the Makian in Kao to protect them from a predicted volcanic eruption on their home island.⁴ It was also to include several

²For a more detailed account of the course of the violence see (Nanere, 2000) and (Duncan, 2001)

³For more on the violence in Ambon see (Human Rights Watch, 1999) and (Klinken, 2001).

⁴See (Ternate Pos, 2002b) and (Lucardie, 1985) for more on the resettlement of the Makian.

Pagu villages and some villages from the sub-district of Jailolo.⁵

The violence in August lasted only a few days, but tensions lingered. Disturbances broke out again in October, this time resulting in the total defeat of the Makian by the indigenous population. Approximately 15,000 Makian were forced to flee to the neighboring islands of Ternate and Tidore. Although the Kao-Malifut conflict was primarily based on ethnic differences, influenced by events in Ambon, it soon took on a religious character—as the Makian are Muslim and the majority of the indigenous people of Kao are Christian. Violence then broke out in Tidore and Ternate with the appearance of a suspicious letter calling for Christians in North Maluku to cleanse the region of Muslims.⁶ This letter infuriated Muslims and the resulting riots in early November forced approximately 13,000 largely Christian IDPs to flee to North Sulawesi and Halmahera. This period of violence was followed by “Muslim” attacks on the western and southern regions of Halmahera sending thousands more, largely Christian, IDPs to North Sulawesi and northern Halmahera.

At the end of 1999, after months of tension, fighting broke out in Tobelo in northern Halmahera resulting in the deaths of several hundred Muslims and the complete destruction of their homes and mosques. The violence then spread throughout Halmahera and to the nearby islands of Morotai, Bacan and Obi. Provocative accounts of the violence in Tobelo (Republika, 2000) created a national uproar that played a role in the creation of the Laskar Jihad, a group of self-proclaimed Muslim “Holy Warriors,” who flooded into Maluku several months later to help their religious brethren.⁷ These jihad troops, supported by some military per-

⁵The Pagu villages and those from Jailolo were to be included in the new sub-district of Makian Daratan to meet government requirements for a minimum number of villages in a sub-district.

⁶For an in-depth account of the letter and the rumors surrounding it see (Bubandt, 2003). The letter is reproduced in full in (Nanere, 2000).

⁷For more on the Laskar Jihad see (Hasan, 2002) and (for a more partisan view) see (Shoelhi, 2002).

