



# THE GENDER DIMENSIONS OF SOCIAL CONFLICT, ARMED VIOLENCE AND PEACEBUILDING

Research Brief

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## MAKING PEACE SUSTAINABLE? FROM SUCCESSFUL POLICIES TO CONCERNS FOR PEACE IN MALUKU, INDONESIA

By Christelle Rigual and Arifah Rahmawati

As notions of sustainable peace and conflict prevention are gaining attention in contemporary international security governance, the case of Indonesia provides useful lessons. The first UN-World Bank joint report on 'pathways for peace' presents the country as a successful case of making peace sustainable. Indonesia has introduced a range of policies, including political and fiscal decentralisation, gender quotas, reform of the security forces, and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programmes attractive to former combatants, leading the report's authors to portray it as 'a prevention story of settling four secessionist conflicts between 1999 and 2004' that contributed to transition from economic crisis and authoritarianism to democratic rule, a resilient economy, and a stable political environment (UN and World Bank 2017, 25).

However, our inductive, community-based research on the island of Ambon in Maluku, Indonesia, conducted in the framework of the r4d project Gender and Conflict tells another story: peacebuilders, activists, and scholars argue that existing policies need to be complemented with gender-inclusive community-driven initiatives to ensure the sustainability of peace.

### BACKGROUND OF THE MALUKU CONFLICT

The Province of Maluku is an archipelago situated in the eastern part of Indonesia (see [Map 1](#)). Ambon is one of its 1'000 islands and the location of the provincial capital, the City of Ambon. Since the colonial era, the island has hosted a mixed community of Christians and Muslims who have lived in relative harmony for decades. In the 1990s, Indonesia's long-time president, General Soeharto sought to restore his political authority by promoting Muslim elites to positions of power. By 1996, all district chiefs had become Muslims, replacing Christians who since the colonial era had benefited from greater access to education and held

### KEY TAKE-AWAYS

- Policies for peace and economic development in Indonesia have entailed decentralisation, fiscal and security sector reforms, as well as the introduction of gender quotas in political representation.
- In complement to such policies, making peace sustainable requires fine-grained, micro-level analysis to take the pulse of post-conflict communities and adjust measures tailored for their needs.
- Gender-sensitive participatory consultative processes can contribute to including diverse voices in the peacebuilding process and to fine-tuning macro policies with community-driven propositions for peace.
- In the case of Maluku, while on paper the region is 'at peace', women and men peacebuilders, activists, political and religious leaders, youths, academics and journalists agree that trauma healing has not taken place and that identity crystallisation remains.
- Women and men in Maluku resourcefully engage in supporting peace, which they conceptualise as 'freedom from fear' both in the domestic and public realms. They point to suggestions for a more gender-inclusive sustainable peace including support for gender-inclusive participatory dialogue, trauma healing programmes, and media gender training.

most political offices (Buchanan 2011, 17). The sudden shift in political representation generated tensions, which culminated in communal violence following the fall of Soeharto in 1998. Regional decentralisation in the context of democratic transition further contributed to igniting competition for power between local elites. In this context, an apparently ordinary fight in Ambon between a young immigrant Muslim Bugis man and a young Christian Ambonese *angkot* (public transportation) driver escalated and sparked a wave of communal violence between 1999 and 2003, during which 1'000 to 3'000 people died (Varshney 2003). The conflict shifted from gang fights into a communal war, with youth militias mobilising along religious lines (Krause 2018). Socio-economic factors, such as high rates of unemployment and high levels of alcohol consumption acted as enabling conditions. In addition, prevalent conceptions of masculinity legitimised a display of violence to prove manliness and project pride in the defence of religion (Malukans have borrowed the Spanish term 'machismo' to describe such behaviour). After years of ethno-religious tensions, efforts of the central government to settle the conflict bore fruit with the Malino II agreement in 2002. Since then, in spite of some eruptions of small-scale violence, the region has been considered at peace.



Source: r4d Gender and Conflict Project. Map produced by Piia Bränfors.

