

March 2011



Centre for  
Humanitarian  
Dialogue

*Mediation for peace*

## Peacemaking in Asia and the Pacific: Women's participation, perspectives and priorities



Women at the Peace Table **Asia Pacific**

# The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD Centre)

## “Mediation for peace”

The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD Centre) is an independent mediation organisation dedicated to helping improve the global response to armed conflict. It attempts to achieve this by mediating between warring parties and providing support to the broader mediation community.

The HD Centre is driven by humanitarian values and its ultimate goal to reduce the consequences of violent conflict, improve security, and contribute to the peaceful resolution of conflict.

It maintains a neutral stance towards the warring parties that it mediates between and, in order to maintain its impartiality it is funded by a variety of governments, private foundations and philanthropists.

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Women in the northern Indian city of Chandigarh at an event to mark International Women's Day, 8 March 2011. © Reuters/Ajay Verma

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#### Images (back cover)

Internally displaced persons inside a refugee tent, Beto Timur, Timor-Leste, 3 July 2008.

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## Foreword

It is a pleasure and an honour to be writing the introduction to this valuable HD Centre publication *Peacemaking in Asia Pacific: Women's participation, perspectives and priorities*. This brief and accessible publication offers those who work in and on peace processes a range of new and useful evidence and pointers not only for implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and its sister resolutions, but simply for creating better peace processes.

While the issue of women's involvement in peace process continues to be a real and burning issue for those of us working in Nepal, this is truly a global concern. Showing leadership on achieving equal representation by men and women in influential positions continues to be a global challenge, not least in the organisation I represent – the United Nations (UN).

The first woman to head any peacekeeping or political mission for the UN was appointed nearly fifty years after its founding – Margaret Joan Anstee (Special Representative of the Secretary General to Angola 1992-3). Seventeen years after Dame Margaret's appointment, in early 2009, I became only the eighth woman in the UN to head such a mission. However, to date, the UN has yet to appoint a woman as a dedicated lead mediator in support of any major, comprehensive peace agreement process.

The growing body of research showing the influence of women on peace agreements indeed underlines that the benefits are important and all to the good. But linking the engagement of women in peace negotiations to what they have suffered still underscores women's experience as victims. This publication helps to remind us that women have a right to sit at the negotiating table as actors with a stake in the future of their country and with a stake in international peace and security. Women belong there as decision-makers and as problem-solvers.

Women working our way into top national and international political and peacemaking posts is an achievement in itself, and still a very incomplete one that needs much more support. In June 2010, I took part in the global open day in



Kathmandu on Resolution 1325. On that day, I was reminded of the experiences of women during and as a result of the conflict in Nepal, and also of the enormous resources and engagement among Nepali women whether they are members of the Constituent Assembly, active in civil society, or approaching the issues from a more academic point of view. I am convinced this is not a resource unique to Nepal. We need to see more women in the formal and informal processes where decisions on peace and security are made, here and all over the world.

And for that to happen, there has to be a deliberate strategy. The UN Department of Political Affairs and UNIFEM (now UN Women) have set out a strategy for supporting more, and more effective, women's participation at all levels of conflict resolution and mediation. It involves building up gender expertise in mediation processes - so that mediators, and all parties, understand the implications for women's rights of their draft agreements. Second, it aims to build better gender balance among the ranks of mediators, emphasising that this aspect is integral to negotiations, not an add-on. And third, it seeks to engage more women outside the negotiating parties to impress their priorities on the principal actors in peace talks.

This publication makes an excellent contribution to achieving these aims, bringing the reality not only of the benefits and obstacles to women's participation, but also of actionable strategies as to how this can be achieved. It is a must-read for anyone with a serious interest not just in Asia Pacific peace processes, but peace processes across the world.

**Karin Landgren**

Representative of the Secretary General  
United Nations Mission in Nepal  
Kathmandu  
January 2011

# 1. Introduction

Cate Buchanan

“... in matters of war and peace, where death does not discriminate by gender, a shift is beginning in the tradition that women spend their lives treading softly in their homes and villages while the broader work of governance and negotiation is left to men.”<sup>1</sup>

In October 2010, the groundbreaking UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (SCR 1325) celebrated its tenth anniversary. This publication, through the actual experiences of women peacemakers from diverse countries, explores why women remain so under-represented in peace processes, and identifies concrete options to expand women’s contribution to peacemaking both quantitatively and substantively.

The first Security Council resolution to acknowledge women’s needs and contributions across a range of ‘peace and security’ issues, SCR 1325 built on decades of work from the 1979 Convention to End Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) to the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action as well as numerous UN resolutions and additions to international law to secure and extend women’s rights.<sup>2</sup>

SCR 1325 has been used in a multitude of ways to highlight and advance women’s involvement in ending wars and violence, keeping peace, and rebuilding war-torn societies. As well as endorsing these activities, the resolution specifically

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1 Zoll, Miriam H., “Women start taking their places at the peace table”, American News Service, January 25, (2001), p. 1. [www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/Resources/Academic/Disp-PartPP-Rep\\_PeaceTable\\_Zoll.pdf](http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/Resources/Academic/Disp-PartPP-Rep_PeaceTable_Zoll.pdf). Accessed September 12, 2010.

2 For a concise overview of this history see, Gierycz, Dorota, “Women, Peace and the United Nations: Beyond Beijing” in Skjelsbaek, Inger and Smith, Dan (Eds.), *Gender, Peace and Conflict* (London: International Peace Research Institute, Oslo and Sage Publications, 2001), pp. 14-31. Also see, Mesa, Manuela, “Women, Peace and Security: Resolution 1325 on its Tenth Anniversary”, in, *Yearbook Peace Culture 2010. Culture of Peace: A concept and a campaign revisited*, Ratkovic, Viktorija and Wintersteiner, Werner (Eds), (Austria: Centre for Peace Research and Peace Education, 2010), pp. 104-125.

calls for attention to be given to the rights and needs of women and girls, and the prevention of gender-based violence during and after conflict. Recent years have seen further developments in this area with the passing of SCRs 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), and 1960 (2010) which all build on, and reinforce, SCR 1325. (See Annex 1, Key international norms, for more detail).

The momentum and expectation of these norms is necessary as the peace process spectrum brings together those in positions of political and military power – predominantly men – to negotiate on behalf of the parties to a conflict, not on behalf of those affected by it. It is no surprise, then, to find that such conflict resolution efforts reflect the very exclusion that women across the world experience socially, culturally, politically and economically. Thus the intention of the norms developed in this area is to ensure a gendered perspective is applied to the full range of peace process practice. Contrary to popular misconception, this is not complex, technical social science; it simply means paying attention to the different ways that men and women, girls and boys are affected by violent conflict *and* contribute to its sustainable resolution. The self-conscious application of gender ‘lenses’ in conflict resolution ‘tool kits’ is essential because men rarely (if at all) question their identity through such a ‘lens’ but for most women, it is unavoidable precisely because of their marginalisation and oppression.

What this means in practice is working on conflict resolution from two different angles:

- *The numbers angle* – addressing the persistently low levels of women involved in direct peacemaking as negotiators, mediators, envoys, and senior advisers, by systematically including competent, qualified and committed women who are supported by diverse constituencies.
- *The substance angle* – addressing the paucity of robust measures in peace agreements that strengthen women’s rights and ensure gendered perspectives are consistently employed.

This introduction gives an overview of the important issues related to working on these two angles and highlights the country-based content of the publication which ends with a set of practical recommendations. These are aimed at helping peace process facilitators get beyond potentially frustrating concepts and semantics into making a reality of both international norms and women’s expectations of being regarded as equals and competent leaders and participants in peacemaking.

## The numbers angle: female representation in peace talks

SCR 1325 and SCR 1889 explicitly call for more women to be appointed as special representatives and envoys, and for parties to conflict to include women in the deliberations to end war. The call has not been adequately acted on.

According to research in 2009 on 21 major peace agreements since 1992, just over 2 per cent of signatories to peace agreements have been women; no women have been appointed chief or lead peace mediators in UN-sponsored peace talks; and women's participation in negotiating delegations averaged less than 6 per cent of the 10 cases for which such information was available.<sup>3</sup>

Compounding the problem of women's under-representation in peace negotiations is the fact that the profession of Track One mediation is also almost exclusively male-dominated. Some 66 of the 91 high level United Nations appointments have mandates that relate specifically to conflict, either by country or by theme.<sup>4</sup> Of these, 11 are held by women (17 per cent) and 1 is vacant. From 1 January 2010 to 31 January 2011, 23 of those positions have been filled. Of those appointments, 4 have been women (17 per cent, again).

The European Union (EU) is even worse in this regard. Of 11 EU Special Representatives in conflict areas, currently only one is a woman (Rosalind Marsden, Sudan) and she is the first ever female appointment.<sup>5</sup> The EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Lady Catherine Ashton, has agreed to report on gender (and geographical) balance in the European External Action Service in 2013, though as usual there are no sanctions attendant on failure to log improvements.<sup>6</sup>

There are also no female representatives in the African Union Peace and Security Council and, with the exceptions of Uganda and Kenya, mediators in the major African peace processes have all been men (for example in North/South Sudan, Darfur, Burundi, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, Central African Republic, Zimbabwe, and the Democratic Republic of Congo).<sup>7</sup> The Organisation

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3 UNIFEM, *Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections between Presence and Influence*, (New York: UNIFEM, 2009).

4 Methodology: 60 country specific roles (DRSG, SRSG etc) were reviewed along with 31 other appointments. Of those, SRSGs for Children and Armed Conflict; Human rights for IDPs: Prevention of Genocide; Sexual Violence in Conflict; and, Violence against Children, plus the Special Adviser to the SG on the Prevention of Genocide were included. [www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/sites/srsg/table.htm](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/sites/srsg/table.htm). Accessed February 25, 2011.

5 [www.consilium.europa.eu/showpage.aspx?id=263&lang=EN](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/showpage.aspx?id=263&lang=EN)

6 Essentially the Foreign Ministry of the European Union, see [www.eeas.europa.eu/index\\_en.htm](http://www.eeas.europa.eu/index_en.htm). Also see [www.deljpn.ec.europa.eu/modules/media/news/2010/101020c.html?ml\\_lang=en](http://www.deljpn.ec.europa.eu/modules/media/news/2010/101020c.html?ml_lang=en)

7 At the AU more generally there is one female Commissioner (out of 8) and two of the five AU Panel of the Wise are women.

## Figure 1: Breakdown by sex of holders of key UN conflict-related positions

○ Held by women (17%) ○ Vacant (2%) ● Held by men (81%)



of American States (OAS) fares poorly too, and appears not to have appointed any women as mediators though women do feature in other relevant leadership positions.<sup>8</sup>

Even in the non-governmental sphere, conflict resolution organisations and operational programmes are rarely, if ever, led by women (for example at the HD Centre, Crisis Management Initiative, Carter Center, *Comunità di Sant'Egidio* and *Conciliation Resources*).