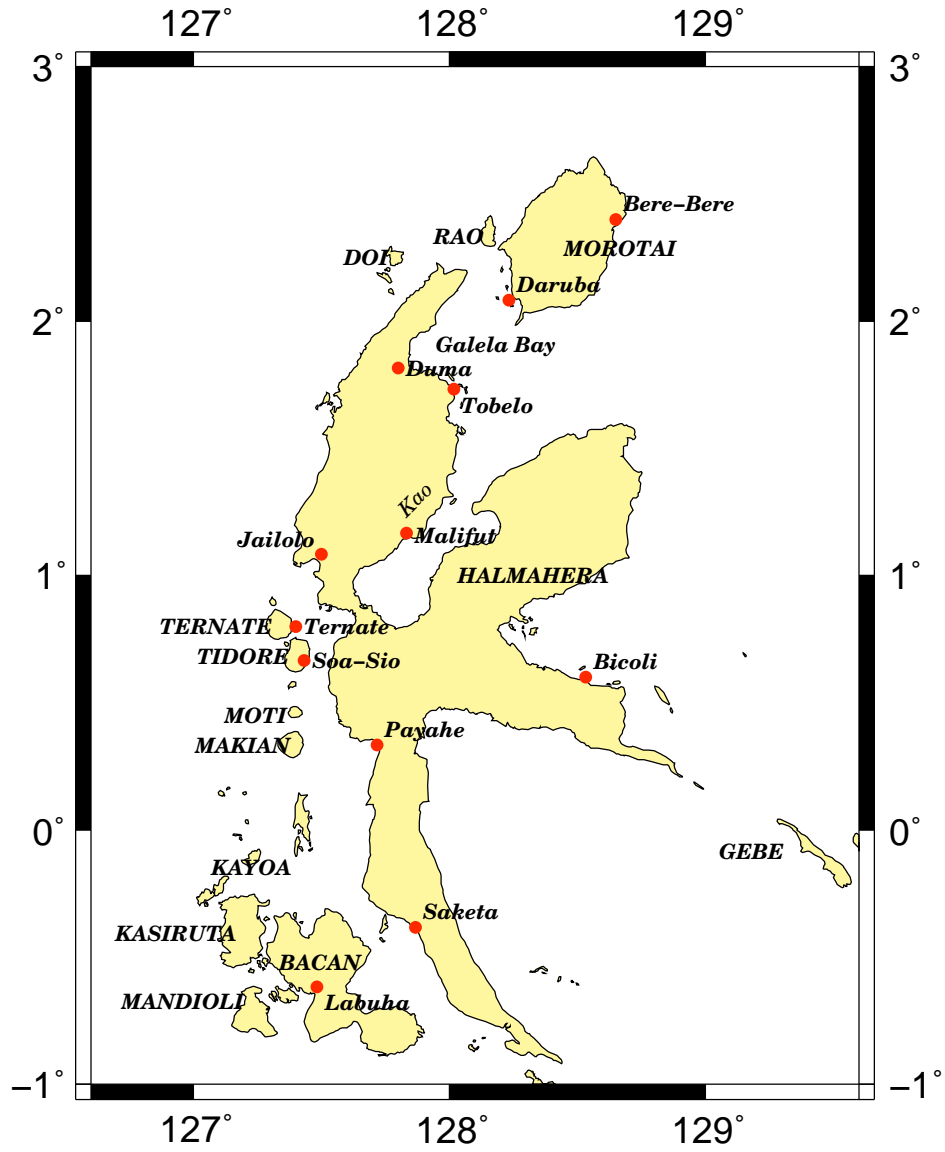


Figure 1: Halmahera and Surrounding Islands

sonnel and some local Muslim populations, attacked and destroyed virtually every Christian village in the sub-district of Galela, as well as other parts of the province. When the large-scale violence finally subsided in July of 2000, few regions were untouched by the conflict and over 220,000 people (roughly 25 percent of the province's population) had been displaced from their homes.

The people fleeing from the conflict in North Maluku went to a number of places inside and outside of the province based largely on religious identification. North Moluccan Muslims primarily fled to the island of Ternate, the sub-district of Galela (northern Halmahera), the southern half of the island of Morotai, and the island of Bacan, while a number of Javanese transmigrants from Kao and Tobelo were removed against their will by the armed forces and returned to Java. Ternate held the largest concentration of IDPs in North Maluku with an estimated 100,000 (close to 10% of the province's entire population) from various parts of North Maluku. The Christian diaspora was more widely spread and covered at least four provinces (North Maluku, Maluku, North Sulawesi, and Irian Jaya). Within North Maluku, Christian IDPs were concentrated in the sub-districts of Tobelo and Kao in northern Halmahera and on the island of Rao, off the west coast of Morotai. By far the largest concentration of Christian IDPs in North Maluku was in the sub-district of Tobelo with some estimates as high as 60,000 people originating from all over the province. Outside of the province approximately 35,000 mainly Christians IDPs were housed in North Sulawesi and additional IDPs fled to Timor, Seram, and Papua (Sorong and Manokwari).⁸

Since the large-scale violence in North Maluku came to an end in June of 2000, the region has remained relatively calm and by mid-2001 many displaced began returning to their homes.⁹ By the

⁸This list is in no way conclusive. Small numbers of IDPs from North Maluku went to a numerous other places as well, including Gorontalo, Makassar, and Jakarta.

⁹There were occasional outbursts of violence, including the destruction of three villages in Morotai Utara in September of 2002; a "Muslim" attack on Gorua and Wari (Tobelo) in June 2002; and several kidnappings and shootings in Galela in early 2002.

end of 2001 some entire communities had already returned such as the various Makian and Pagu villages in the Malifut region of northern Halmahera. However, a large number had yet to return, and many showed no signs of preparing to do so. These people were the target of the new government policy for resolving the “IDP problem” released at the end of 2001.

3 Implementation of the New Policy

The Department of Social Affairs in Jakarta devised the policy to deal with the “IDP problem” throughout Indonesia, seemingly with little input from the regions housing the IDPs, or the regions from which they fled. Although the policy directives and budget came from Jakarta, provincial and regional governments were left to coordinate the implementation of the policy and to distribute the funds. In North Sulawesi, the first move was the cessation of government sponsored food aid to IDPs. This aid had primarily consisted of rice and “side dish money” (*uang lauk pauk*) that was supposedly paid to the IDPs during their period of displacement. This aid, aimed at meeting daily subsistence needs, officially consisted of 400 grams of rice and Rp. 1500 per day per person to be paid in monthly or bimonthly installments. The full amount was rarely, if ever, distributed. IDPs accused civil servants in charge of aid distribution of corruption. In their defense, civil servants claimed that they never received the full amount from Jakarta and thus could not be blamed for the shortfall. It is likely that there is truth to both sides of the argument. For example, in one widely publicized case, a number of people in Ternate were charged with taking approximately Rp. 79 billion from funds earmarked for IDPs to finance a political campaign (Keadilan, 2002).

