DISPLACEMENT, COPING MECHANISMS AND THE EMERGENCE OF NEW MARKETS IN AMBON

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Abstract

Starting from the question how IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) in the conflict-ridden city of Ambon (East Indonesia) adapted their income generation strategies during and after a high-intensity conflict, this working paper will illustrate how informal market activities became a strategy to cope with insecurity and economic hardship for internally displaced. This process indicates that IDPs, and in this case especially women, tried to deal with their displacement in a proactive way. Nevertheless, this study will equally demonstrate that fully understanding the success and/or failure of these strategies requires that two notions have to be kept in mind. First, one cannot solely focus on the agency of the actors themselves as the success of their coping strategies is seriously limited by structural opportunities in the broader political-economy of the region. Secondly, our data will prove that these strategies in the informal economy cannot be labelled as ‘durable livelihood strategies’ but should be termed as ‘coping mechanisms’ by which we mean short-term strategies reacting to sudden disturbances in the livelihoods system. In the end, these coping mechanisms caused a deep impoverishment of the household.
Introduction

Massive internal displacement was one of the most direct consequences of the conflicts that raged throughout Indonesia after the fall of the authoritarian New Order in May 1998. Already during the New Order, long-lasting separatist conflicts such as the ones in Aceh and East-Timor caused internal displacement but the fall of Suharto and the subsequent start of communal violence in the regions of Sulawesi, Kalimantan and Maluku provoked a considerable increase in the number of IDPs. Although this number was at its peak around 2001 with some 1 million to 1.3 million IDPs in the country (Mason, 2001), internal displacement still poses serious challenges to policy makers in Indonesia today, not least because of its more permanent character.

This is certainly the case in the province of Maluku where, as a consequence of a conflict between Christians and Muslims, huge sections of the population fled their homes. This conflict is traditionally divided into three phases. The first phase started when a fight broke out between a Christian public transport driver and a Muslim passenger in the transport terminal of Ambon in January 1999 (HRW, 1999; Van Klinken, 2001). This brawl quickly generated large-scale riots and spread to neighbouring islands in the province. Although these riots initially were defined as a fight of Ambonese against non-Ambonese, the violence quickly turned into a religious conflict of Muslims versus Christians (ICG, 2002). In this first phase, the fighting was mainly conducted among gangs of local male youths and the number of victims and casualties remained relatively low. Nevertheless, Ambon became a religiously segregated city, divided by a street symbolically referred to as the ‘Gaza-Strip’. The second phase of the Moluccan conflict started with the arrival of the Laskar Jihad in May 2000. This Java-based Muslim paramilitary group gave the conflict a more profound turn. Heavier weaponry entered the region and security forces of different sorts started to align with the warring parties (Bartels, 2001). Consequently, the security situation in the city further deteriorated and the number of casualties rose considerably. This phase formally ended with the signing of the Malino II peace declaration in January 2002. Since then, Ambon entered a religiously segregated city, divided by a street symbolically referred to as the ‘Gaza-Strip’. The second phase of the Moluccan conflict started with the arrival of the Laskar Jihad in May 2000. This Java-based Muslim paramilitary group gave the conflict a more profound turn. Heavier weaponry entered the region and security forces of different sorts started to align with the warring parties (Bartels, 2001). Consequently, the security situation in the city further deteriorated and the number of casualties rose considerably. This phase formally ended with the signing of the Malino II peace declaration in January 2002. Since then, Ambon entered a religiously segregated city, divided by a street symbolically referred to as the ‘Gaza-Strip’.

The total number of direct killings due to the conflict in the Moluccan region is estimated at around 10,000 (ICG, 2002). In the meantime, the violence provoked a widespread displacement among the population. Data on the number of IDPs in the province of Maluku often depend on the source that is consulted. Both local authorities and NGOs used different criteria in their collection of data on IDPs, which resulted in a lack of reliable data and poor, chaotic and even overlapping policy-making. In most NGO reports, it is stated that at the height of the conflict, almost one third of the total population was internally displaced (ICG, 2002; Mason, 2001). The figures that come across official channels are particularly lower than the figures found through NGO-reports. In a report published by the Indonesian National Commission on Human Rights, it is written that in the years 2002 and 2003, there were 275,091 IDPs in the province of Maluku (Komnasham, 2005). According to this same report, the total number of IDPs in Indonesia in 2002 consisted of 662,834 and in 2003 of 829,895. This implies that in this official census, the province of Maluku accounted for a huge share of the total number of IDPs in Indonesia. For 2004, this number has decreased to 181,640 on a total Indonesian IDP population of 524,839.