So where are the women? A common response is that there is a deficit of qualified women. However, this is not supported by experience and comparison with male peacemakers. A more appropriate phrase might be that there's a 'confidence and opportunity deficit'. In 2010, the HD Centre convened a number of roundtable discussions in the Asia Pacific region: an Indonesia-specific meeting in Jakarta in March; an Aceh-specific meeting in July; and a region-wide meeting in Nepal in September.<sup>9</sup> There was no difficulty in identifying experienced, female peace process actors and analysts for these meetings. The meetings brought together women to reflect on their experiences, successes and failures associated with peacemaking. Three recurring reasons were cited as obstacles: the inability to access male networks; self-doubt and a lack of confidence; and a lack of recognition that women's existing skills and abilities could be transferred to peacemaking (in contrast to many men who apparently flourish in this area with little or no formal training). As women's participation at

8 Discussion between Maria Fernanda Trigo, Deputy Director of the OAS Department of Democratic Sustainability and Special Missions and Rebecca Peters, HD Centre consultant, various dates in February 2011. Claudia Vargas de Peréz was Deputy Chief of Mission of the OAS project to support the Colombian peace process: [www.mapp-oea.net/](http://www.mapp-oea.net/). Elizabeth Spehar co-ordinated the Technical Electoral Assistance Program which led to the 2006 elections in Haiti. The OAS Secretary General appointed Hilda Solis, US Secretary of Labor, as one of his two representatives on the Verification Commission on the Honduran crisis in 2009. See [www.oas.org/en/media\\_center/press\\_release.asp?sCodigo=E-360/09](http://www.oas.org/en/media_center/press_release.asp?sCodigo=E-360/09). Accessed February 21, 2011.

9 See [www.hdcentre.org/projects/gender-amp-mediation/issues/women-peace-table---asia-pacific](http://www.hdcentre.org/projects/gender-amp-mediation/issues/women-peace-table---asia-pacific)

the grassroots level at all stages of the conflict and peace spectrum is starting to become better acknowledged and understood, the argument that they are not qualified for actual negotiations increasingly fails to ring true.

It does not help women's confidence or their visibility that it remains impossible to prove empirically what impact the presence of women would have if a peace negotiation included a critical mass of 40 per cent women. Certainly, a wealth of literature suggests that the influence of gender on negotiations is profound.<sup>10</sup> However, the pressure to conform to the 'norm' in such processes can be very strong. For example, Shadia Marhaban, the only woman involved in the 2005 Aceh peace talks, has cast doubt on the impact of her own presence.<sup>11</sup> Women who have had this experience recall that "*we had to fit into the process as men not as women.*"<sup>12</sup> On the whole, it appears that "*women wait to be asked to be a part of peace processes, men insert themselves.*"<sup>13</sup>

The socialisation and oppression that many women experience ironically often provides women with the core skills necessary for successful conflict resolution: considering the 'other'; identifying areas of compromise; empathy; active listening; attention to detail; and consensus-building. These skills are often regarded (sometimes derided) as feminine, yet male mediators also need to deploy them if they are to make any headway in negotiations. Indeed one of the most senior women in the mediation field, Teresita Quintos Deles, has reflected that "*when women are in senior posts, they seem to take a wider approach, expanding spaces, nurturing 'other tables'*".<sup>14</sup>

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10 Non-exhaustive suggestions: Babcock, Linda and Lashever, Sara, *Women Don't Ask: The High Cost of Avoiding Negotiation and Positive Strategies for Change*, (New York: Bantam Books, 2007); Alvesson, Mats and Due Billing, Yvonne, *Understanding Gender and Organizations*, Second edition, (London: Sage, 2009); Putnam, Linda L and Kolb, Deborah M., "Rethinking Negotiation: Feminist Views of Communication and Exchange", *Center for Gender in Organizations, Working Paper Number 7*, (Boston: Simmons School of Management, 2000, January); Bowles, Hannah Riley, Babcock, Linda and McGinn, Kathleen L., "Constraints and Triggers: Situational Mechanics of Gender in Negotiation", *Kennedy School of Government Faculty Research Working Paper Series RWP05-051*, (Boston: Harvard University, 2005); Kolb, Deborah M and Coolidge, G.G., "Her place at the Table", in JW Breslin and JZ Rubin (Eds), *Negotiation Theory and Practice, The Program on Negotiation*, (Massachusetts: Harvard Law School, 1991), pp. 261-277.

11 Reflection made at the Experts Meeting: Women at the Peace Table – Asia Pacific, Kathmandu, Nepal – September 27-30, 2010. Organised by the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue in collaboration with Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace and the Alliance for Social Dialogue.

12 Comment made at the Experts Meeting in September 2010 in Nepal under the Chatham House rule.

13 Comment made at the Experts Meeting in September 2010 in Nepal under the Chatham House rule. For a fascinating exploration of this reality see Babcock, Linda and Lashever, Sara, *Women Don't Ask: The High Cost of Avoiding Negotiation and Positive Strategies for Change*, (New York: Bantam Books, 2007).

14 Conversation with Cate Buchanan, HD Centre in Manila, July 2010.

Other reasons for exclusion – external and self-driven – may relate to the persistently disproportionate responsibilities of women and men as carers for children and the elderly. Peace negotiations often take place in a neutral place, sometimes far from areas of fighting. For many women the cost of travel, the care and domestic burdens they cannot put aside, and security concerns mean they simply cannot take part. Negotiators from rebel groups or armed movements are particularly vulnerable in this regard. Shadia Marhaban has noted: “*When I was negotiating in Aceh my safety was under threat. This needs to be better addressed by mediators and third parties. If I had been living in Aceh at the time I would have thought twice about joining the talks because of my family’s safety*”.<sup>15</sup>

However, the vast majority of third party mediators and facilitators are older men typically aged between 50 to 75 years. If female mediators were to come from the same age bracket, many women would be past the most intensive period of caring for children or even elders, so this may not be the largest impediment at this level.<sup>16</sup> However for younger women who may be working in proximate roles to peace processes (for example as advisers) and who are also mothers or carers, travel and peace process support may be challenging.

However, with imagination, creativity, political will and financial resources – all hallmarks of successful conflict resolution practice – these kinds of issues could easily be handled. This may involve providing funds, alternative care arrangements, properly planned security arrangements and other provisions under the aegis of the peace process.

Even when women get beyond the so-called barriers of talent, qualifications and physical capacity they still face the problems of prejudice and tokenism. With gender issues typically so marginalised, the few women in such processes are often rapidly sidelined as solely being concerned with, and called on to articulate, ‘women’s issues’ or ‘social welfare’ issues. Some women have sought to invert this problem and change perceptions. As recalled by a participant at an experts meeting in Nepal 2010: “*Having been a negotiator in a peace process, I recall being reluctant to bring out gender issues to avoid being marginalised. I thought, “I am going to get known as ‘that gender person’ and no one will listen to me.” So I developed expertise in other areas of peace processes and established my credibility in ceasefires which then enabled me to bring gender issues up across the board*”.<sup>17</sup>

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15 Reflection during the Experts Meeting in September 2010 in Nepal.

16 Potter, Antonia, “We the Women: Why conflict mediation is not just a job for men”, *Opinion Piece* (Geneva: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2005).

17 Comment made at the Experts Meeting in September 2010 in Nepal under the Chatham House rule.



Women's participation in these activities is not a 'nice thing to do.' It's not as though we are doing a favor for ourselves and them by including women in the work of peace. This is a necessary global security imperative."

United States Secretary of State, Hillary Rodham Clinton, October 26, 2010

So where to look for "capable" women? If national parliaments and assemblies do not already provide potential female candidates, experience has shown beyond doubt that the largest and most capable talent pool is in civil society. Indeed, civil society representatives are increasingly understood by mediators (even if grudgingly by some) to be critical actors in peace process

management who need to be more systematically included. Christine Bell and Catherine O'Rourke make this argument: "*Promotion of local women's participation also stands to legitimate and thereby assist the implementation of resulting measures in a way that imposition by mediators will not. Requiring mechanisms to include local women in peace processes is therefore as important as the use of women mediators.*"<sup>18</sup>

In conclusion, there is no dearth of capable, qualified and highly committed women with a strong investment in peace, in all countries embroiled in conflict. But obstacles still prevent them from participating, and it is imperative to insist systematically that local women peace negotiators and mediators be included in peace talks and agreements and are provided with specific support to ensure this. It would have a mutually reinforcing effect for both international female mediators and peace envoys, and local female peace negotiators if their numbers were visibly increased to achieve a minimum 40 per cent. Or stated in another way by US Secretary of State, Hilary Rodham Clinton: "*Women's participation in these activities is not a 'nice thing to do.'* It's not as though we are doing a favor for ourselves and them by including women in the work of peace. This is a necessary global security imperative."<sup>19</sup>

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18 Bell, Christine and O'Rourke, Catherine, "Peace Agreements or Pieces of Paper? The Impact of UNSC Resolution 1325 on Peace Processes and Their Agreements", *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, Vol. 59, October (2010), p. 39.

19 Secretary Clinton's speech to the UN on Women, Peace and Security, 26 October 2010. Available at: [www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2010/October/20101026152400su0.3725353.html#ixzz14NGnpq1n](http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2010/October/20101026152400su0.3725353.html#ixzz14NGnpq1n). Accessed February 25, 2011.



## The substance angle: gendered content in peace agreements

Peace agreements come in a range of styles and sizes; from the very brief (e.g. Aceh 2005) to the voluminous (e.g. Darfur 2005) and in three key forms: cease-fires, framework and implementation agreements. Across this diversity there is a certain consistency with weak or non-existent content on gender justice and equality. Bell and O'Rourke note: "*Specific references to women are important at all three stages . . . While the terms of a peace agreement do not secure the implementation of its provisions, and the omission of an issue does not mean that it cannot be addressed in practice, issues that are not specifically mentioned in the agreement can be difficult to prioritize post-agreement, and importantly, international implementation mechanisms and donor funding flow from agreement priorities.*"<sup>20</sup>

Women's experiences of war will, in most cases, differ from those of the men as will their need for, and definition of, security in its aftermath. Yet too often in peace talks (and resulting agreements) the perspectives of women "*become a euphemism for 'society' or 'welfare issues'*" or are amalgamated with those of children, the elderly or other marginalised or victimised groups.<sup>21</sup> Some of the absolute necessities for women which are unlikely to be adequately dealt with in a peace agreement unless there are women and sensitised men present in the process include: protection from and justice for gender-based violence and sexual violence; meaningful representation in power-sharing arrangements; the right to land; social services and access to employment for widows and returnees; and attention to the specific needs of all combatants and the communities to which they will return. The notion that peace agreements are typically gender-neutral and thus neither problematic nor progressive is flawed. Indeed as Donald Steinberg states: "*. . . a peace agreement that calls itself 'gender-neutral' is, by definition, discriminatory against women and likely to fail.*"<sup>22</sup> Further the evidence for failing to carefully include gender-specific concerns can be demonstrated as follows:

- Just 4 per cent of agreements address sexual or gender-based violence;
- Direct reference to women or gender is found in only 16 per cent of peace agreements since 1990;
- Since the agreement of SCR 1325 there has been a rise from 11 per cent to 27 per cent of peace agreement references to women;

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20 Bell, Christine and O'Rourke, Catherine (2010), p. 7.

21 Comment made at the Experts Meeting in September 2010 in Nepal under the Chatham House rule.

22 Steinberg, Donald, *Beyond Words and Resolutions: An Agenda for UNSCR 1325*, (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2010, June 30), p. 4.



By not

including the voices of half of the population, critics argue that these male-dominated peace agreements will rarely be able to contribute to a just society.”

- Agreements concluded before *and* after SCR1325 are more likely to include references to women if the agreement had a high level of local input and control.<sup>23</sup>

## Does it matter?

If the end result is an end to violence and a form of peace, does it really matter who negotiated the agreement(s)? Surely what matters most is that violence ends and if that means peace processes are dominated by men, then so be it. Does it matter that clauses are not specific on gender? There are lots of other important issues which are also not spelled out. In recent years this cynical line of argument has come under increasing fire as more and more women and some men raise their voices about the consequences and long-term ramifications of excluding and marginalising women in the multitude of processes that occur to end war and violence. By not including the voices of half of the population, critics argue that these male-dominated peace agreements will rarely be able to contribute to a just society. Satbeer Chhabra observes: “*When women participate in peace negotiations and in structuring and crafting a peace agreement, they keep the future of their societies, their communities in mind. They think of how their children and grandchildren will live in their country, how they will benefit from the peace agreement*”.<sup>24</sup> Male-dominated agreements tend to focus on power issues, and minimise core issues of exclusion/inclusion and social in/justice that underpinned the war. When women are systematically excluded, the perennial issues in peace processes – power-sharing, devolution, autonomy, constitutional reform, parliamentary reform, access to land and property, security system reform – are only ever partially addressed when gender blind agreements are made.<sup>25</sup>

A number of examples from peace negotiations, from places as diverse as Sudan and Northern Ireland, show that the issues women tend to push for (including human rights, compensation for victims, health and education) benefit the whole population. Antonia Potter also notes that whilst “*not every issue*

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23 Bell, Christine and O'Rourke, Catherine (2010).