Although final payments were promised by the end of 2001, they were not made in North Sulawesi until April 2003. Many IDPs thought that the aid had been stopped to encourage, if not force, them to return to North Maluku. Government officials replied that the resources had been more urgently needed to fund

other pressing social needs throughout the archipelago. It is clear, however, that officials were concerned with the growing tensions between IDPs and local communities, often fueled by the jealousy concerning the aid given to the IDPs (Jakarta Post, 2001, *Republika*, 2001, *Tempo*, 2001). IDP suspicions of aid restriction do not seem fully implausible given these conditions. However, if the government had been hoping to encourage the IDPs to return by cutting off the aid, they had limited success. Corruption and mismanagement had depleted the aid to such an extent that most IDPs had learned to cope without it. Furthermore, church groups, NGOs and others continued to provide aid after the government had stopped. Displaced people from rural areas who lacked marketable job skills, and older IDPs who were unable to do the manual labor jobs available, did find it more difficult living in urban IDP camps (such as Manado, Bitung and Ternate) once the aid was stopped. Thus the policy did hasten the return of a small number of IDPs, or in many cases it simply displaced them to new, more rural communities. The second phase of the program was aimed primarily at displaced people who were living in IDP camps in North Sulawesi and in Ternate. In North Sulawesi, the announcement of the policy (without an announced budget) created confusion. Although a few copies of the policy did find their way to the IDPs, copies of the budget were never made available. I was told by the official in charge of handling IDPs in North Sulawesi that Rp. 5.5 million per family, in cash and material, had been allocated to return IDPs to North Maluku, though “unofficial” reports suggested amounts as high as Rp. 15 million.¹⁰ In any case, the amounts that families eventually did receive were a fraction of these sums, sometimes as little as Rp.75,000. Although the policy was widely discussed and much debated in North Sulawesi and Ternate, it was virtually unheard of in the rest of North Maluku, and as late as September of 2002, sub-district officials in Tobelo and Kao had not been informed of the policy—even as IDPs were

¹⁰See (Komentar, 2001a) for one such account.

returning as a result of its implementation in Ternate.

4 Returning Home

The first option for IDPs, and the one favored by the government, was for them to return to their place of origin. One of the largest obstacles to returning displaced people to their original homes and villages was the presence of other IDPs in those locales. As the violence spread through North Maluku in 1999 and 2000, various waves of IDPs swept through the region, often displacing other people in their path and occupying their homes. For example, Muslim IDPs from Tobelo fled to southern Morotai and displaced Christians in the region who then fled elsewhere. The Christian IDPs were reluctant to return to Morotai because the people who had played a role in their own displacement were still present, and often living in their homes. Most IDPs felt it would only aggravate tensions, and potentially lead to further conflicts, if they returned home under these conditions. They argued that the resentment they would feel towards those living comfortably in their houses would eventually lead to violence. Thus a large number of Christian IDPs from southern Morotai in Tobelo were reluctant to return home, yet their continuing presence in Tobelo was cited as one reason that the Muslim IDPs in Morotai were reluctant to return to Tobelo.

Large-scale coordination between regional and local governments could have facilitated the return of these IDPs but such coordination rarely occurred, and in some cases was even discouraged. The differing agendas of regional governments and what they perceived to be their best strategy for reintegrating returnees, or returning IDPs, further complicated the process. It often meant that IDP host communities were doing their best to speed up the pace of returns, while communities recovering from conflict were trying to slow down the pace of returns to ensure a smooth transition. The former were rarely sympathetic to the needs of the latter. For example, the city government of Ternate paid no heed

to requests from officials in Tobelo to repatriate Muslim IDPs in stages. Both Muslim and Christian leaders in Tobelo had agreed that a gradual return of the thousands of IDPs from Ternate was the best way to ensure their peaceful reintegration into the community. The city of Ternate, in contrast, was interested in removing as many IDPs from Ternate as quickly as possible; once they were gone it was no longer their concern. The same could be said for the government of North Sulawesi; its primary goal was to return as many IDPs to North Maluku as possible, regardless of where they were going, and whether recipient regions were able to cope with them, or were even aware they were coming.

Moreover, corruption and mismanagement hampered the program from the beginning. The government did not always handle the return of IDPs itself. In some cases the job was sub-contracted to well-connected local businessmen who were paid based on the number of families they registered and returned, and they typically had no concerns about whether the IDPs were returning to their original homes (as was the official policy) or simply moving elsewhere in the archipelago. For example, the businessman moving IDPs from North Sulawesi to North Maluku returned several hundred IDP families to Tobelo, from whence only a handful had originated. Since they were being paid for the number of families they returned, they did not make efforts to ensure that the people they were “returning” were actually IDPs who were going home nor did they make efforts to coordinate their plans with regional officials. As a result, returnees would often arrive in North Maluku to find that no preparations had been made to accommodate them. Furthermore, many IDPs in North Sulawesi used the program as an opportunity to travel to North Maluku, for business or pleasure, and signed up with false names, then returned when they were done (Komentar, 2003c) (Maluku Media Centre, 2003b). Additionally, people from North Maluku visiting Manado, often posed as returning IDPs in order to get the free ticket. Others would sign up to “return”, board the boat and receive their aid payment, then get off the boat and go back to their current homes

in North Sulawesi. Thus, estimates of IDPs reported as having returned to their homes are often unreliable.