Research Question

Different authors already made attempts to explain the outbreak of civil war in the Ambonese region (Goss, 2004; Bertrand, 2004, Van Klinken, 2007). Based on this literature, one can conclude that civil strife in the Ambonese region is closely linked with a competition for access to economic and political resources in a period of institutional turmoil and uncertainty. In this political economy explanation, especially the issue of access to jobs in the state bureaucracy and the patrimonial linkages dividing the society among Christian and Muslims networks are seen as the defining factors provoking the riots (Van Klinken, 2007). Apart from the literature that focuses on the different dynamics at the roots of the religious conflict, we are still badly informed on the way people adapted their everyday livelihood strategies during ongoing civil warfare and the social outcomes this produced in a context of post-conflict. To put it in other words, very little is still known on what Benedikt Korf (2006) calls ‘the social mechanisms of ongoing civil war’ in the Moluccan conflict.

For this reason this paper will not ask why men or women rebel in this particular context but starts from the question how ongoing violence affects the everyday livelihood experiences of ordinary people. More specifically, the question will be posed how IDPs in the city of Ambon transformed their income generation strategies before, during and after the violence that started in 1999 and ended around 2003. Considering the huge numbers of internally displaced in Maluku and the enormous impact migration has on the daily livelihood of people, it is remarkable that serious data are still lacking about this aspect. The first aim of this paper is therefore to get a better insight in the daily income generation strategies developed by the internally displaced and, more generally, in some of the societal transformations that occurred during the Ambonese conflict.

The second objective of this paper is more general and wants to sketch how opportunities and constraints in the broader political economy of the region determine the success and/or failure of the income generation strategies developed by the internally displaced in Ambon. In a traditional humanitarian view, IDPs and refugees are portrayed as victims (Refslund,
They are not able to cope with their forced migration and are treated as the beneficiaries of aid. This humanitarian approach has far-reaching consequences. A study by Liisa Malkki among Hutu refugees in Tanzania reveals that because refugees and IDPs are solely treated as victims, IDPs and refugees become depoliticised and dehistoricized (Malkki, 1996). They are stripped off from their personal history and their human identity is one-sidedly understood in the context of their forced migration. They cannot be anyone else than a pure refugee, or a victim whose thinking is completely traumatized by his/her displacement (Malkki, 1996). Although this view is still strong among many humanitarian agencies, since the middle of the nineties, different scholars pleased for a more personal approach towards issues of forced migration. Of particular relevance is the work of Karen Jacobsen (Jacobsen, 2002; Jacobsen, 2005). Without doubting the harsh conditions refugees and IDPs often face, Jacobsen wishes not to look at IDPs solely as victims of violence but perceives refugees and IDPs as actors that have certain capacities to cope with insecurity and stress in a proactive way. By focussing on refugees and IDPs this way, one comes to very different conclusions such as the observation that refugees can contribute to the economic vitality of a region, the fact that refugees and IDPs can ameliorate several aspects of their life or the insight that there are multiple axes of identity among IDPs that cannot all be related to their forced migration (Vincent, 2001).

This actor-oriented approach has brought new and dynamic insights into several aspects of the personal life experiences of refugees and IDPs. However, the question in how far the success of these coping mechanisms depends on the broader political economy often remains underexposed. A good understanding of everyday life experiences of refugees and IDPs implies that research cannot be solely concentrated on the actors themselves but should also deal with aspects of the broader political economy to put the behaviour of the IDPs in their right perspective (Indiyanto et. al. 2006). By focussing on my case in Ambon, I wish to shed a light on the way this interaction between the coping mechanisms of grassroots populations and structural aspects in the broader political economy can be conceptualized.

Research Setting

I conducted my fieldwork in the Christian IDP-camp of Wisma Atlit and the Muslim IDP-camp of THR in the months of January and February 2006. Wisma Atlit and THR came into being shortly after the outbreak of the first riots in the city of Ambon in January 1999 and both camps were situated in the city centre of Ambon. Wisma Atlit was located in the well-off Christian neighbourhood of Karpan while THR was situated near the harbour in the neighbourhood of Waihaong. Both
IDP-camps were built around an abandoned government building that first served as a temporary shelter.