24 Chhabra, Satbeer, *Gender Perspective in Peace Initiatives*, Women Development Division, New Delhi : NIPCCD, 2005), p. 4.

25 Potter, Antonia, “Gender Sensitivity, Nicety or Necessity in Peace Processes”, Oslo Forum Briefing Pack (Geneva: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2008), pp. 54-65.

and every nuance” can be fitted in, applying a gendered perspective enriches visions, discussions and possibly agreements on post-war stability, peace and development.<sup>26</sup>

## A focus on Asia and the Pacific

This publication takes a brief, and necessarily selective, journey across the contribution of women as peacemakers in Asia and the Pacific over the last ten years. This region has one of the world’s worst gender gaps across a range of human development indices. For example it has some of the lowest rates of political representation of women in the world, and almost half of the adult women in South Asia are illiterate.<sup>27</sup> Yet paradoxes exist. Despite these appalling statistics, almost every South Asian state has had women in key leadership roles including President or Prime Minister, while this is still rare in Europe and has never happened in the USA. Some suggest this has only been possible because these women have been the wife or daughter of a powerful male leader. Many Asian women have also held key ministerial positions such as Foreign Minister. There are also some exciting developments across the region to improve women’s representation in parliaments through quotas.<sup>28</sup>

A cursory look at the architecture of international ‘women, peace and security’ norms across the region provides much ‘food for thought’, with scant evidence of their integration visible in policymaking processes. Of the paltry 25 UN Member States which have produced National Action Plans (NAPs) for the implementation of SCR 1325 in the last ten years, it is preoccupying that only two come from Asia and the Pacific (namely, the Philippines, in March 2010 and Nepal, in October 2010).<sup>29</sup> From the region, Australia, Indonesia, Timor-Leste and the Solomon Islands are in the preparation and/or drafting stage. It remains to be seen whether there is the political will and financing to make these NAPs a reality.

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26 Potter, Antonia (2008), p. 58. Potter points out that in Liberia, El Salvador and Sri Lanka women proximate to the peace talks put forward specific suggestions on disarmament, demobilisation and re-integration from the view of the communities, largely female-headed, who would be accepting returnees. Thus the issue of combatants was viewed from two perspectives instead of solely the needs of the combatant. See also, Bell, Christine, “Women Address The Problem of Peace Agreements”, in Coomaraswamy, Radhika and Fonseka, Dilrukshi (Eds), *Peace Work: Women, Armed Conflict and Negotiation*, (India: Women Unlimited, 2004), pp. 96-126.

27 UN Development Programme, *Power, Voice and Rights: A Turning Point for Gender Equality in Asia and the Pacific*, (New York: UNDP, 2010).

28 See for example, British Broadcasting Corporation, “Indian Upper House Approves Women’s Quota Bill”, March 9, (2010). <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8557237.stm>. Accessed February 22, 2011.

29 Based on email correspondence between Cate Buchanan and Malika Bhandarkar, Peace and Security Cluster, UN Women, February 25, 2011. Also see [www.peacewomen.org/pages/about-1325/national-action-plans-naps#National\\_Implementation\\_Overview](http://www.peacewomen.org/pages/about-1325/national-action-plans-naps#National_Implementation_Overview) for links to various NAPs.



Ratna Maya Thapa (80-years-old at the time) from the Central Region of Nepal shows her voter registration card after walking for one and a half hours to cast her ballot in the Nepalese Constituent Assembly elections, 10 April, 2008 in Dolakha, Nepal. © UN Photo/Nayan Tara

However, there are also empirical reasons to be optimistic. As the growing and strikingly consistent body of work on women in peace processes demonstrates, despite not always being present around the peace table, women are making robust contributions, getting their voices heard, and creating their own forms of peace processes. This publication features just some of these examples:

- Irene Santiago, a member of the negotiating panel for the Philippines Government in 2001-2004, provides an overview of the efforts of women to contribute to the Mindanao peace process. In the Philippines, a country that continues to distinguish itself with the prominence of women in public life, this long-running conflict remains unresolved. New talks opened in February 2011 with a woman, Teresita Quintos Deles, sitting (for the second time) in a key seat as Presidential Adviser to the Peace Process.
- Another voice is Kumudini Samuel, who was a member of the Sub Committee on Gender Issues during the 2002-2003 Sri Lankan peace talks which created an opportunity for five women from either side of the conflict to work with each other to inform the peace talks.

- Indonesia has experienced localised volatile political instability for some two decades with armed violence besieging Aceh, Poso, Maluku and elsewhere. A long-running colonial conflict is also still active in Papua. Rohaiza Asi and colleagues account for the subdued role of women in formal conflict resolution across Indonesia despite the prominence of women in local peacemaking efforts and Indonesia's comparatively thriving democracy. In addition, they identify readily available opportunities for policymakers to remedy the under-involvement of women.
- In Timor Leste democracy is emerging after three repressive decades of occupation. Despite women's significant contributions to secure an independent state, and the intense involvement of the international community, their voices have been continually overlooked at crucial decision-making moments. Rebecca Peters provides an overview of how women in Timor Leste are making their voices heard in the contemporary context.
- In India, Rita Manchanda gives us the essence of the long-running and complex struggle for self determination in the northeast, specifically Manipur and Nagaland. This section reveals how women have used some of their multiple identities as mothers, wives, sisters and 'kitchen cabinets' to be effective and responsible activists, advocates and monitors in these struggles. Using a range of identities women have been able to prevent internecine violence where armed actors and high-level diplomats have failed, demonstrating again women's ability to work across lines – party, clan, class – with peace as their main objective.
- The Solomon Islands was thrust into the international limelight in 1998 with an outbreak of violent identity-based conflict. This conflict is little-known outside the region, and women's roles and contributions to its resolution have scarcely been explored. A contribution from Rebecca Peters uncovers the powerful nexus between women's traditional cultural and religious roles, and their own activism within the conflict and subsequent resolution process. She shows the progress and impacts they have made in the face of overtly repressive traditional views and international support structures which were initially blind both to the specific impact of the conflict on them, and to their actual and potential roles in the sustainable resolution of the conflict.
- Past and present challenges for women in Nepal are also profiled. Despite not a single woman being present as a negotiator to the peace talks – notwithstanding the massive participation of women as combatants particularly with the Maoist rebels during the war – Reecha Upadhyay

outlines how women have found a place in the ongoing peace process; particularly in the national parliament and the ongoing constitution-making process. Women's involvement in peacebuilding was bolstered by a more specific commitment in the Interim Constitution of 2007 to proportional inclusion which requires that 33 per cent of candidates for the Constituent Assembly must be women. Upadhyay argues that Nepal provides a cautionary tale about the importance of ensuring such provisions have long term strategies behind them, to ensure women do not tread water in junior positions in parties or end up being treated as "tokens".

The report concludes with a number of suggestions with global applicability. Three annexes are included of practical significance: an overview of key international norms; a resource list; and, a set of pointers for mediation teams for where and how gender issues can be included in their work.

## Summary

As the evidence in this publication attests, women in Asia and the Pacific are present, and are taking an active part in conflict resolution. However, this primarily occurs from the margins, as they remain largely excluded from the actual negotiation table. Much more can be done to ensure their substantive inclusion from the start of peacemaking efforts (for example, talks about talks, preliminary agenda setting) through to the implementation phase. There is a long way to go before peace agreements consistently include meaningful gendered content. What is needed to increase the presence of women and influence the substance of negotiations is simply political will and the focussed attention of local, national and international actors. To assist this process, this publication concludes with some suggestions which seek to identify where peace process actors (members of armed groups, government officials, security agencies, NGOs and the international community of third parties, donors and advisers) can make constructive contributions, not just to seeing international norms implemented, but to making better peace processes.

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## 2. Mindanao

Irene Morada Santiago

“If women negotiated the peace agreements it would be more than just a settlement. It would be fair and enduring. It would be wise.”<sup>30</sup>

The Philippines is notable for the number of women in leadership positions in both the government and non-government peace initiatives. This reflects the, perhaps unusual, role that Filipino women have in public life generally compared to many other nations in the region and globally. The Philippines was the first South East Asian country to ratify the *Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women*, CEDAW. In August of 2009 the Magna Carta of Women was passed, a major law aiming to end discrimination against women.<sup>31</sup> The UN Human Development Report rates the nation 40 out of 155 countries when a gender-related index is compared directly to the human development index, putting the Philippines ahead of countries like Australia and South Africa.<sup>32</sup>

### Women in peace talks

Women’s involvement in the long running and ongoing formal peace negotiations between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has either been as members of the Government negotiating panel or as part of third-party groups providing technical assistance to the panels. The MILF panels have consistently been composed solely of men.

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30 Mindanao Commission on Women, *Position Paper for the Peace Negotiating Panels*, (Davao City, Philippines: Mindanao Commission on Women, 2006).

31 The law took seven years to be agreed and contains many groundbreaking and long overdue provisions. See Burgonio. TJ, “Magna Carta of Women finally a law”, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 15 August, (2009).

32 United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2009*, (New York: United Nations, 2009). See [http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR\\_2009\\_EN\\_Table\\_J.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2009_EN_Table_J.pdf). Accessed January 20, 2011.

## Box 1: Background to the conflict

Ouseph Tharakan, HD Centre

The Muslim minority in the Philippines – known as the Moros – have long claimed a distinct identity from the rest of the (mainly Christian) country. In the 1960's, the Moros launched an armed struggle for an ancestral homeland in the south of the country. The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) was established as the armed wing of the Mindanao Independence Movement. It began its operations in earnest after the so-called March 1968 Jabidah Massacre when some 28 young Moros were killed on the island of Corregidor. Unbeknown to them, this was part of a special military operation to invade Sabah in Malaysia. This incident was the catalyst behind the Moro insurgencies. Temporary peace was reached between the MNLF and the Marcos government in 1976 with the signing of the Tripoli Agreement, although violent conflict broke out soon afterwards. The MNLF began to splinter with factions such as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) pursuing a more militant approach. A ceasefire agreement was reached with the MNLF in 1994, followed in 1996 by a peace agreement that established the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). Key elements of the 1996 agreement are yet to be implemented and negotiations continue, though violence with the MNLF has subsided significantly.

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) was originally an offshoot of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). It separated from the MNLF in the mid-1980s to brand itself as a more fervently Islamist and militant alternative to the MNLF, who were engaged in dialogue with the government. The numbers of the military wing of the MILF is estimated at 12,000, though numbers vary depending on the source.<sup>1</sup> Originally, the MILF was fighting for an independent Muslim state with full autonomy but recently has opted for “the highest form of autonomy” within the Philippine state.