5 When Is It Safe to Go Home?

The government's focus on returning IDPs to their place of origin raised concerns about safety. How was it possible for IDPs, government officials, or aid workers to know when the political situation was conducive for IDPs to return? Having experienced the violence first hand, many IDPs tended to err on the side of caution. In contrast, government officials tended to make their decisions rather indiscriminately. It was often evident that, since their superiors in Jakarta had decided that IDPs needed to go home, all else, including the future safety of the IDPs, was largely irrelevant. At times, officials appeared to have a total disregard for the situation on the ground, often urging people to return to places at the same time that new IDPs were arriving from those very locales, fleeing renewed hostilities. Additionally, officials often equated the cessation of hostilities with safety. For example, in mid-2002 officials in North Sulawesi were deriding IDPs for not returning to Ternate. They pointed out that the fighting had stopped in 2000 and it had been "safe" for almost two years. In response to these portrayals of a safe Ternate, Christian IDPs noted the presence of over 100,000 Muslims IDPs living there (themselves reluctant to go home to Halmahera), many of whom were occupying their houses. They were also quick to note that they could only attend church in Ternate on a heavily guarded military base. As a result IDPs generally disregarded government reports and opinions concerning the safety of North Maluku.

Most IDP concerns regarding their return to North Maluku were legitimate ones. However, some IDPs, who themselves did not plan on returning in the near future, attempted to manufacture a climate of fear in an effort to persuade others not to go home. Certain camp leaders were accused of this behavior because, as the argument went, as soon as the camps closed they would lose con-

trol over aid distribution. The dissemination of rumors about recent or impending violence in North Maluku played a major role in these efforts to dissuade people from returning.

To convince the IDPs to return to North Maluku, the North Sulawesi government took 20 IDPs from various parts of North Maluku on a survey trip to the region to meet with local officials and alleviate their fears. Conclusions concerning the survey trip were mixed. I interviewed almost all of the IDPs who took part in this trip and most were skeptical of the whole process. In general they had met only with sub-district level officials and police, all of whom guaranteed their safety. However, as many IDPs pointed out, this was the government's official position and thus all of the officials had to agree. Meanwhile, according to the government officials, it was a success and proof that it was safe to go home. IDPs were unconvinced and regretted that there had been no opportunity to meet independently with local people. Many of the officials who were telling them that it was conducive to return were often the same people who had promised to protect them in 1999–2000. One IDP who had been on the contingent to Bacan pointed out that they had been accompanied by a military escort throughout their entire visit (the same was true in Morotai), evidence enough for him that it was prudent to wait.

As an additional incentive, North Sulawesi officials promised IDPs that the North Maluku government and the armed forces would guarantee their safety. As IDPs saw it, they were being asked to place their trust, and quite possibly their lives, in the hands of the very people who had failed them in the past, and whose performance since that time had been rather poor. Both Muslim and Christian IDPs noted that although it may look safe to officials from outside the region, to NGO representatives, or even to an anthropologist, they had lived through the violence and were traumatized by their past experiences. They maintained a mistrust of their former neighbors who had often turned on them during the conflict. Officials rarely took IDP trauma into account when discussing their return. Officials also seemed to have a completely

different view of what was meant by the idea of North Maluku being “conducive” for the IDPs to return. Many Christian IDPs wanted their churches rebuilt before they returned, as a sign that Muslims were willing to accept them. However, a leading official in North Sulawesi said that not all of the IDPs could expect to be able to rebuild churches or even to worship in public once they returned. He argued that it was safe for them to return, and that they would have freedom of religion, “but only in their own homes”.

In some cases the government lost its patience waiting for IDPs to make their decisions. The government of the city of Ternate, host to a large number of Muslim IDPs from Tobelo who were reluctant to return, was representative of this impatience. The ferocity of the violence that had taken place in Tobelo and the resulting trauma was a major concern that prevented many Muslims from returning to Tobelo. Furthermore, the presence of several thousand Christian IDPs in Tobelo from elsewhere in Halmahera, many of whom were living in abandoned Muslim homes, caused them to think twice before returning. Muslim IDPs from Tobelo often said they were not afraid of the locals in Tobelo, but were nervous about meeting displaced people from elsewhere who were suffering trauma and might attack them. Furthermore, in the case of Tobelo proper, most of the Muslims had limited economic prospects. A large percentage of them had worked either as laborers at the harbor, or had sold goods at the market. Both of these activities were now controlled by Christians who were unlikely to give them up.

By the end of 2002, the local population of Ternate was losing its patience with the IDPs for a number of reasons. The population of IDPs in the town was almost as large as the town population itself, and many locals were intimidated, citing the arrogance and violent nature of IDPs from Tobelo. The IDPs had demonstrated on a number of occasions when they felt their aid had been misappropriated and at times these demonstrations had turned violent, causing panic among the (largely Christian) Chinese business community who would temporarily flee. As they fled they would

order any ships off-loading their goods to return to sea for fear of looting, and as a result, workers at the harbor could lose several days wages. This loss of wages translated into anger against the IDPs. Furthermore, by mid-2002 there was a growing perception throughout the region (among both Muslims and Christians) that Muslim IDPs from Tobelo were particularly troublesome. Some speculated that the economic issues played a major role in their unwillingness to accept the new status quo.