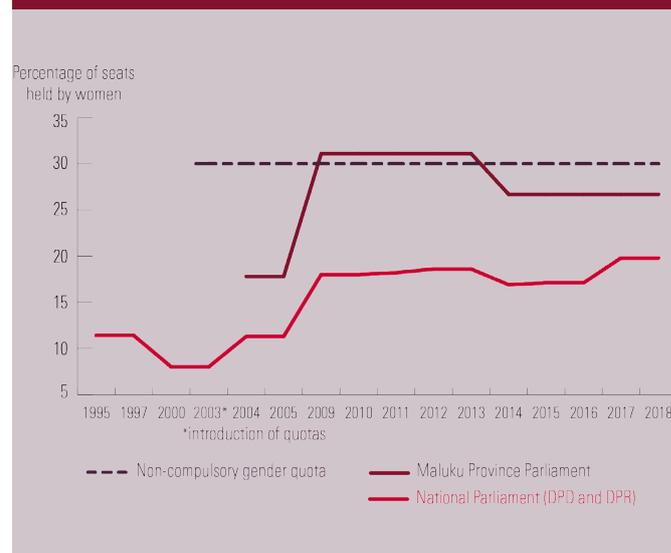
## GENDER AND PEACE: NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES IN INDONESIA

National and international actors have sought to help make the peace in Maluku sustainable, and some of their policies have paid attention to gender dynamics that can enable eruptions of violence. In collaboration with women activists, the national and Maluku governments have established action plans to implement the UN's Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, conducted consultations to elaborate roadmaps for implementation, and are as of April 2019 working in synergy to implement the local plan. The focus of the plans is on women's protection from violence, participation in decision-making, and empowerment.

Gender mainstreaming and the efforts of Indonesian activists have borne results in the area of women's political participation (Siregar 2005). In 2003 the government adopted legislation introducing a non-compulsory

gender quota of 30 per cent for women's representation in parliaments, which helped many women secure political positions. Women's representation in the Maluku parliament reached the quota in 2009 with 31.1 per cent (14 out of 45), but declined again to 26.7 per cent (12 out of 45) in 2014. In addition, since 2014, two out of four Maluku representatives in the Indonesian bi-cameral legislative body are women. Finally, at the federal level, women's representation has slightly increased since 2009, but the quota has not been realised, with women's representation in both houses of the national parliament amounting to 19.8 per cent in March 2018 (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Share of seats held by women in National Parliament and Maluku Province Parliament



Source: Indonesia Election Portal 2014; UNDP Human Development Report 2015; UNDP Indonesia 2010; Statistical Archive 2018; Statistics Indonesia 2018; The House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia 2018; Vermonte and Gayatri 2014.

International organisations have also been active in Indonesia and Maluku. For instance, Indonesia has been a member of the IMF since 1948, and has implemented several IMF macro-economic recommendations seeking the politico-economic stabilisation of the country, including fiscal reforms, structural programmes for infrastructure, financial markets development and liberalisation of the foreign direct investments regime (IMF Country Report 2018). Our interviews have also identified organisations that have complemented macro-level policies with inclusive and community-based initiatives. For example, the UNDP's 'Peace Through Development' programmes have included in-depth consultations in Maluku and proposed local empowerment projects such as micro-production cooperatives, which have been positively received by women. UN Women has also adopted a diversified conceptualisation of peace as combining both women's empowerment and participation along with development activities. Unfortunately budget constraints and shifting political priorities have led UNDP and UN Women Indonesia to now focus solely on preventing violent extremism in Java, and they have left Maluku. Short-term horizons cast doubt on their capacity to contribute to sustaining peace in the long run. Insights from the conflict-affected communities support this assessment.

## LOCAL CONCERNS ABOUT THE SUSTAINABILITY OF PEACE

In the context of our research project we invited key stakeholders, including religious and political leaders, peacebuilders and activists, students, and the media to a public consultation on gender and peacebuilding in Ambon in October of 2017. Women and youth have been very active in everyday peacebuilding in the city, where they play various roles as mediators, negotiators, and initiators of interfaith and intergroup dialogues. The consultation offered evidence of a lively and gender-inclusive community committed to fostering sustainable peace.