A ceasefire agreement supervised by an international mission was reached in 2003, though it was frequently violated. An agreement on ancestral domain, a significant issue for the MILF, was reached over 2007-2008 but was suspended by the Supreme Court in 2008 just before it was ratified. An upsurge in violence followed – the following three months saw 312 people killed and over 693,000 displaced.<sup>2</sup> In September 2009, the two

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1 In 2007 the Armed Forces of the Philippines estimated the number of fighters as 11,679. See Chalk, Peter, *The evolving terrorist threat to Southeast Asia: a net assessment*, (USA: Rand Corporation, 2009), p. 41. A number of 12,000 is cited by Herbolzheimer, Kristian, *Philippines: conflictos armats i processos de pau*, Conference paper at Sant Cugat del Vallès: XXII Summer Course. Peace International University, (Barcelona, 2007). Between 12,000 and 15,000 is cited by Bowman, Robin L, “Moro Insurgents and the Peace Process in the Philippines”, in Forest, James J.F, (Ed.), *Countering Terrorism and Insurgency in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: International Perspectives*, (California: Praeger Security International, 2007).

2 National Disaster Coordinating Council, “Sitrep 84 re IDPs in Mindanao”, NDCC Update issued 18 May, (Quezon City, Philippines: 2009). [http://210.185.184.53/ndccWeb/images/ndccWeb/ndcc\\_update/IDPs\\_2009/ndcc%20update%20sitrep%2084%20idps%20in%20mindanao18may2009.pdf](http://210.185.184.53/ndccWeb/images/ndccWeb/ndcc_update/IDPs_2009/ndcc%20update%20sitrep%2084%20idps%20in%20mindanao18may2009.pdf). Accessed December 12, 2010.



conflict parties agreed to set up an International Contact Group (ICG) to assist the peace process. The ICG consists of an ad hoc grouping of states from Asia, the European Union and the Organization of Islamic Conference, as well as international NGO's including the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue.<sup>3</sup> Formal peace talks were resumed in December 2009 with Malaysia as the facilitator. The new administration of President Benigno S. Aquino III has indicated that it will continue dialogue with the MILF for a negotiated political settlement. The key government agency is the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process.

Some 120,000 people are estimated to have died in the violent conflict in Mindanao over the past four decades.<sup>4</sup> Some two million people have been displaced. Years of violence have further exacerbated the region's chronic underdevelopment. Weak policing and easy access to weapons have created an enabling environment for increasing rates of criminal violence, the presence of various militia groups and a growing demand amongst civilians to arm themselves.<sup>5</sup>

Despite women's prominence in many aspects of Filipino life, the Philippines, and particularly Mindanao, remains heavily patriarchal. In Muslim Mindanao while women are accorded respect as members of the family and community, most decision making power remain with men.<sup>6</sup> While traditional gender roles generally limit the direct involvement of women in actual fighting, they play a range of informal and indirect roles through supporting their male family members (husbands, brothers, sons, fathers, uncles etc) in their involvement in militia and armed groups.

The conflict in Mindanao periodically results in massive displacement of civilians. Women are particularly affected during such periods. The scarcity of employment or income-generating opportunities in camps for internally displaced people makes women and children an easy target for traffickers. The limited water and sanitation facilities in camps and the absence of electricity increase the risk to personal security and integrity, particularly for women.<sup>7</sup>

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3 For more information see [www.hdcentre.org/projects/philippines-mindanao](http://www.hdcentre.org/projects/philippines-mindanao).

4 International Crisis Group, "Southern Philippines Background: Terrorism and the Peace Process", *Asia Report No. 80*, (Jakarta/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2004).

5 Report of PhilANSA to IANSA on the "Peoples' Consultations in the Philippines on the Arms Trade Treaty" (Manila: PhilANSA, 2007); Nario-Galace, Jasmin, *Gun Violence in the Philippines: A Human Security Concern* (Manila: Miriam College Philippines, no date).

6 Lidasan, Amirah Ali, "Moro Women's Struggle for Human Rights in the Philippines", Paper presented in Jakarta, Indonesia at the conference 'Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Muslim Societies', 11-12 March, 2009.

7 Norwegian Refugee Council and Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Cycle of conflict and neglect: Mindanao's displacement and protection crisis A profile of the internal displacement situation*, 5 November (Geneva: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2009). [www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/\(httpInfoFiles\)/2487E9AEA0AA9B91C1257665005CE8F4/\\$file/Philippines+-+November+2009.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles)/2487E9AEA0AA9B91C1257665005CE8F4/$file/Philippines+-+November+2009.pdf). Accessed February 22, 2011.

However the MILF announced in September 2010 that two women will be named as advisers to the panel.<sup>33</sup> Whilst women are involved in these processes, they remain a minority and are much more visible in informal efforts to make peace.

When the former administration of President Gloria Arroyo reconstituted the Government's peace negotiating team in 2001, two women were appointed to the five-member panel.<sup>34</sup> Since 2004, new Government panels have also included at least one woman on the panel.<sup>35</sup>

Ahead of the peace talks (which were set to resume in November 2010 but progress halted and they eventually recommenced in February 2011), the Mindanao Commission on Women and the Mothers for Peace Movement submitted a letter to then President Gloria Arroyo, in which SCR 1325 was cited to urge her to include qualified women. Following this letter, Grace Rebollos, a university president and peace activist, was included in the otherwise all male peace panel.<sup>36</sup> This panel was disbanded in the lead-up to the May 2010 national election. A new panel was formed in September 2010 by President Benigno S. Aquino III. This includes one woman, Miriam Coronel Ferrer, a respected academic at the University of the Philippines.

Women have also made contributions whilst at the helm of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP). A member of the President's Cabinet, the Presidential Adviser oversees all ongoing peace negotiations and ensures full compliance with signed peace agreements. Teresita Quintos Deles, a well-known feminist and peace advocate, is currently holding this position for the second time. Deles held it first under Arroyo from 2003 to 2005 when she broke away from the administration over the issue of Arroyo's questionable victory in the controversial 2004 elections. She took office again as the Presidential Adviser in July 2010. Annabelle T. Abaya, one of the best trained mediators in the country, was presidential adviser from November 2009 to June 2010. Although her stint was short, Abaya significantly reduced the corruption that had tainted the office. Abaya also reached out to civil society organisations to broaden the support base for peacemaking across the Philippines. Under her leadership, President Arroyo signed an Executive Order on a National Action Plan implementing SCR 1325 and 1820.

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33 "MILF forms new peace panel, board of consultants", *MILF Official Web*, September 13, (2010). [www.luwaran.com](http://www.luwaran.com). Accessed January 20, 2011.

34 Emily Marohombsar and Irene M. Santiago.

35 Sylvia Okinlay Paraguya, Grace Rebollos and Miriam Coronel Ferrer.

36 "MCW Welcomes Appointment of New Woman Panel Member", Website statement, March 23, 2010. [www.mindanaowomen.org/mcw/?p=1825#more-1825](http://www.mindanaowomen.org/mcw/?p=1825#more-1825). Accessed June 18, 2010.

## Women and violent conflict in Mindanao

As in other violent conflicts, women in Mindanao have consistently spoken out against the escalation of violence in an effort to mobilise the public behind a peace process. This effort has had mixed success. In 2000 it was rumoured that the Estrada administration (1998-2001) was about to start a major offensive to bomb the main MILF camp in Camp Abubakar in the province of Maguindanao. A group of nine women (from the now-defunct Mindanao Council of Women CLeaders, three of whom were Muslim) shuttled between the MILF chairperson and the Secretary of National Defence to argue the case for dialogue. The women were not successful in their mission but they were able to engage the interest of the national media in the consequences of war and the ensuing displacement of people.<sup>37</sup>

In 2003, when the Arroyo administration again decided to bomb a wide swathe of what was considered a MILF stronghold, I was a member of the Government negotiating panel. After much work behind the scenes, there came a time for more public work to end the violence. I became one of many women across Mindanao who engaged women in other parts of the country in a 'Mothers for Peace' campaign. This came into being after I spoke to a friend, a publicist, about my frustration over the bombing of Buliok. She gave the idea that we could mobilise mothers and gave the campaign a name, 'Mothers for Peace'. After a long discussion about whether we should use "women" or "mothers", we deliberately chose the word with greater emotive power but that would not be so "threatening". We contacted our networks and got a tremendous response from individuals and groups all over the country. Launched on Mother's Day (May 11), the campaign demanded an immediate ceasefire and a return to the negotiating table. It effectively shaped public opinion through face-to-face encounters between women from Mindanao and elsewhere in the Philippines which were well covered by the national media.<sup>38</sup> Three women who had fled their homes and were now staying in evacuation centres were brought to meet other women in major cities in the country. At these gatherings, thousands of

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37 Hostilities in 2000 displaced around 1 million people. See, International Crisis Group, "The Philippines: Counter-insurgency vs. Counter-terrorism in Mindanao", *Asia Report No. 152*, (Jakarta/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2008). A campaign report by the 4th Infantry Division claims that 1,089 rebels were killed and 1,722 wounded though these figures are not independently verified. See, "Islamic way of life – MILF's biggest strength", *The Manila Times*, June 20, (2002). <http://archives.manilatimes.net/others/special/2002/jun/20/20020620spe1.html>. Accessed June 19, 2010.

38 "Ate" V Bonds with Mindanao's Moms for Peace', *TODAY*, May 19, (2003); 'Mothers for Peace Launch National Campaign', *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, May 11, (2003); Benign, Teodoro C, "Pgymlion Takes Off/ Mothers for Peace, Others", *The Philippine Star*, May 21, (2003).



A Moro Islamic Liberation Front fighter separates the women from the men during a gathering in the group's Camp Bushra, Mindanao, March 2008. © Jason Gutierrez/IRIN ([www.irinnews.org](http://www.irinnews.org))

women listened to the women from Mindanao describe their pain and the disruption of their lives as a result of continued displacement. *"I didn't know that we hurt you so much. Please forgive us"* said one woman in Pangasinan, a province in Northern Luzon, for whom the war in Mindanao was formerly a distant issue.<sup>39</sup>

The campaign also asked major media outlets, advertisers and advertising agencies to help disseminate the two demands of the campaign: the declaration of a ceasefire by the two parties and a return to the negotiating table. A 45-second advertisement was made and shown on major TV networks and several spots aired on national radio. These advertisements were screened for free as part of the networks' contribution to achieving peace in Mindanao. Two months after the campaign began, a ceasefire was declared by both the Government and the MILF. The successful campaign has now been transformed into a powerful grassroots movement, with women organised into 'peace circles' and given training in conflict prevention, resolution and containment skills.

As a member of the negotiating panel I was involved in the painstaking follow-up and networking to ensure the ceasefire stuck. I was the person responsible for "fixing" the ceasefire mechanism. In spite of the fact that an agreement

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39 Mothers for Peace Roadshow in Pangasinan, May 2003.

had been signed establishing an International Monitoring Team (IMT), a Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH) composed of government and MILF representatives, and a local monitoring team, the drivers of the conflict remained unaddressed and so violent incidents between the two warring parties still occurred.

I worked with the panel Chair to successfully find a new CCCH Chair who had the authority within the armed forces to enforce the ceasefire. I also worked with the panel Chair to make sure that the letter to foreign governments willing to send members of the IMT was sent by the Department of Foreign Affairs (the letters had been stalled in the Department). Work was then done with the new CCCH Chair (General Rodolfo Garcia, Armed Forces of the Philippines Vice Chief of Staff) to bring all the field commanders in Mindanao to a meeting to emphatically tell them that the peace process was paramount.

Local women also took the initiative to form monitoring teams to further promote compliance and act as a form of local accountability. Some years later, building on this experience, a 'Women's Protection Unit' was formed by the Mindanao People's Caucus under the Civilian Protection component of the IMT to bolster the implementation of the National Action Plan for SCR 1325. Mary Ann Arnado, helped to set up 'Bantay Ceasefire' (Ceasefire Watch), a mechanism that involves the local communities in monitoring the implementation of the ceasefire agreement.