Regardless of the reasons the IDPs did not want to return to Tobelo, the national government's new policy provided the government in Ternate the opportunity to return most of them. Over the course of a few days in September 2002, several thousand displaced people were shipped to Tobelo, thus solving the IDP problem in Ternate, but seriously exacerbating it in Tobelo. There were still tens of thousands of Christian IDPs in Tobelo, many living in the homes of Muslims, who were not going home in the near future. The local government was already stretched thin coping with these Christian IDPs and was now being asked to take care of thousands of returning Muslim IDPs. Local officials were concerned that these difficulties, along with a tight job market, could lead to increased tensions and the possible outbreak of violence. In June and August of 2002 there had been brief clashes between Christians and returning Muslim IDPs to the north of Tobelo, and many thought the arrival of a large number of Muslim IDPs would exacerbate these tensions.

Reflecting the localized and varied nature of conflict and post-conflict realities, there have also been a number of success stories for returning IDPs, and the United Nations considers North Maluku to be one of the better examples of how to handle the return of IDPs (PBP, 2003, p. 13). As mentioned previously, virtually the entire Makian population of the Malifut region had already returned home by mid-2001. They have largely rebuilt their villages and relations between them and their neighbors in Kao have been peaceful, even to the point that a joint Kao-Malifut *adat* council was established in mid-2003 to fight the expansion of an Australian-

owned goldmine in the region (Lembaga Masyarakat Adat Kao dan Malifut, 2003). Pagu villagers from the Malifut region who had fled to Kao had also returned to their villages. In Galela the majority of people have returned to their homes. Most Muslim IDPs in Galela returned after the Christian communities were defeated in mid-2000 and by the beginning of 2003 most Christian villages had returned or were planning to return in the near future. A large number of IDPs have also returned to the islands of Obi and Bacan in the southern part of the province. Many of these successes consist of people returning to their homes in regions where there are not a large number of IDPs from elsewhere, thus they are not competing with IDPs for aid, nor forcing IDPs from their homes as returnees in Ternate, Tobelo and Morotai were doing.

6 Ambiguity and Ambivalence: Reconciliation in North Maluku

Government officials, local leaders, and NGO workers talked consistently about the importance of “reconciliation” to the return and reintegration of IDPs, yet they rarely clarified exactly what they meant by it. In interviews with local communities throughout North Maluku, most people were unable to distinguish between reconciliation and the simple cessation of fighting. For the most part, government or military sponsored efforts consisted of short *adat* feasts with speeches declaring that reconciliation had taken place. However, these activities did little to improve relations between Muslims and Christians. The prevailing lack of faith in government institutions and the armed forces, which had been unable to prevent the violence, did not help their efforts.

In Galela local officials simply told communities that they must accept that the conflict was “the work of God” and thus neither side was to blame. They hoped this declaration would lead to reconciliation between the two sides. However, this explanation for the violence was not well received. As one Christian man in Galela said:

We are shocked that the government says we cannot blame anyone, and that we have to look at this as the work of God. You can call a famine, a drought or a natural disaster, the work of God but social conflict is different. If a river is turned to blood, you can say that is a curse sent by God, but the Muslims clearly invaded us. How can you say that is the work of God? Why do we have to share equal blame?

It would appear that local governments in North Maluku have adopted a policy of forgetting. Although this seems like an easy policy choice to avoid the pitfalls of prosecution and blame, it was clear from talking to IDPs over the course of fieldwork (both Muslim and Christian) that simply forgetting was not an option. What are the people of North Maluku being asked to forget? Are they being asked to forget about the perpetrators and instigators of the violence? Or to forget about the victims? If it is the latter, most attempts at reconciliation will only increase local resentment against the government. As Biggar (Biggar, 2001, p. 10) notes in his discussion of reconciliation: "To suffer an injury and have it ignored is to be told effectively, 'What happens to you doesn't matter, because you don't matter.'" He also notes that: "hatred and mistrust constitute an unstable mixture that, under certain conditions, is liable to explode and to rupture the half forgetful present with the unfinished business of the past." As the events of 1999–2000 exemplify, the people of North Maluku are not known for their short memories.

In addition to the limited attempts by local government, some local and international NGOs made efforts at reconciliation. They tried to facilitate reconciliation throughout the province with a variety of methods, including seminars on "peace journalism," and multi-day workshops. It remains to be seen (as of late 2003) if these efforts will succeed, as many of them, particularly those of international NGOs, were not done *in-situ*. Furthermore, many people in North Maluku pointed out the irony that the people

who attend the workshops and forums were precisely the people who wanted reconciliation. The people who refused to reconcile their differences, and who never attended such workshops, were the ones who might have benefited from such activities. Oftentimes, moderates would attend the meetings, only to be shouted down upon their return by members of the community who were unwilling to move on.