During the consultation Malukans expressed their visions and hopes for sustaining peace. Peacebuilders, activists, and scholars defined peace as ‘freedom from fear’ in both the domestic and the public realms and identified as a barrier to peace a highly masculinised culture, which often celebrates male violence and keeps women out of leadership positions. While women’s participation in peacebuilding has improved their status, this has not yet fully translated into their recognition, visibility, or a conversion of their competences into formal political positions. Members of the media also pointed to a lack of awareness of gender-sensitive reporting, and to a need for gender training of journalists.

Participants raised concerns about the fragility of peace in Maluku. In spite of the successful settlement of the conflict and the rich community of peacebuilders engaged in interfaith dialogue, they emphasized that fear, tensions, and identity crystallisation remain. In the words of Margareta Hendrik, the prominent Christian leader who took part in the 2002 Malino II peace negotiations, Ambon is ‘calm on the surface only.’ Since the conflict, Malukans have lacked interfaith trust and hesitated to enter previously mixed neighbourhoods in which residents from the other religion are now the majority. While interfaith violence is absent, Malukans point to a lack of trauma healing and sustained dialogue. Mistrust continues to divide communities along ethno-religious lines and carries the potential to re-escalate tensions. Maluku is living a negative peace while wishing for a positive one.

The consultative process and interviews with key stakeholders also revealed divergences between international priorities and local needs. Discrepancies emerged with regard to two areas. First, Indonesia is considered to be at peace even though tensions remain in several regions, including the formerly separatist regions of Aceh, and Poso, Central Sulawesi. Similarly, Malukans point to persisting and overlooked tensions and identity cleavages in their region that could fuel a relapse into conflict if unaddressed. Second, participants in the consultation noted that competition for funds among local NGOs stands in the way of developing synergies among peace activists. Moreover, proposals for projects and initiatives require an increasing amount of time and effort as the length of grants consistently decreases, impeding sustainability.

Our research highlights that peace, in order to be sustainable, requires constant support and long-term investment. In Maluku, a negative peace masks profound tensions. There is an urgent need for a more in-depth inclusive peace and reconciliation process in the communities. An effective approach to conflict prevention and sustainable peace would require greater attention to inclusive consultative processes in post-conflict regions.

Figure 2.

Scars and segregation: a house still damaged and abandoned following the 1999-2003 communal conflict, Passo, Maluku.



Source: © C. Rigual (2017)

### Acknowledgment

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### The 'Gender Dimensions of Social Conflict, Armed Violence, and Peacebuilding' project

The 6-year project 'Gender Dimensions of Social Conflict, Armed Violence and Peacebuilding' investigates gendered conflict dynamics and peacebuilding initiatives at the community, state, and international levels in three types of conflicts in Indonesia and Nigeria: ethno-religious conflicts opposing Muslim and Christian communities in Jos (Nigeria) and Ambon (Indonesia); anti-governmental movements in Aceh (Indonesia) and Delta (Nigeria); and resource-driven vigilantism in East Java (Indonesia) and Enugu (Nigeria).

With the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325, the international community has embraced the idea that international peace and security require a gender-sensitive approach to conflict management and peacebuilding. This project contributes to this effort by addressing the gender gap in the peacebuilding literature, exploring how gender operates in processes of conflict escalation, de-escalation and peacebuilding and probing the connections between local, national, and international peacebuilding practices.

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### Swiss Programme for Research on Global Issues for Development

In the light of the global challenges, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) launched in 2012 the joint 'Swiss Programme for Research on Global Issues for Development' (r4d programme). The main goal of the r4d programme is the generation of new knowledge and the application of research results that contribute to solving global problems and securing public goods in low- and middle-income countries within the framework of global sustainable development. The r4d programme consists of six modules, five with thematic priorities and one for thematically open calls. <http://www.r4d.ch>



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