Despite these similarities, strong differences could be observed in the build-up of the two camps. Wisma Atlit came into being as a camp for Protestants fleeing the Batu Merah neighbourhood, the site where the first riots on the 19th of January 1999 broke out and since then was one of the most dangerous areas in the city. The whole Protestant community fled on the 23rd of February 1999 and went up the steep hills to reach the safe area of Karpan (Karang Panjang), barely one kilometre in walking distance. Of the 700 households that fled from Batu Merah, some 200 families could settle in Karpan. Others arriving once the place was already packed, became dispersed all over the island. Although the people originally thought that this displacement would be a temporary solution to cope with short-term insecurity, this community has finally lived seven years in the camp. For the first two years, people simply lived in the building and slept on the ground. As privacy was very poor during this period, social frustrations and tensions were at the order of the day. From the end of 2001 onwards, people began to build small wooden cabins, both in the government building and in the surrounding area. It is important to note that in the case of Wisma Atlit, the individual IDPs originated from the same area and arrived in the camp at the same moment. As a consequence, this camp was very much inhabited by a unified and well-organized group. This was visible for practical issues of internal organisation such as the distribution of water or the care-taking of children but also for the claiming of certain rights.

5 The picture for THR looks different. First of all, the IDPs of this camp came from different parts of the city and the Moluccan region. This resulted in an ethnically diversified IDP-community where recognisable leadership was lacking and internal discord restrained the camp from behaving as a united group. This ethnic diversification is illustrated in the architectural development of the camp. Here also, people originally slept on the floor of the government building but when they finally began to build their cabins, they did this among ethnic lines. This resulted in a camp where ‘ethnic enclaves’ could be distinguished as the Bugis, Makassarese, Butonese and other ethnic groups all occupied their own quarter. The camp was also characterized by a constant in- and outflow of people. For instance, people from the Muslim neighbourhood of Waringin left their original place for THR when there was high-intensity violence in the city but returned every time the situation became more conducive. The highest number of IDPs was reached shortly after the riots of January 1999 until 2001 and with the riots of April 2004. In these periods, THR accommodated approximately 600 households. At the time of research in January - February 2006, THR gave shelter to some 250 households as some of the IDPs were already resettled in a new and permanent place.

Gender Relations and the Informal Economy

To have an overview on the different coping mechanisms that men and women used to generate an income for the household, Table 1 classifies these mechanisms into socio-professional categories. To overcome the problem of diversification (one person using different strategies at the same time), only the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Means of Subsistence</th>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Women</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Before</td>
<td>During</td>
<td>After</td>
<td>Before</td>
<td>During</td>
<td>After</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Servant</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Employee</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petty Trade</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer-Fisherman</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worker</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housemaid</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportsector</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Income</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: With the term ‘Private Employee’, I mean a white-collar worker employed for a private company in contrast to the term ‘Worker’ by which I mean a blue-collar worker employed for a private company. In this diagram, I only look at those categories where a steep rise or fall can be noticed because only these categories reflect a clear-cut tendency.
strategy that people indicated as their most important source of financial income was selected and placed in the relevant socio-professional group. In the underlying statistic that gives data for both the camps of THR and Wisma Atlit, further division was made between men and women.

These data show the development in the income generation for the IDPs of THR and Wisma Atlit. The most remarkable trend is in the category of ‘No Income’ where a steep rise can be noticed of male respondents during the conflict. While only 3% of the men declared they did not have any source of financial income before the conflict, this figure rose to 29% during the conflict. When the violence came to an end, the figure dropped again to 2%. This picture is completely different for women. Before the conflict, 44% of the women declared they had no real source of income. During the conflict, this figure dropped to 3%. When the conflict was over, this figure reached again the same level as before the conflict.

This same tendency is reflected in the underlying table about the household income. In the household-interviews we asked people to indicate the money they made per month into four income categories. This gives the following outcome:

Table 2: Household Income Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original place</th>
<th>During Conflict</th>
<th>After Conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Income</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; Rp. 500.000 (45 euro)</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rp. 500.000-1.000.000 (90 euro)</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rp. 1.000.000 &gt;</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because many men lost their income while some women gained a source of income when the violence broke out, a rise in the relative share of women in the household income during the conflict could be observed. While before the conflict, only 40% of the women in both camps declared that they had an income between 0 and 500,000 Rp., this rose to 58% during the conflict. This higher share of women in the household income should be corrected though by an overall decline in the household income among the two IDP-communities during the conflict. Before the conflict, 19% of both men and women in the camps of Wisma Atlit and THR declared they had a monthly income above 1,000,000 Rp. while during the conflict this number declined to 2%. The total number of people having no income rose from 47% before the conflict to 64% during the conflict. Interpreting these data, it is important to bear in mind that since the fall of the New Order in 1998, a monetary crisis that ravaged throughout the Southeast Asian region resulted in the whole of Indonesia in an enormous devaluation and a loss in purchasing power. These effects were also visible on Ambon. In other words, while the absolute household income before and after the conflict is similar, the purchasing power of the household itself has gone down. The effects of the impoverishment that IDP’s had to deal with, in reality were much stronger than suggested in Table 2.

The most significant conclusion that comes out of the data is that during the conflict, in the city of Ambon, women managed to cope easier with displacement and insecurity than men. Many men lost any form of financial income during the conflict, while the opposite can be noticed for the women. A major explanation for this is the far better access of women to the informal sectors of the economy in contrast to men in Ambon who were more involved in the formal economy as private employee. Especially this formal sector was vulnerable to conflict-dynamics. Specific for the Ambonese case is the fact that the overwhelming part of the Chinese community, that controlled almost the entire formal economy, fled the region shortly after the outbreak of violence. Moreover, the whole of Indonesia was confronted with an implosion of the formal economy due to the overall Southeast Asian financial crisis of 1998 (Booth, 1998). Consequently, a lot of male Ambonese lost their ‘formal’ jobs when the riots started in early 1999 and could no longer fulfil their traditional role as the wage earners of the household. The picture for female Ambonese looks totally different. Here we see that before the conflict, women were mainly employed as petty traders and housemaids. Both socio-professional categories, which are situated in the informal sector of the economy during the conflict, came to act as last resorts to deal with the economic effects of the crisis. As our data show, these jobs did not lead to a sufficient financial income for the household but instead caused a deeper impoverishment of the community. This shift in income generation strategies between men and women did not immediately result in a qualitative change in gender-relations within the household. It is hard to measure these emotional and personal relationships but throughout the different focus-group discussions and individual interviews, it appeared that these qualitative changes were limited. Already before the conflict, women played a prominent role within the organisation of the household.
especially in field of expenditure. During and after the violence, they maintained this role but in a more outside oriented way. What they did during the conflict can best be described in their own terms, namely ‘taking up responsibility as they did not have another option’. Once the violence was over, a lot of these women again took up the inside oriented role they had before the violence, the men on the other hand returned to their traditional function as the wage-earner of the household.

The Rise of Petty Trade

The most important sector within these informal means of subsistence for both IDP-communities was petty trade. Two types of selling activities can be distinguished. The first type is ‘outside’ selling (activities in marketplaces down the road or by walking around with a mobile stall). The second type of activity includes ‘inside’ selling activities (at home or at least inside the walls of the camp). These market activities are understood as part of the informal economy because during the conflict, Ambon was subject to a deep form of institutional collapse in which the traditional state-authority had nearly disappeared (Van Klinken, 2001). This created opportunities to start markets in the city when and where people wanted. Where before the violence, people officially had to register to start a market stall, during the conflict this was no longer the case.

Before further elaborating on these markets, a closer look at some additional data is needed. Table 3 gives an overview of the percentage of people who were involved in petty trade before, during and after the conflict in the IDP camps of THR and Wisma Atlit. It is important to keep in mind that around 70% to 80% of these vendors were female.

Table 3: Petty trade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>During</th>
<th>After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Outside</td>
<td>Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THR</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisma Atlit</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A first conclusion is that in the Muslim camp of THR, people were traditionally more involved in selling activities than their Christian counterparts in the camp of Wisma Atlit. For the camp of THR, already before the violence broke out, 34% of the total active population was involved in petty trade. Among the women of THR, this figure was as high as 46% or almost half of the total active female population. During the conflict, the number of people involved in petty trade stayed approximately the same. The story for Wisma Atlit on the other hand is different. Here, people were traditionally less involved in market activities but their number has doubled with the outbreak of the violence. This implies that our original observation that women became more involved in informal markets during the conflict must be refined because this involvement should mainly be attributed to the Christian women of Wisma Atlit.