## Content in peace talks

In addition to public advocacy campaigns, civil society groups have also prepared substantive policy recommendations which could be fed into formal negotiations. For example, in 2006 the Mindanao Commission on Women organised a series of consultations with various groups of Bangsamoro and indigenous women that culminated in the Mindanao Women's Peace Summit with the theme "If Women Negotiated the Peace Agreement . . .". These consultations also led to the development of a position paper which was presented to the Chair of the government panel and a representative of the MILF panel. It put forward women's positions on demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) structures and mechanisms to be established after a peace agreement and the allocation of resources from the proposed trust fund.<sup>40</sup> These substantive points have not yet been discussed in negotiations and it is not clear how the two panels will incorporate the recommendations embodied in the position paper.

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40 Mindanao Commission on Women, (2006).



As is the case elsewhere, in the Philippines peacebuilding activities are where women are most visible and gain senior decision-making positions.”

In August 2008, the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain – a product of four years of negotiations – was stopped by the Supreme Court at literally the last minute. There was massive public support for the Supreme Court decision.

Killings and looting occurred in several Mindanao towns, setting back the entire peace process. It is estimated that nearly a million people were displaced.<sup>41</sup> To ensure active and wide public participation in the peace talks, especially after the debacle of the non-signing of agreement and the ensuing public outcry that showed the strong prejudice against Muslims, Mindanao women initiated the formation of a Mindanao Contact Group on Peace (MCGP). The MCGP is composed of the heads of civil society organisations and academic institutions with nationwide constituencies. The group liaises actively with the international NGOs that are members of the International Contact Group formed by the two panels to advise them in their negotiations.<sup>42</sup> The MCGP has made confidential recommendations to the panels to shape the direction of the negotiations.

## Peacebuilding

As is the case elsewhere, in the Philippines peacebuilding activities are where women are most visible and gain senior decision-making positions. These span a broad range of areas: journalism, education, community organising, training, research and advocacy.

One leading example is the Mindanao Media Forum, a co-operative media group which aims to ensure fair reporting of news on Mindanao.<sup>43</sup> It was established in 2002 and initiated by women journalists who were frustrated with the biased reporting on Mindanao that was adding further fuel to the fire.

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41 When talks resumed at the end of 2009, some 188,000 people remained displaced. See Norwegian Refugee Council and Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, “The Philippines”, 31 December, (Geneva: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2009). [www.internal-displacement.org/countries/philippines](http://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/philippines). Accessed January 20, 2011.

42 This was created in December 2009 and includes the United Kingdom, Japan and Turkey and the following international NGOs: The Asia Foundation, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Conciliation Resources, and Muhammadiyah.

43 [www.mindanews.com](http://www.mindanews.com).

Another is the work of the Bangsamoro Women's Solidarity Forum to assist women to become better informed and effective advocates within *and* for their communities. Composed of Muslim (Bangsamoro) women, it seeks to inform the public about both the MNLF (Moro National Liberation Front) and MILF peace processes (see Box 1, Background to the conflict, for more information). The Forum was instigated by MNLF-aligned women to make sure that, in the post-agreement period, they will continue to make gains in decision-making and not be relegated to subordinate roles in 'peace time'. They noted the vital roles they played in war time as couriers, intelligence gatherers and mobilisers. Some of them were in the frontlines with their men. Many others took responsibility for feeding the troops and caring for those injured in battle. Now that the peace agreement has been signed, they have involved themselves in the so-called tri-partite talks to discuss implementation of the 1996 Final Peace Agreement between the government and the MNLF. Young Bangsamoro women have also formed their own organisation, the Moro Women's Development and Cultural Center to monitor human rights violations in co-operation with the Mindanao Human Rights Action Center.

Bangsamoro women have also been very active in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of their communities. Starting as community organisers, they have become officials or members of their local government units. These women facilitated the creation of the Federation of United Bangsamoro Women Multi-Purpose Cooperatives to bring together previously disparate co-operatives in order to organise and run income-generating projects, provide marketing advice and conduct training in gender sensitivity "within the Islamic context", organisational development, and leadership.

Indigenous women have also formed their own organisations or are receiving training to take on leadership roles and documenting traditional peace practices, developing materials for training or dissemination through the media. Others have undertaken research on practices oppressive to women and engaged tribal elders and the women themselves in discussions about changing these practices in the hope that respect and protection will be guaranteed by law. Indigenous women are also receiving training in conflict resolution to work on ancestral domain (recognition of relationship to land) claims and boundary disputes.

Having realised that their communities needed the support of the local government to strengthen social ties among the people, 'GAD Iligan' (gender and development) spearheaded the establishment of a government office to promote multiculturalism. The Office of Maranao, Higaonon, and Other Cultural Communities (OMaHCC) organises inter-faith dialogues, ethnic and religious festivals attended by all groups and livelihood projects for poor communities.

Their efforts have been particularly effective in reducing tensions when, for example, the peace talks have stalled or have broken down.

## Challenges and opportunities

In 2010 the Philippines became the first nation in Asia to have a National Action Plan (NAP) implementing SCR 1325 and 1820.<sup>44</sup> In March 2010 Executive Order 865 was signed creating a National Steering Committee on Women, Peace and Security to implement the UN resolutions and provide it with funds of Peso 5 million (USD 110,000). Additional funding will come from the OPAPP. ‘Mindanao 1325’, a network composed of women’s NGOs and peace groups, was formed in May 2010 under the initiative of the Mindanao Commission on Women to ensure that implementation is consistent in Mindanao. The network was subsequently expanded in February 2011 to include government agencies such as the Commission on Human Rights and NGOs involved in the various aspects of the peace process.

“This [NAP on 1325 and 1820] means that our efforts at building grassroots-level peace pacts and women-led indigenous peace processes would no longer be considered an alternative but as an unconditional and necessary process in building peace.”

—Carmela Lauzon-Gatmaytan, Initiatives for International Dialogue<sup>45</sup>

Despite the commitment of women to achieving peace in Mindanao, a number of challenges exist. The example of successful campaigns or projects that had a great impact, not only on the conflict itself but also on society in general, demonstrates the importance of more consistent linking of grassroots activities with macro policymaking. Their activities are, however, usually location-specific and have little or no link to the decision makers who hold the power to dismantle or support their work, and rarely feed into the actual peace talks themselves.

Shifting public opinion in favour of the peace process is also pivotal to achieving and sustaining a peace agreement. Women have to develop the skills in using mass media and the internet to make sure that the wider public is involved in peacemaking.

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44 Available at: [www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/NationalActionPlans/philippines\\_nap.pdf](http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/NationalActionPlans/philippines_nap.pdf).

45 Philippines Information Agency, “RP adopts UN Resolution to promote women’s participation in peace building”, press release, 26 March, (2010).





. . . even where women do have the skills to be negotiators, preference is still given to men because of the flawed argument that because men make war they must also make peace.”

## **Raising gender issues at the peace table**

Women also face a daunting task in their efforts to bring gender issues to the peace agenda because, although there are many women active in the peace movement, many of them are reluctant to advocate gender issues. This lack

of self confidence comes from internalising the belief that gender is not central to the conflict and therefore must take a backseat until all the other “more important issues” are resolved. Women must insist that, while gender is not a conflict driver, women are central to the resolution of the conflict. Training and making connections with people from across the country and elsewhere as well as ideas and movements will help to build their self confidence. But more than that, women have to hold on to the belief that women’s agency is necessary to end wars and to heal wounds.

Women’s participation in peace negotiations – as in other areas of public decision-making – is often thought of as a matter of ‘competence’. If they have the preparation and the skills, there is no reason for women not to be chosen to be members of negotiating panels, for instance. This argument, of course, is blind to the realities of women’s lack of opportunities to gain expertise in negotiating issues at the more formal level of peace processes. But, even where women do have the skills to be negotiators, preference is still given to men because of the flawed argument that because men make war they must also make peace.

In Mindanao this is vital given that the conflict has developed ethnic and religious overtones, making it more difficult to advocate for women’s empowerment. ‘Culture’ or ‘religion’ is automatically invoked to exclude women. Challenging such entrenched beliefs by pointing out that culture is dynamic and changes over time, and that gender equality is also a goal of peacemaking, requires self-confidence.

There are, however, some discussions in public – though infrequent and tentative – among a few Bangsamoro women and men of whether the right to self-determination, invoked by the MILF as the bedrock of its struggle, also includes the Bangsamoro women’s right to self-determination, however that right is manifested (for example in a ‘culturally-sensitive’ way).

It is also important that those women who are engaged in peace negotiations act not only as peace advocates but as gender advocates as well. The Philippines does not lack women who would make excellent negotiators. However, many women need to strengthen their tactical knowledge of how to advance gender issues and women's rights in peacemaking processes to be effective negotiators on behalf of women.

The NAP provides the mandate and the means to increase women's involvement in the peace process, and seriously advance gender concerns. Since the NAP directs the participation of the security forces, national government departments, local government units, civil society organisations, and other groups, it will expand the number of participants in peace processes. More importantly, the NAP will give women the confidence to invoke gender issues and women's rights, and they will do so with men who also will be involved in the NAP's implementation. The NAP will also ensure tighter links among those involved in the three P's: peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. The complexity of formulating a peace agreement between two protagonists and rebuilding a peaceful society demands nothing less.

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**About the author:** Irene M. Santiago was a member of the Philippine Government panel negotiating with the MILF from 2001 to 2004. In 1995, she headed the secretariat of the NGO Forum on Women held in China, the parallel NGO event to the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, the biggest international gathering of women in history. In 2005, she was one of the 1000 Women nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. Since 2001, Irene has been the Chair and Chief Executive Officer of the Mindanao Commission on Women, an NGO involved in influencing public policy and public opinion to "take women seriously".

### 3. Sri Lanka

Kumudini Samuel

While none of the previous attempts at formal peacemaking in Sri Lanka allowed women any role in the negotiating process,<sup>46</sup> the peace talks which commenced in 2002 established a formal space for their engagement by creating a Sub Committee for Gender Issues (SGI) to report directly to the plenary of the peace talks.<sup>47</sup> This was the result of concerted advocacy by women's groups. Mandated to "explore the effective inclusion of gender concerns in the peace process", the SGI was facilitated by a senior Norwegian politician (Dr. Astrid Heiberg). It was comprised of ten appointees, five from the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) who were mostly feminist advocates/activists from the non-governmental sector, who were to represent the Government at the talks and five senior women cadre from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who were to represent LTTE interests.

I was a member of the SGI from its inception and remained a part of it until 2003 when the formal peace talks collapsed. Here, I examine the SGI as a mechanism for women's inclusion in peace processes and consider the pros and cons of such mechanisms for advancing gender concerns and women's interests in peacemaking processes and outcomes.

#### **The work of the Sub Committee for Gender Issues**

The SGI decided to use gender as their conceptual framework to avoid being limited to working on women's issues alone. Reflecting the difference in experience, capacity, and interests, the Government delegation chose to focus on legal and policy reform work based on a gender-sensitive analysis while the LTTE delegation chose to concentrate on meeting immediate needs such as resettlement,

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46 Except Adel Balasingham, wife of the LTTE's Chief negotiator, who has reputedly been present at all formal negotiations between the Government and the LTTE.

47 The SGI was appointed at the third round of plenary talks in December 2002 which followed the signing of a formal ceasefire agreement in February 2002.