The local government in Tobelo, northern Halmahera, is hoping to stimulate reconciliation by reviving interest in *adat* (Duncan, 2003c). Leading government officials believe that a return to *adat* is the best answer to facilitating reconciliation. Their ideas are based on the notion that prior to the violence people identified themselves with their religion (as Muslim or Christian) rather than their ethnic identity (Tobelo). They hope that a return to *adat* will switch people's focus of identity to their ethnicity and make them less susceptible to religious-based provocation. As part of this goal of increasing awareness of local tradition, there have been moves to add Tobelo language classes to school curriculums, and a plan to construct *adat* houses in every village to serve as forums for conflict resolution.

7 The Military Presence

The continuing military presence in the region also had an effect on people's decisions to return home. As mentioned above, the armed forces played a role in facilitating "reconciliation" activities, but elements of the armed forces had also played a role in the violence. There were numerous accusations of various levels of military involvement in the fighting, ranging from standing by as violence took place to the selling and renting of weapons and direct participation by individual soldiers or entire units (Suadey, 2000, Aditjondro, 2001). Opinions of the armed forces, as in Ambon, tended to follow religious lines. Muslim communities in North Maluku generally tended to trust the military in the regions where they were victims, such as Tobelo, Galela, and Malifut.

In contrast, Christian communities tended not to trust the armed forces at all. The inability of the army to prevent the outbreak of the violence, and the widespread belief in the complicity of the armed forces in the continuation of the violence left many Christian communities with little faith in the armed forces and police.

Tobelo provides a ready case study. Many Christians there saw the continued military presence up until the end of 2002 as a sign that reconciliation had not occurred, and that Muslims were unwilling to co-exist. Mistrusting the military and believing it had provided cover for Muslim infractions, Christians rejected Muslim demands for the stationing of troops in their districts. When Muslims were repatriated to Tobelo from Ternate, the local government refused to let troops be stationed in the village of Gamhoku. The Muslims were welcome to stay, but without military support. The Muslims declined and most settled in Togoliua to the south, not feeling safe without the armed forces to guarantee their safety.

A general lack of faith in the armed forces seemed to be developing in North Maluku, as it was in much of Indonesia during 2002. Locals felt that the armed forces wanted to maintain the civil emergency as it provided them with lucrative opportunities to make money through various means. Many believe that the sporadic violence that broke out in North Halmahera in 2002 was instigated, or least encouraged, by the armed forces. After each incident, people were encouraged to pay the military protection money if they wanted to move around. Furthermore, the longer things remained unstable, the longer large businesses in the region, such as Barito Pacific and the Newcrest gold mine would need their services.¹¹ An additional concern was the relationships between soldiers and local women. It was estimated by leaders in Tobelo that when one army unit rotated out of Tobelo in late 2001, they left behind over 40 unmarried pregnant women. It was not just Tobelo where the military was a problem. The large military

¹¹The state of civil emergency was lifted in March of 2003. For more on the business dealings of the Indonesian armed forces see (McCulloch, 2000)

presence in on the island of Obi led many who had not fled the violence, to send their daughters, and in some cases their wives, to Manado to escape harassment from soldiers.

8 Relocation

Although the government favored returning IDPs to their original homes, officials were well aware that in some cases that would not be possible. As a result the government provided the option of relocation, which in most cases meant taking part in a transmigration project either within North Maluku or in North Sulawesi. Within North Maluku there was one transmigration settlement constructed by the end of 2002. This project was aimed at Christian IDPs in Manado with a fishing background. The settlement was built to house approximately 40 families on the small, isolated island of Mayu (also known as Batang Dua) in the Moluccas Sea between Halmahera and northern Sulawesi. Another development in North Maluku that affected the relocation of IDPs, although not explicitly a transmigration project, was the government's "re-opening" of the island of Makian for settlement.¹² The island was officially "re-opened" with much fanfare in June of 2002. The re-opening of Makian can be seen, in part, as providing an option for Makian IDPs who did not want to return to the Malifut region.

In North Sulawesi, the Department of Transmigration had built two transmigration sites by the end of 2002 aimed at relocating Christian IDPs from North Maluku. The first site, Kakenturan Dua, was built in the sub-district of Modinding on the western border of the district of Minahasa. This site was plagued by complications from the outset. The neighboring district (*kecamatan*) of Bolaang Mongondow also claimed the land. Officials from the district government of Bolaang Mongondow refused to accept the

¹²The island of Makian was evacuated in 1975 as described above. After that time people slowly moved to the island in small numbers, but since the island was officially closed there were no public services. In 1997 the island had a population of 5,015 people (Ternate Pos, 2002a). The island was opened with the issuance of SK Bupati No 284 / 2002. For more on the re-opening of the island see (Ternate Pos, 2002b)