- Outside Selling Activities

The main reason for this rise of Christian vendors is quite evident. Before the outbreak of the violence the most important market of Ambon was situated in Mardika. This was a market where both Christians and Muslims went to buy their products but the majority of the sellers were Muslims. With the outbreak of the riots it became impossible for Christians to go to this market that was situated in Muslim area. Consequently, the Christians had no access to the market while the demand for products stayed the same. This created economic opportunities for Christians that were most clearly reflected in the emergence of new markets in different parts of the Christian quarters of the city. The first ‘Christian’ market appeared in the Belakang Soja neighbourhood but soon others followed. Specifically for the IDPs of Wisma Atlit, the market that appeared near the Citra supermarket in the centre of the city became important. Some of these markets that emerged during the conflict such as Batu Meja or Batu Gantung still exist until today.

A major problem for these new markets was the supply of products, mainly fresh vegetables and fish. Traditionally, food supplies for Maluku mainly arrived through the harbour of Ambon. Since the harbour of Ambon was in Muslim territory, Christians did not have direct access to these products any more. Therefore, meeting points had to be arranged where Muslim and Christian traders could meet in secrecy. These transactions could take place during the night in or around the city of Ambon but also under military protection or even in military barracks. Other places where Muslims sold their products to Christian traders included the open sea or far-off small villages. Because of the interference of different middlemen and/ or because the military had to be paid for protection, products were considerably more expensive in the Christian neighbourhoods than in the Muslim area. Another tactic that Christian traders used to deal with this problem was to buy their products in Christian coastal areas such as Paso. This strategy proved to be equally dangerous and expensive because of the long rides by minibus through the mountains in a time where fuel was extremely expensive. The same reasons, namely insecurity and the cost of the fuel, made buying vegetables among the Christians in the mountains of Ambon-island, very difficult.

On the Muslim side of the town, a new market came into existence in the former shopping mall of Amplaz (Ambon plaza) where IDPs of THR went to sell products. This new market emerged as it became very dangerous for Muslims to go to the Mardika market. Apart from this market, the
practice of ‘jibu-jibu’ was particularly characteristic for the Muslims of THR. Jibu-jibu is the local term for mobile selling where the sellers carry their products around the city. For the people of THR, this was mainly done in the harbour. When a ship arrived, the sellers got onto the ship selling food such as nasi ikan (fish and rice) or nasi kuning (yellow, spiced rice), tea... Also selling along the docks for merchants and porters was commonplace. A major incentive for this practice was the stock of food aid distributed by international NGOs that was available for the IDPs. Therefore, jibu-jibu was considered as very profitable because people did not have to buy their products to sell. This created frustration among the non IDP vendors that remained deprived of these sorts of aid but found them nevertheless in an equally vulnerable economic position. It is important to keep in mind that, although the Muslims had a good access to the harbour, the Muslim petty traders lost their Christian customers. This did not lead to a fall in Muslim petty trade but rather in a fall in income. Before the conflict, only 45% of all the Muslim vendors (both inside and outside) indicated that they had a wage between 0 and 500,000 rupiah per month. During the conflict, this number had risen to 95%. For the Christians, the level of income in absolute terms stayed roughly the same.

When the city of Ambon finally reinstated a system of registration for public market activities and mobile selling around 2002/2003, a lot of the petty business of the Christians and Muslims comes to an end. This is also reflected in our data. For THR the percentage of people selling outside dropped from 15% to 10% while for Wisma Atlit, the number drops from 10% to 2%. For female vendors selling outside, this figure is even more exceptional. During the conflict, 22% of the female population of THR sold on the market but this number dropped to 6% after the conflict. For Wisma Atlit, this figure fell from 16% to 4%.

- Inside Selling Activities

The internally displaced not only sold outside but also inside the camps. Also here, a strong incentive for people to start selling in the IDP camps was the abundance of food aid that was mainly distributed by international NGOs. At certain moments, the amount of food aid was just too much and the people got fed up with the one sidedness of the staple food. This resulted mainly in the selling of (i) dried fish, (ii) dishes made on the basis of rice such. A main motivation for the IDPs to sell this staple food was to have the money to buy food of higher quality. Obviously, these selling activities were also directed at non-residents of the camp. The inaccessibility to the market of Mardika for the Christians again explains why the rise of people selling in the camp in Wisma Atlit is bigger than for THR. Logically, when the security situation became more conducive and the Mardika market more accessible, a decline of selling activities at home is noted for the Christians. Looking at the data, we indeed notice that for the Christian camp of Wisma Atlit the number of people selling at home during and after the conflict drops from 17% to 10% while for the Muslim camp of THR the number stays the same.