## Box 2: Background to the conflict

Ouseph Tharakan, HD Centre

Sri Lanka has had one of the world's bloodiest and longest-running civil wars with over 70,000 lives lost in the course of the conflict, and countless others injured, traumatised, displaced and leaving the country as asylum seekers and migrants.<sup>1</sup> The root causes of the conflict remain unresolved. Specifically, the Tamil minority's perception, following independence in 1948, they were being discriminated against by the Sinhala majority state, particularly in the area of power sharing. This led eventually to a campaign for a Tamil homeland in northern and eastern Sri Lanka, where most of the island's Tamils reside. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was one among a number of militant groups that emerged in the late 1970's and early 1980's to fight for this cause. The LTTE gained ascendancy over other Tamil militant groups and established itself as a formidable fighting force, claiming to be the sole representative of the Tamils. The year 1983 is regarded as a watershed year in the conflict as the LTTE ambushed an army convoy, killing 13 Sinhala soldiers which triggered state aided riots in which thousands of Tamils died. In 1987, India imposed an accord with the Government and the LTTE to devolve power and deployed a peacekeeping force in an attempt to end the violent conflict. However, opposition to the accord resulted in escalated violence forcing the Indian Army to withdraw after three years. In the following years, a military stalemate ensued which saw waves of fighting between the two sides with territory being gained and lost but no fundamental change in the status quo.

A Norwegian mediated peace process began with a ceasefire agreement in 2002, but the peace process broke down and despite the ceasefire, fighting escalated in 2006. After gaining control of LTTE-held territory in the east of the country, the Government formally withdrew from the ceasefire in January 2008 and launched an attack on the remaining LTTE stronghold in the north. The LTTE steadily lost territory and cadres. In May 2009, its key leaders including its head, Velupillai Prabhakaran were killed and Government forces gained control of the entire Northern Province. Concern over human rights violations committed by both sides during the last phase of the war were raised by the international community, with the LTTE accused of using civilians as shields from attack, and the Government alleged to have shelled civilian areas regardless.<sup>2</sup> Estimates of civilian casualties in the last phase of the conflict range from 10,000 to 20,000.<sup>3</sup> Over 300,000 Tamil

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1 Minority Rights Group International, *State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2010 – Sri Lanka* (London: Minority Rights Group International, 2010, 1 July). [www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4c3331075f.html](http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4c3331075f.html). Accessed December 29, 2010; UN figures cited in Lynn, Jonathan, 'UN demands access to civilians in Sri Lanka', Reuters Online, May 20, (2009). <http://uk.reuters.com/article/idUKLK43566>. Accessed December 14, 2010.

2 Amnesty International, "Sri Lankan government and LTTE must heed demands from UN Security Council", Report, 13 May, (2009). [www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/news/sri-lankan-government-and-ltte-must-heed-demands-un-security-council-20090514](http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/news/sri-lankan-government-and-ltte-must-heed-demands-un-security-council-20090514). Accessed December 14, 2010.

3 Philp, Catherine, "The hidden massacre: Sri Lanka's final offensive against Tamil Tigers", *Times Online*, May 29, (2009). [www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article6383449.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article6383449.ece). Accessed December 14, 2010.

civilians were displaced and were interned in government-run camps.<sup>4</sup> An estimated 80,000 civilians remain in these camps awaiting resettlement.<sup>5</sup>

A comprehensive political solution that addresses the apprehensions of the Tamil minority is necessary for sustainable peace. Given the brutality of the war, and decades of mistrust, reconciliation between the Tamil, Muslim and Sinhala communities is set to be a long-term process requiring considerable effort and commitment from all parties involved.

Women suffered immensely during the conflict, they were subject to multiple displacement; dealt with the large scale disappearances of loved ones and suffered violence ranging from assault, sexual harassment to rape and torture. However women were not merely victims. Women contributed to violence by actively taking up arms in both the Sri Lankan army and the LTTE. Women made up a third of the LTTE's fighting forces.<sup>6</sup> Women were also active as human rights defenders, and peace advocates, pushing for a dialogue process and demanding greater accountability and justice.

The conflict also changed the traditional roles of women in Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim society in conflict-affected areas of Sri Lanka. Many women were forced by the circumstances to become de facto and de jure heads of household, and be responsible for the survival and economic security of their families.<sup>7</sup>

Many women remain vulnerable in the post-war phase. Displaced women are at particular risk as are those who are returned to their war torn villages. Additionally, often at the end of a war, attempts are made to re-impose the 'traditional' gender roles. Ensuring the representation of women in post-war decision making is vital to consolidating any positive gains made by women during the war.<sup>8</sup> However this has not yet been the case in Sri Lanka. The 19-member Presidential Task Force on Northern Development appointed in May 2009 does not have a single woman. While, the recently appointed Commission on Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation is all male except for a single woman member. Additionally, the representation of women in formal political institutions is limited.<sup>9</sup> This is a paradox given the fact that in 1931 Sri Lanka became one of the first countries in the developing world to permit women to vote and in 1960, Sirimavo Bandaranaike became the world's first elected woman Prime Minister. Additionally, her daughter Chandrika Kumaratunga served two terms as President of Sri Lanka.

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4 United Nations, *Sri Lanka Mid-Year Review, Common Humanitarian Action Plan*, (Geneva: United Nations, 2009). [www.humanitarianinfo.org/sriLanka\\_hpsl/Files/Appeals%20and%20Funding/Appeals%20and%20Funding/AF00023\\_MYR\\_2009\\_Sri\\_Lanka\\_CHAP\\_SCREEN.pdf](http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/sriLanka_hpsl/Files/Appeals%20and%20Funding/Appeals%20and%20Funding/AF00023_MYR_2009_Sri_Lanka_CHAP_SCREEN.pdf). Accessed December 14, 2010.

5 UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Joint Humanitarian Update, North and East Sri Lanka, Report No. 28*, September (Colombo: OCHA, 2010). [www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFFiles2010.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/VVOS-8AEK8K-full\\_report.pdf/\\$File/full\\_report.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFFiles2010.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/VVOS-8AEK8K-full_report.pdf/$File/full_report.pdf). Accessed February 25, 2011.

6 Editorial, "Female ex-LTTE members rehabilitated into Sri Lankan Society", *Unite Sri Lanka*, November 11, (2010). [www.unitesrilanka.org/2010/11/11/female-ex-ltte-members-rehabilitated-into-sri-lankan-society/](http://www.unitesrilanka.org/2010/11/11/female-ex-ltte-members-rehabilitated-into-sri-lankan-society/). Accessed February 21, 2011.

7 Samuel, Kumi and Chulani Kodikara, "Sri Lanka: Women are not willing to go back to pre-war status quo". *Secularism is a Women's Issue*, siawi.org, May 22, (2010). [www.siawi.org/article/1972.html](http://www.siawi.org/article/1972.html). Accessed February 21, 2011.

8 Samuel, Kumi and Chulani Kodikara (2010).

9 Samuel, Kumi and Chulani Kodikara (2010). Also see the blog post on the local governance bill and local government elections on the HD Centre peacetalks blog, written by Kumudini Samuel, 8 February 2011.



In electing to meet in LTTE controlled territory we, the GOSL delegates were able to quickly build trust, while the LTTE women playing hosts were also assured of an agentive role”

rehabilitation, livelihoods and recovery from trauma. The TORs the SGI drafted for itself focused on sustaining the peace process and included work in the areas of: resettlement; personal security and safety; infrastructure and services; livelihood and employment; political representation

and decision making; and reconciliation.<sup>48</sup> (See Box 2, Background to the conflict, for more information on conflict causes and impacts.)

In electing to meet in LTTE controlled territory, the GOSL delegates were able to quickly build trust, while the LTTE women playing hosts were also assured of an agentive role. We were also able to discuss more personal issues outside the formal meeting spaces which provided the opportunity to build understanding and consensus. However while a significant level of agreement was reached on discussion areas, it was also obvious that not all issues would be discussed without contention because of their political sensitivity. Despite this, it was evident that the SGI could make common representation on some issues such as women’s immediate needs and some elements of legal reform (on violence against women, political representation, land rights and policy issues such as equal access to jobs and equal wages).

## Analysing the SGI

As short-lived as it was, with two formal meetings and some informal engagement after the breakdown of peace talks in April 2003, the SGI merits analysis and assessment. Its setting up, composition, links to the formal peace process, degree of autonomy, and links to the broader women’s movement all require critical examination.

## Appointment and composition

The SGI was appointed jointly by the Government and the LTTE and was thus not the result of a consultative process with civil society groups or other political entities. As a consequence, the LTTE retained the right to appoint Tamil women to the SGI and chose to include only its own cadre, refusing to acknowledge the

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48 See SGI Press Release of 6 March 2003 available at [www.peaceinsrilanka.org](http://www.peaceinsrilanka.org)

political diversity of Tamil society. There was also contestation among women's groups about the class and regional representation of the GOSL delegation, and their own status as neutral NGOs – making it imperative for the SGI to work out a method of strategic engagement with civil society that was external to the peace process, we on the government delegation did this conscientiously, making sure that our negotiations were informed by the voice of women directly affected by the conflict. All the elements we included in the terms of reference of the SGI reflected their concerns.<sup>49</sup>

## Autonomy and dependence

The SGI was affiliated to the formal peace process as an advisory body but there was no clear direction of how this affiliation could, in practical terms, be realised. The GOSL and the LTTE agreed that the SGI could be represented at the plenary talks but the talks stalled before this agreement could be realised – so there was no opportunity for the SGI to negotiate its continuity, independent of the stops and starts to the peace process and independent of the GOSL and the LTTE.

While the SGI did indeed retain a great degree of autonomy, it was limited to an advisory role, which made its existence and relevance dependent on the commitment and political will of the LTTE and the Government to carry on with the formal peace talks. It also meant that the SGI had independence to act only as long as the concerns it addressed did not clash with either the peace process or the political agendas of the Government and the LTTE. For instance, since human rights, demilitarisation and the inclusion of Muslim political representation in the peace process were contentious issues at the plenary, the SGI was also constrained in directly dealing with them, although the SGI did make some headway in addressing some of these issues. However, the SGI's continued interaction with the plenary was totally dependent on the political will of the Government and the LTTE to continue with the peace talks. So while engagement with both the Government and the LTTE was indispensable in the formal arena of peacemaking, the question of autonomy and independence became a critical factor.

The nature of the appointment of the SGI, as a formal structure of the peace talks, also made it impossible for continued informal dialogue between the women delegates. This was because although independent from its political structures, we of the GOSL delegation were nevertheless compromised by our

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49 See Women and Media Collective, "Women's Concerns and the Peace Process, Findings and Recommendations, Women's Mission to the North East of Sri Lanka, 12-17 October 2002", (Colombo: Women and Media Collective, December 2002). This formed the basis of the SGIs terms of reference.



Peace processes always pose a dilemma about how and to what extent one engages with extra-judicial entities that use violent means to meet their goals. A pragmatic choice was made in favour of engagement at the level of formal peace talks.”

positioning as Government delegates and not as independent actors in our own right, and the LTTE nominees had no independence at all from the LTTE. Therefore, when the LTTE decided to pull out of all formal structures in the peace process, the LTTE women on the SGI had to withdraw from negotiations as well and the SGI became ineffectual as an inclusive mechanism. In fact all the sub-committees ceased to exist.

It is therefore crucial for any mechanism or mechanisms, appointed as adjuncts to formal negotiations to maintain some independence from the official process and parties, while also being recognised as part of the official process.

## Essentialism

None of the Sub-Committees established prior to the SGI had women appointed to them.<sup>50</sup> No women delegates from the SGI were invited to formulate Government proposals for an interim administrative mechanism for the northeast, which were made in an attempt to re-open the stalled peace process. Nor were LTTE women representatives on the SGI part of drafting the LTTE’s proposals for an interim self governing authority put forward in response to the GOSL proposals in October 2003.

It was possible, therefore, that the SGI would, over time, be perceived as an expendable mechanism – unless its delegates could be part of the negotiations at the peace table. This was an early demand of the SGI which was acceded to but was not realised due to the breakdown of the formal talks in April 2003.