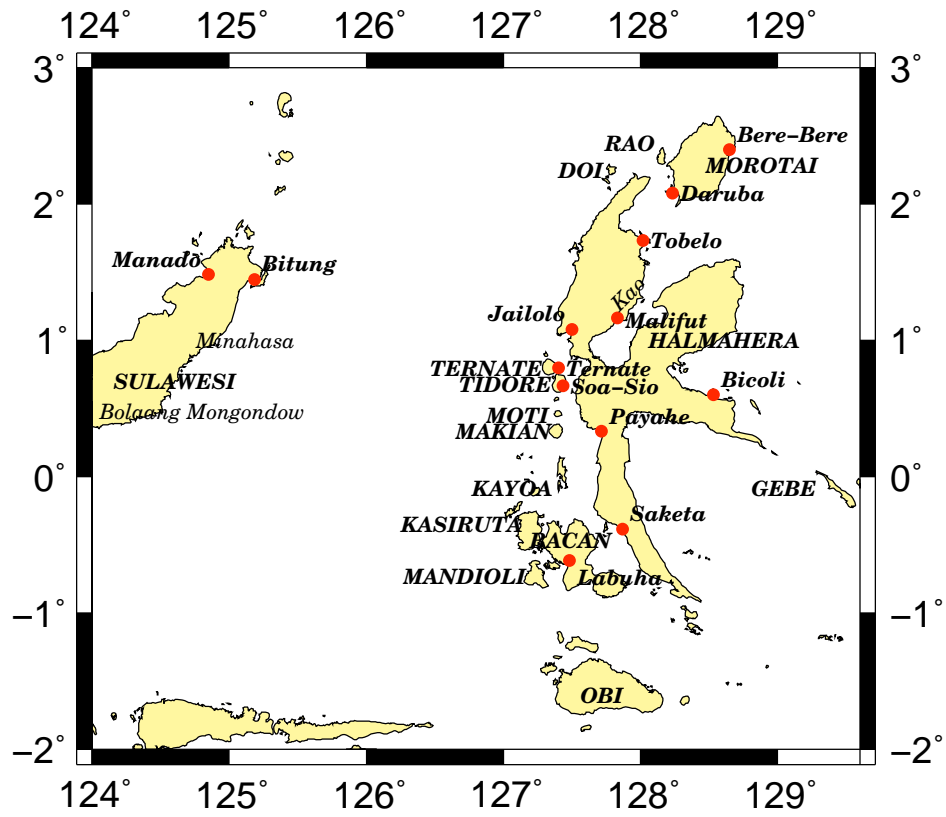


Figure 2: North Maluku and Sulawesi

project, claiming that they needed the land for their own people. The district regent of Bolaang Mongondow said he could not guarantee the safety of the IDPs if they were settled there, and their presence could lead to new social problems (Komentar, 2001b). In fact, there was much more than land at stake. The transmigration site was built in one of the last large stretches of forest in the region. The district that developed it stood to make a significant amount of money from the sale of the timber. There were also rumors of gold in the region. Before the matter was resolved, and against the objections of the government of Bolaang Mongondow, the IDPs were moved into the settlement. They were smuggled in during the middle of the night to avoid any confrontation. The second transmigration settlement, Serey-Sangkilang in eastern Minahasa, was plagued by conflicting land claims as well; the government had bought the land from one family, but another family claimed ownership (Komentar, 2002) This issue also remained unresolved, but the IDPs were moved in regardless. The anger in these cases was directed at the government; however there were worries that it could be vented on the IDPs.

In addition to the problems of conflicting land claims, poor planning and poor site selection hampered these two sites. For example, although the Kakenturan Dua transmigration project site was touted as a perfect location for lucrative vegetable farming, the chosen land was unsuitable for growing vegetables, raising the question of how the new settlers would earn a living. Furthermore, the IDPs were moved in before the settlement was finished, before there was a school for their children, or a road into the settlement. The other transmigration site, Serey-Sangkilang, was designated for fishermen; however the hulls of the boats provided by the government as part of the settlement had already rotted by the time IDPs arrived.

Within the municipality of Manado a large resettlement site was built by the provincial government for IDPs in the village of Pandu. This was originally only supposed to be temporary housing, and families were to be granted use rights over the houses,

not ownership. This development was plagued by conflicting land claims as well (Manado Post, 2001, Sulut Post, 2002). To stem the problem of jealousy among poorer segments of the indigenous community, some locals were granted land by the government on an adjoining plot, but were not given houses. They were not satisfied with this arrangement and demanded housing. An additional problem was that many IDPs who had claimed houses in the site continued to live in the city. Locals were upset with the sight of hundreds of vacant houses that they were not allowed to use themselves. At various points these tensions broke out into conflict, resulting in the destruction of resettlement houses, and physical attacks on IDPs (Duncan, 2003a).