A first conclusion that can be derived from these figures is that after the conflict the Muslims are reinstated in their traditional role as the vendors of the city vis-à-vis their Christian counterparts. While during the conflict there was a rise of Christians selling in both the market and at home, when the conflict came to an end, the number of Christians in this sector dropped considerably. This can mainly be attributed to the restoration of the big market in Mardika which is traditionally dominated by Muslim sellers. Because the security situation improved since the beginning of 2002, Christian consumers slowly started to go back to Mardika. This led to a decline in the number and size of the Christian markets. Some markets had to close and others that still exist until today are reduced in importance.

Conclusion

The most important way the IDPs in the camps of THR and Wisma Atlit in the conflict-ridden city of Ambon attempted to preserve their income generation strategies was by getting access to informal petty trade. This illustrates that internally displaced have certain capacities to cope with insecurity and displacement and cannot solely be seen as passive victims of conflict. For the IDPs of Ambon there were three main reasons to engage in informal market activities: (i) the formal economy proved to be very vulnerable for conflict-dynamics in combination with the overall financial crisis in Southeast Asia. Therefore, looking for alternatives in the informal economy became inevitable if the IDPs wanted to preserve some sort of financial capital. This dynamic brought women in an outside oriented role in the household. A lot of the men on the other hand lost any form of financial income during the conflict as they traditionally had access to the formal economy (e.g. private employee) which nearly totally collapsed; (ii) the excessive amount of food aid that was distributed to the camps by international NGOs made that the IDPs started to sell the surplus of the food aid both inside and outside the camp; (iii) during the insecurity that plagued the city every form of state control largely disappeared and people were free to start market stalls wherever and whenever they wanted.

In spite of these general incentives to access informal markets, our data show that the Christian women of Wisma Atlit were more successful in their petty trade activities than their Muslim counterparts of THR. The main reason for this is that Muslims lost their Christian costumers as they were unable to go to the Mardika market for reasons of insecurity. Consequently, a surplus of Christian consumers emerged in the Christian part of Ambon during the conflict. This created economic opportunities that the IDPs of Wisma Atlit were eager to take and that were visually translated in the emergence of new markets. In these markets, Christian IDPs
and more specifically Christian women - strongly engaged. The Muslims of THR also were proactive to look for answers to their displacement by getting involved in petty trade. Practices such as jibu-jibu however, could in no way level the income they had before the violence broke out. The fact that Muslims lost their Christian costumers is one of the main explanations why the impoverishment among the Muslims of THR was much deeper than for the Christians of Wisma Atlit. When the high insecurity finally came to an end and the Mardika market could be reinstated again, we returned to a situation similar as the one before the conflict. This concrete example proves that the place of the political economy has a defining impact on the emergence and the success of the response strategies of the internally displaced and that the flexibility actors have in these sorts of contexts is limited. This paper therefore criticizes against liberal views that overestimate the capacities of grassroots populations in enduring civil warfare hereby often constructing a ‘myth of survival’ (González de la Rocha, 2007). Research on forced migration should not only focus on the agents themselves but should put the behaviour of these proactive agents in a national, regional and even very localized perspective to fully understand the extent of their actions (Collinson, 2003). Secondly, these findings illustrate that aspects of vulnerability in protracted civil warfare are complex and highly context specific. Even in a very localized setting such as the city of Ambon, different groups face different opportunities and constraints in the build-up of their livelihoods. Agencies wanting to tackle this vulnerability should be aware of this complexity and the dynamic way this relates with the political economy instead of applying universal approaches to intervene in these contexts (Le Billon, 2000; Goodhand, 2006). This implies that every intervention in a complex political emergency such as the one in Ambon should be preceded by a fine-grained conflict assessment. An exercise that was often lacking in Ambon considering the way food aid disturbed normal patterns of economic interaction and ultimately created tensions between the IDPs and the non aid-recipient population.