## Representation and participation: some dilemmas, challenges and lessons learned

### Engaging with women militants

Peace processes always pose a dilemma about how and to what extent one engages with extra-judicial entities that use violent means to meet their goals.

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The high profile Sub-Committee on Immediate Humanitarian Needs (SIHRN), the Sub-Committee on De-escalation and Normalisation (SDN) and the Sub-Committee on Political Matters.





Women demand dialogue during a demonstration against the war in Colombo January 23, 2006. Suspected Tamil Tiger rebels ambushed and killed three soldiers in the east days before, just as a Norwegian peace broker flew in to begin a last-ditch peace bid to avert a slide back into civil war.  
© Reuters/Buddhika Weerasinghe

A pragmatic choice was made in favour of engagement at the level of formal peace talks. I believe this allowed for the sharing of experiences and strategies and the shaping of policy interventions in key arenas of marginalisation for both LTTE women and women/feminists from the women's movement outside the LTTE.

### Engaging with the state

In 2002, the unfolding peace process compelled Sri Lankan feminists to revisit our engagement with the state. Some among them decided to be a part of or work with the SGI. The establishment of the SGI and the original elaboration of its mandate at the plenary talks included women in the formal peacemaking structures and shifted women's engagement in peacemaking from the non-formal to the formal arena.

### The engagement of women's movements in peacemaking

The concept of the SGI – a separate entity that could meet and work with some independence, but which was also directly linked to the formal peace process

– is a useful mechanism to develop further as a means of ensuring inclusion and more direct engagement. However, it is also imperative that peace activists, women’s groups and coalitions concerned with peace, understand and accept that mechanisms such as the SGI are potentially fragile and cannot be the sole means to safeguard women’s interests. They cannot be considered a substitute to women’s active and independent mobilisation and constant lobbying for a representative and inclusive process that respects and guarantees human and democratic rights and ensures sustainable and transformative peacemaking.

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**About the author:** Kumudini Samuel works in Sri Lanka as Director of the Women and Media Collective. She is also an Executive Committee member of Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN). Kumudini was a member of the National Advisory Council on Peace and Reconciliation, a group of civil society and policymakers appointed by the President during the period of the peace process. Kumudini works on issues of women’s rights, human rights, peace and conflict and has also published widely on these concerns.

## 4. Indonesia

Rohaiza Ahmad Asi, Cate Buchanan, Irine Hiraswari Gayatri, Akiko Horiba, Lidya Christin Sinaga, Septi Satriani and Shienny Angelita<sup>51</sup>

Evidence suggests that in Indonesia, as elsewhere in the world, the resolution of violence and war is predominantly the domain of men. This is despite the fact that women are actively involved in peacemaking and peacebuilding at the level at which such violence is occurring (locally, within and between communities, and at the 'grassroots'). Essentially, the Indonesian experience tallies with the global picture.

Despite being a democracy which has had one female head of state and slowly growing representation of women in the national legislature (from 16 to 18 per cent in the last general elections in 2009)<sup>52</sup>, only a handful of women have been involved in formal peace processes in recent history. During the final round of the 'Helsinki process' peace talks on Aceh, one woman, Shadia Marhaban, was involved, as a member of a support group to the Free Aceh Movement (GAM).<sup>53</sup> In the peace process in Poso (Malino I), there were two female pastors from the Christian community who participated in the process (Nelly Alamako and Lis Sigilipu) and one Muslim woman (Ruwaida Untingo).<sup>54</sup> In the Malino II process in Maluku, a female pastor (Margaretta Hendrik) and two Catholic women (Sister Brigitta Renyaan and Etty Dumatubun) were chosen as representatives of the Christian community. There was no female Muslim representative in the Malino II process.<sup>55</sup>

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51 This article is an abridged and slightly revised version of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, *Women at the Indonesian peace table: Enhancing the contributions of women to conflict resolution*, report and policy recommendations with the Indonesian Institute of Sciences, (Geneva: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2010). Bios of the authors are available in the larger report.

52 International Parliamentary Union, Women in National Parliaments as of December 31st 2010, International Parliamentary Union Database, [www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm](http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm). Accessed February 14, 2011.

53 The Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement can be accessed at [www.aceh-mm.org/download/english/Helsinki%20MoU.pdf](http://www.aceh-mm.org/download/english/Helsinki%20MoU.pdf)

54 The Malino Declaration on Poso can be accessed at [www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/ACOS-64BRC3?OpenDocument](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/ACOS-64BRC3?OpenDocument)

55 Malino II Peace Agreement on Maluku can be accessed at [www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/ACOS-64CDMA?OpenDocument](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/ACOS-64CDMA?OpenDocument)

### Box 3: Background to Indonesia's recent conflicts

Soeharto's powerful New Order regime took power in 1966 in the then comparatively young country of Indonesia. It retained power for some two decades, falling dramatically in 1998. The regime placed a heavy emphasis on the state ideology of *Pancasila* which consists of five principles:

1. Belief in the one and only God;
2. Just and civilised humanity;
3. Unity of Indonesia;
4. Democracy guided by the inner wisdom in the unanimity arising out of deliberations amongst representatives;
5. Social justice for all the people of Indonesia.<sup>1</sup>

Civil society, and non-governmental, organisations (NGOs) had to subscribe to *Pancasila* in order to be allowed to register. Students from high schools to tertiary institutions had to undergo long hours of indoctrination in order to understand and embrace this ideology.

Press freedom was heavily suppressed. National elections were held every five years and political participation was greatly limited with only three political parties allowed to contest them.<sup>2</sup> During the New Order, 'development' was heavily promoted as a modernising process and goal. Dissent was prohibited, and understood to be a threat to the country's development. The politicised emphasis on development led to stark wealth disparities, widespread corruption, as well as nepotism with the frequent use of violence to quell challenges to the state.<sup>3</sup> Soeharto also expanded an earlier policy of transmigration, which exported people from overpopulated Java to the outer islands, aggravating relations between the migrants and the indigenous population. The state was highly militarised, and in all the higher ranks of political and military power, the only power women tended to have was associated with the person to whom they were married.

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1 Nishimura, Shigeo, "The development of Pancasila moral education in Indonesia", *Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 3, (Singapore: National University of Singapore/Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 303-316.

2 Those parties were the Functional Group (Golongan Karya); the United Development Party (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan, PPP), an Islamic-based party; and the Indonesian Democratic Party (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia, PDI), a secular/populist ("Abangan") party.

3 The New Order regime undertook numerous executions of petty criminals or people suspected of crimes. These so-called mysterious killings (commonly referred to as *petrus*) were concentrated in the years 1982-1985. See, Columbjin, Freek, "Explaining the violent solution in Indonesia", *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, Vol. IX Issue 1, Spring, (2002); Vatikiotis, Michael. R.J, *Indonesian politics under Suharto: The rise and fall of the New Order*, (London: Routledge, 1998); Nordholt, Henk Schulte, *A Genealogy of Violence in Indonesia*, (Portugal: CEPESA, 2000).

Most of the conflicts that erupted in the Soeharto era were sudden, very violent, and centred on issues of injustice and human rights. For example disputes between military and religious interests (Tanjung Priok 1984), corruption, ethnic (anti-Chinese) issues and police brutality (Tasikmalaya 1996), student activism around dissatisfaction with government services and military/police brutality (Makassar 1996).<sup>4</sup>

In May 1998, Soeharto fell from power. This followed mounting public pressure, and increasing demands for democracy which were compounded by the 1997 Asian monetary crisis. After thirty years of military dictatorship, Indonesia rapidly slipped into political chaos. Violent conflicts began to erupt across the nation. Secessionist demands grew across Aceh, Papua, and East Timor while communal conflicts, pivoting on religious and ethnic issues, broke out in Central and West Kalimantan, as well as Central Sulawesi and Maluku. These conflicts had been brewing for many years, and it was only heavy-handed repression that had previously kept them from spilling over. Conflicts were often quickly suppressed during the New Order period for fear of triggering 'SARA' (the acronym used in Indonesian for the phrase meaning 'tension stemming from ethnicity, religion, race and inter-group relations'). Ultimately this policy of suppression is blamed for the violent outbreak of communal conflicts after 1998.<sup>5</sup> This violence led to the loss of thousands of lives and the internal displacement of millions of people.

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4 Supriatna, A. Made Toni (Ed), *Tahun Kekerasan Potret Pelanggaran HAM di Indonesia*, (Jakarta: Yayasan Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Indonesia/YLBHI, 1996), pp. 41-48.

5 Gershman, John, "Indonesia: Islands of conflict", *Asia Times Online*, 26 October, 2002.



Papuan woman demonstrates for greater autonomy in Jakarta. © Jefri Aries/IRIN ([www.irinnews.org](http://www.irinnews.org))

Even in Papua, where women have been more actively involved in informal peace talks to resolve conflict or calm tension between Papuans and the Indonesian officials (or between different elements of civil society) their presence at formal talks is limited.<sup>56</sup> Efforts to involve women in peace talks are mainly driven by women's groups, such as Solidaritas Perempuan Papua-SPP, (Papua Women's Solidarity).

Peace agreements in Indonesia have been consistently lacking in gender sensitivity. While it is clearly not the case that only women can raise gender issues, history has shown that it is only they that do, which must provide more than a partial explanation for the lack of gendered perspectives in Indonesia's agreements. Seemingly, the need for an urgent political solution and the preoccupation with 'hard' security and the reduction of violence overshadows other important issues. For example, not a single article in the 2005 Aceh agreement touches on gender despite, to give only one example, the need to deal with the

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56 The use of the word 'Papua' in this report refers to Papua and West Papua provinces. Indigenous people refer to Papua and West Papua province as West Papua.

re-integration of female members of the rebel group.<sup>57</sup> The same applies to the Malino I and II peace agreements.

## Challenges to participation and gendered perspectives: religion, patriarchy, prejudice

In Indonesia a range of factors influence the exclusion of women from formal, and semi-formal, conflict resolution. Even though some parts of Indonesia have a strong matrilineal tradition (for example, Minangkabau in West Sumatra), the potentially positive impact of this has often been undercut by conservative religious interpretations of women's roles and place in society.

For example, Shari'a law has been used in Aceh in an attempt to remove a woman from her position as head of a subdistrict, where the local district of Bireuen Chairperson, Ridwan Muhammad claimed: "*According to Shariah, a woman is prohibited from becoming a leader.*"<sup>58</sup> This example chimes with a general tendency amongst many men and women to think that women essentially lack the capacity and experience to participate in politics or public life.<sup>59</sup> According to a Member of the National Parliament, Eva Kusuma Sundari, woman legislators must be twice as smart and work twice as hard to be acknowledged.<sup>60</sup>

In March 2010 the HD Centre convened a roundtable meeting on this subject in Indonesia where one (male) participant stated:

"Before we talk of enhancing women's participation in formal peace processes, we need to ensure there is a ready stock of potential and capable women."<sup>61</sup>

Several women participants agreed with this, despite the strong voice of women in civil society in conflict-affected areas like Papua, Poso and Maluku. Thus the single greatest challenge to women's robust participation in Indonesian public life, and peacemaking in particular, remains patriarchy.

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57 According to Shadia Marhaban, the only woman involved in the talks, Martti Ahtisaari's strategy was to spend five months on core issues such as security, political arrangements and re-integration. Not only was the issue of gender neglected but that of human rights as well. However, it was promised by the Indonesian government that those issues will be accommodated in the Law on Governing Aceh (LoGA) as stipulated in the Helsinki MoU.

58 "'Women Unfit to Lead' Says Acehese District Council Chairman", *The Jakarta Globe*, 8 October, (2010).

59 "Women in politics ignored by legislators, parties: Experts", *The Jakarta Post*, 14 June, (2010).

60 Dewi, Mariani, "Eva K. Sundari: 'You are measured by whether your presence has an effect'," *The Jakarta Post*, 8 February, (2009).