9 Empowerment: The Integration of IDPs

The government's focus on returning or relocating IDPs overshadowed the "empowerment" option; it preferred to have IDPs return to their homes or to take part in transmigration schemes. This third option was aimed at providing IDPs with an "opportunity to start a new life within an existing community, with assistance and facilitation from the government, whether in terms of employment or facilities to make it easier for them to earn a living" (Sosial, 2001). Since most local governments wanted the IDPs to leave, this option was rarely discussed and the topic was often avoided in discussions with IDPs until mid-2003.

In Ternate the city government eventually moved the majority of the IDPs back to Tobelo as discussed above. In North Sulawesi the government had concerns that if too many IDPs stayed in Manado and Bitung, social conflict could develop (Duncan, 2003b). Officials voiced these fears on numerous occasions to encourage the IDPs to leave North Sulawesi. In one meeting with IDPs in North Sulawesi, the official in charge of handling IDPs in the province concluded his discussion by saying: "If you [the IDPs] do not go back to Maluku Utara, in ten years my children will kill your children, since this is our homeland not yours."

There have been low-level conflicts in North Sulawesi since the arrival of the IDPs in November of 1999 (Republika, 2001). In early May of 2003 these conflicts erupted into violence again in Bitung, when an argument between local youth and IDP youth turned into a large-scale conflict that lasted several days, necessitating the intervention of the army (Manado Post, 2003a, Manado Post, 2003b, Komentar, 2003a, Komentar, 2003b).

It had become apparent to all involved by the end of 2002, that a large number of IDPs particularly those from Ternate and Tidore, felt they could not go home in the near future, and many did not intend to return. The majority of them had sold their houses in North Maluku when possible and it is likely that a large number will remain in North Sulawesi, particularly in Manado and Bitung. Some IDPs who have spent the last few years living in Manado in Ternate see no reason to return to their homes in North Maluku where they feel they have fewer opportunities and their children will have a lower quality education.

Due to their reluctance to encourage IDPs to stay in North Sulawesi, the “empowerment” option remained somewhat of a mystery. During 2002 it was never explained to the IDPs, and they were never informed of their rights or choices regarding this option. In April of 2003, the government of North Sulawesi instigated a “Termination” program to end the IDP problem, granting each family a “Termination Package” worth Rp. 2.5 million. Acceptance of the package meant that the family in question relinquished IDP status and any claims to future IDP aid, and became registered members of the local community. There were several options in this “Termination Package”, including a “trading stall” (*kios*) option in which a family received a glass fronted cabinet and Rp. 1.3 million worth of goods to sell. The remaining Rp. 1.2 million was deducted by the government for “distribution and administration.” Another option was the “bakery” option in which an IDP family received approximately Rp. 2 million worth of bakery equipment and baking supplies, again forfeiting the rest of the funds for administrative fees. Reportedly IDPs who had already

registered and been returned to North Maluku, but had come back to North Sulawesi, were excluded from this settlement. The majority of IDPs who chose these options were from Ternate and Tidore, the two locations where Christian IDPs in North Sulawesi were most reluctant to return. These efforts did not resolve the “problem” of IDPs in North Sulawesi and several thousand were still living in IDP camps at the end of 2003 (Kompas, 2003).

10 Effects of the Government’s Policy?

What have been the outcomes of the government’s attempts to “solve the IDP problem” by the end of 2002? To what extent has Jakarta’s policy been successful? Obviously, the long-term effects of the government’s handling of IDPs and their return, relocation, or integration will not become evident for some time. Yet even the current situation seems to be in dispute. According to the Department of Social Affairs its efforts were quite effective. They claimed to have resettled over 1 million people in under 1 year; leaving only 200,000 IDPs in Indonesia as of May of 2003 (Jakarta Post, 2003). However, there clearly have been political motivations to paint the situation in a positive light. The central government is especially eager to solve the IDP problem before national elections in mid 2004 (PBP, 2003). Furthermore, since there was no more money forthcoming, it has also been in the interest of local officials to play down totals of those still displaced and convey resolution as well.

It is not surprising, then, to discover that government figures tended to fall significantly below the estimates of other institutions. In June of 2003, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimated that approximately 660,000 IDPs remained throughout Indonesia (PBP, 2003, p. 37). Three months later, focusing just on the case North Sulawesi, Church World Service estimated that 13,000 IDPs had not yet returned to North Maluku (Church World Service, 2003).

Beyond the numbers, it is also too early to assess the ultimate qualitative impact of government policy upon people’s lives. In

North Maluku, among those who have returned home, such as Christian IDPs returning to Ternate from North Sulawesi, many are still living in camps—under much the same conditions as in North Sulawesi, or in some cases worse (Tempo Interaktif, 2003). Furthermore, the ongoing conflict in Aceh, as well flare-ups in Central Sulawesi in late 2003 ensure that there are again newly displaced populations in the country. With no money currently allocated for IDPs in the 2004 government budget, it remains to be seen if durable solutions to the problems of displacement and forced migration can be found in Indonesia.

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