Another reason why we notice a ‘return to normalcy’ once the violence came to an end is that these alternatives in the informal sphere of the economy did not lead to a fulfilling and stable income. Even in Christian neighbourhoods where there were visible economic opportunities, people hardly managed to match the income they had before the conflict and were subject to many uncertainties such as an irregular inflow of products coming from the Muslim areas. Although the period of real high-intensity violence lasted for some three years in the city, only in very rare occasions IDPs in the camps of Wisma Atlit and THR managed to turn these coping mechanisms into real and durable livelihood strategies. We can therefore state that the strategies the IDPs developed have to be labelled as ‘coping mechanisms’.12 Also in this regard, the capacities grassroots populations have to deal with violence and insecurity seem rather limited and have to be put in their right perspective.
Coping mechanisms have to be understood as ‘short-term strategies reacting to sudden disturbances in the livelihoods system’ while the term ‘tangan ketiga’ or ‘third hand’ refers to this practice of middlemen.

The fact that women were more involved in this sector of the economy was also enforced by the involvement of a lot of men in the fighting activities.

This high unemployment rate among the men resulted in both THR and Wisma Atlit in different socio-psychological problems. A lot of the men lost their traditional role as the wage earner and therefore the head of the family and were suddenly confronted with a lot of ‘free time’. This sometimes resulted in alcohol abuse or massive gambling which caused tensions within the household. This free time could also have a more positive outcome.

This method can be justified by the limited diversification between their strategies. When we count the people (both men and women) that declared they had two or more different strategies to inject financial capital in the household, we cannot detect a difference between the situation before, during and after the conflict. Before the violence broke out, 7% of all our interviewees used two or more strategies, during the conflict this number was 6% and after the conflict, our number rose to 9%. We cannot deduce any significant conclusions from these data apart from the fact that the diversification in livelihood strategies was in all three time periods limited. In most cases, people just had an extra and ad-hoc selling activity. One of the most remarkable examples was the selling of different kinds of stuff (e.g. plastics, stones, doors…) that people in the camp of THR left behind when they got resettled or replaced.

The province of Maluku gives home to some 1,300,000 people (Panggabean, 2004), this means that around 400,000 to 500,000 people got internally displaced.

The methodology I used to investigate these two IDP camps was threefold: (i) focus-group discussions facilitated by the use of PRA methodology, (ii) some 70 in-depth household interviews that were conducted using a questionnaire with both a qualitative and quantitative focus, (iii) interviews among stakeholders that were closely related with the issue of displacement in Ambon. The whole research was undertaken in partnership with C-ChildS, Center for Child and Development Studies Maluku.

In April 2006, the Wisma Atlit community moved to the newly built houses in the relocation site of Kayu Tiga, just outside the city of Ambon.

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This is consistent with observations made in other conflict-torn regions where women also have an increasing importance in marketing activities to cope with financial problems in the household, see for instance: Benedict Korf, B. (2004). War, Livelihoods and Vulnerability in Sri Lanka, Development and Change, 35 (2), p. 289.

The fact that women were more involved in this sector of the economy was also enforced by the involvement of a lot of men in the fighting activities or the role they played in the defence structure of the camp. For instance, in THR, there existed a rotation-system to defend the camp, in which all active men had to join. This means that a lot of men had to stay up all night, guarding the camp, and then take their rest during the daytime. Consequentially, women were obliged to look for new livelihood strategies.

These data are consistent with the traditional observation that in the whole Maluku region, Muslims are more integrated in commercial networks while Christians have better access to ‘the state’. As Richard Chauvel writes, due to the specificities of the colonial administration ‘... the Muslim community was relegated to a subordinate position in colonial society compared with their Christian compatriots’ Richard Chauvel, Nationalists, Soldiers and Separatists. The Ambonese Islands from Colonialism to Revolt, 1880-1950, Leiden KITLV Press, 1990, p. 20. See also: jacques Bertrand, Legacies of the Authoritarian Past: Religious Violence in Indonesia’s Moluccan Islands, in : Pacific Affairs, 2002, 75, pp. 57 – 85.

Ambonese referred to this practice of middlemen by the term ‘tangan ketiga’ or ‘third hand’.

Coping mechanisms have to be understood as ‘short-term strategies reacting to sudden disturbances in the livelihoods system’ while the term durable livelihood strategy denotes: ‘long-term strategies anticipating structural changes, risks and opportunities occurring with certain limits of probability’ (White, B. et. al., 2001).

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Another reason for this poor policy-making is the massive corruption on all levels of society. As a consequence, a lot of the money designed for the internally displaced does not reach the IDPs. For a case, comparable to the one in Ambon, see also: Lorraine V. Aragon, Profiting from displacement. In search of honest, well-designed aid for people displaced by the Poso conflict, Inside Indonesia, J an.-Mar. 2004.
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