61 March Roundtable meeting on 'Women at the Indonesian peace table: Enhancing the roles of women in conflict resolution,' 24-25 March 2010, The Sultan Hotel, Jakarta.



Many women, particularly in rural areas, have low levels of awareness of their right to equality and participation.”

However, the presence of female leaders who are gender-sensitive – by no means a given – in the community, as well as in local and central government, has helped to open up access to other women. This was the case in

Maluku when Paula Renyaan was the region’s deputy governor. As a member of the civil society group Gerakan Perempuan Peduli (Concerned Women’s Group) she was able to use her dual role to bring the group’s concerns into discussion at the government level and to ensure their work (such as psycho-social work with traumatised women and children as well as advocacy meetings with the Governor and Regional Military commander) had appropriate political support. It is also notable that their work spanned the pre, during and post-violence period, a rare example of valuable long term approaches to peacemaking and peacebuilding.<sup>62</sup>

However, women, as well as men, sometimes limit opportunities for other women by citing their ‘lack of training’ or ‘education’.<sup>63</sup> This situation is further exacerbated by the fact that many women, particularly in rural areas, have low levels of awareness of their right to equality and participation. As a result, many women are not familiar with political issues, nor do they see it as a domain they should, or could be, involved in. This is despite the fact that they may be local community leaders in their own right, which is not entirely uncommon in Indonesia.

Women in Indonesia, as elsewhere, also predominantly have responsibility for caring for families. This poses logistical and emotional challenges for the prolonged involvement of women in peace processes, particularly if they are not taking place in the local area. Additionally, some women are reluctant to be involved in a process dominated by men and a political system which they may reject, especially when they have been denied a role outside the domestic sphere for cultural or related reasons. Legal and religious reasons may play a part too: Indonesia has numerous examples of regulations that are issued in

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62 Lange, Kirk, “Prospects for Conflict Transformation in Maluku: Mapping Assets, Spaces, and Moments for Peacebuilding”, *Cakalele*, Vol. 11, (University of Hawai’i Center for Southeast Asian Studies: Manoa, 2000), p. 149.

63 Interview by Rohaiza Asi with Ledia Hanifa Amaliah, head of public relations for the Indonesian Parliament Caucus for Women, and a member of the People’s Representative Council (DPR) on 22 April 2010 in Jakarta. This was also a view repeatedly expressed at the March 2010 Round-table meeting.



the name of religious morality as an attempt to restrict women's access to stand for elections or participate in public life. Two of many examples come from Padang Village and Bulukumba District in Makassar, South Sulawesi Province, where the regional regulation (*peraturan daerah, perda*) requires women to wear Muslim clothes.<sup>64</sup> Meanwhile, in Tangerang District, Banten Province, *perda* No. 8/2005 on prostitution has limited freedom of movement for women as it is often used to arbitrarily arrest women who are still outside their home at night.

Lack of political will is another significant contributing factor to the absence of women from peace negotiations. In Indonesia, 'gender mainstreaming' is a relatively new concept and there is a lack of awareness around the concept. Political apathy, lack of resources and of confidence, as well as low levels of education all combine to reduce the involvement of women in peacemaking processes.

## Women in the New Order: 'State Ibuism'

In classic dictatorship style, the New Order developed an official gender ideology that saw the role of women as supportive wives to men in their pursuit of 'development', emphasising their duties as a mother or *ibu*. Labelled colloquially as 'state ibuism', this defined women as "*appendages and companions to husbands, as procreators of the nation, as mothers and educators of children, as housekeepers, and as members of Indonesian society*".<sup>65</sup> Women were often mobilised into organisations like Dharma Wanita (Civil Service Wives Association), a leading women's organisation; the Pendidikan Kesejahteraan Keluarga (PKK, Family Welfare Movement) which functioned from the village to national level; and, Dharma Pertiwi, an organisation which included the wives of men serving in the military.<sup>66</sup> The New Order interpreted politics as 'men's domain' making it difficult for women to hold formal political positions.

By emphasising a women's place in the household, the state thus endeavoured to override alternative gender discourses, produce citizens gendered in a particular way, as well as to control the private and public spheres.

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64 Octaviani, Indry and Sri Wiyanti Eddyono et al, "Inisiatif Pemberdayaan dan Partisipasi Politik Perempuan: Studi Kasus Padang Pariaman, Solok dan Bulukumba" (Women's Empowerment and Political Participation Initiatives, Case Study in Padang Pariaman, Solok, and Bulukumba), in Tim WEMC Indonesia (Women's Empowerment in Moslem Context, Indonesia), *Inisiatif Pemberdayaan Perempuan* (Women's Empowerment Initiative), (Yogyakarta: Amani Press, 2008) pp. 63-65.

65 Suryakusuma, Julia, "The State and Sexuality in New Order Indonesia", in Laurie Sears, (Ed), *Fantasizing the Feminine in Indonesia*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), p. 101.

66 Robinson, Kathryn and Bessel, Sharon (Eds), *Women in Indonesia, Gender, Equity and Development*, (Singapore: ISEAS, 2002), pp. xvii and xxi.

However, access to social services like health and education was promoted as much for women and girls as men and boys, leading to comparatively high school attendance and literacy rates for girls. By the last decade of the New Order, women (particularly well-educated, middle class women) grew restive under the restrictions of the regime. They began setting up overtly feminist organisations including Solidaritas Perempuan, Gerwani, Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia and Kapal Perempuan, using support from international sources.

## **The roles of women in post-New Order conflicts**

As elsewhere, women quickly become seen as ‘victims’ in need of protection in a situation of violent conflict in Indonesia. In fact women and children are frequently conflated into a single concept, obscuring the unique needs of boys and girls, as distinct from women. For many women, the loss of their men-folk to fighting forces also decreases, or removes entirely, their key sources of income, and may put their security and livelihood at risk in terms of issues like land title, access to education or employment.

Despite the negative impact of conflicts on women, they can also be empowering for some women, leading them into public life where they engage in activities previously reserved for men. They may take up various responsibilities from being a member of the armed movement; trading in the market for economic survival; or becoming actively engaged in peacemaking. In Ambon and Poso, for example, women led many inter-religious and peace dialogue efforts at the grassroots level. In fact, the very need for women to carry on the tasks of everyday life has been proven to provide avenues for communication, message carrying and relationship-building that would otherwise be impossible.

## **Dynamics of women’s roles in the violent conflict in Maluku and Papua**

To give some examples of this, in Ambon, local peace and reconciliation processes between women from the two religious communities began in the market place. Women braved the violence to travel to markets, often located in Ambon city, on a regular basis to buy or sell produce. In one example, women selling fish, often referred to as *jibu-jibu*, from the Tulehu village had to use a speedboat to travel to Ambon city in order to avoid passing Christian-dominated areas (Suli and Passo villages). Over time, this mode of transport became too costly. With no other options, the women from Tulehu village contacted their Christian friends in Suli village and negotiated safe passage. The presence of women was perceived



In the very different and complex context of Papua, many local cultures treat women as a symbol or object in peace processes.”

as less threatening by the opposing party, making it easier for them to enter and travel through areas dominated by the other religion. While these efforts may have been driven more by survival needs than conscious attempts at conflict resolution, they did lay the foundation for more formal reconciliation initiatives. In addition, due to interaction between the women from different religious communities, they became messengers for their larger communities. This put them in a good position to verify or dispel rumours and prevent acts of provocation.

In the very different and complex context of Papua, many local cultures treat women as a symbol or object in peace processes. In Biak province, for example, women are given to the enemy as a symbol of peace. Women are expected to marry men from the warring party and produce offspring to replenish lives lost during the conflict, as well as create family ties to avoid future conflict. Interestingly though, women’s roles as traditional symbols of peace put them in a strategic position to act as mediators in conflict and to assist in reconciliation. Papuan women have proven more inclined to consolidate their strengths by working together regardless of their tribal clan or other affiliations.

Women tend to be trusted more widely across various constituencies and play an active role in dialogue at the community level. They have often acted to prevent the outbreak or escalation of violence. They have done this by mediating between conflicting parties in clashes between different tribal groups, as well as between local communities and the logging and mining companies, and between the Papuans and the security forces. In the particular case of conflicts between tribal groups, women contribute to peace by forging and maintaining communication with women of different ethnic groups. This is mostly done informally at the market, in schools, or in churches. Papuan women are active in holding weekly religious meetings or *adat* meetings. At these meetings, issues including the armed conflict and the unequal distribution of natural resources are discussed. Consensus is forged at the meetings and decisions are taken to approach key figures or stakeholders to discuss the matters which concern them. These include sexual violence, particularly (but not solely) committed by security forces and unequal access to economic resources. They aim to get the relevant authorities to address these issues although they are not always successful. Additionally, Papuan women are active in undertaking mass action such as demonstration to protest against state-perpetrated violence,

killings of civilians, and even fighting for the rights of women leaders in the face of discrimination and injustice during local elections.

With the recent influx of local NGOs into Papua, more women have become involved in conflict resolution initiatives. Most of the NGOs focus on democracy and human rights issues and are active in capacity-building, empowerment, advocacy programmes and political education. Women are also increasingly sent to mediation training and meetings, and to assist in negotiating peace between conflicting parties by NGOs like the Alliance for Democracy in Papua (ALDP), women's groups, community leaders and churches. Several NGOs have utilised the existing informal women's networks to 'intervene' in local affairs. This has been done to avoid communal violence as well as a stand-off between the local community and mining companies. It has also been done to avoid a deterioration of the security situation and violent incidences involving the Papuans and the security forces.

Over the period of Indonesian occupation, a new generation of middle class Papuans has emerged. Several Papuan women have won legislative seats in the province, become leading NGO activists and joined local government. Politically, Papuan women received formal recognition in 2004 when the Majelis Rakyat Papua (MRP, Papua People's Assembly) was established. It consists of three working groups focussed on customs and tradition (adat); women; and religion. The working group that focuses on women (pokja perempuan) is not only a symbol of women's representation and aspiration, but also a forum to address and discuss a wide range of issues of concern to women in Papua. However, its function is limited to providing recommendations and these then require the MRP's intervention. There have also been complaints about the composition of the working group and the fact that it lacks women who are knowledgeable and possess experience of working on women's rights. Still, it remains a real and powerful avenue for women's voices to be heard in Papua.

## **International norms: sluggish national action**

Officially, Indonesia supports SCR1325, but to date, there has been no reference to the resolution in the government's policy formulation.<sup>67</sup> The State Ministry for Women's Empowerment and Child Protection has run workshops and semi-

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67 During the sixth anniversary of SCR 1325 in October 2006, the Indonesian delegation, H.E. Adiyatwidi Adiwoso Asmady, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative mentioned, "My delegation takes note of measures by various UN entities to implement the resolution at national and community levels. However, it is essential that these endeavors should be taken in full consultation with national authorities". Source: [www.peacewomen.org/un/6thAnniversary/Compilation/National\\_Implementation.html](http://www.peacewomen.org/un/6thAnniversary/Compilation/National_Implementation.html). Accessed February 26, 2010.

nars to discuss SCR 1325 and other issues related to women with little or no impact on women's participation in actual peace or conflict processes.<sup>68</sup> This is demonstrative of a bigger problem, the lack of concerted effort and support among other ministries to work together on this cross ministerial issue, and a lack of resources to dedicate to such efforts. The Ministry clearly does not yet have the political or financial muscle to pull the issue together across other ministries.

The only reference to gender-based policy at the national level is the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) manifested in the Law No 7/1984 and later Law No.22/2000 on 'National Development Programmes'.<sup>69</sup> The law consists of 26 gender-sensitive development policies in various sectors including the law, the economy, politics, education, social and cultural spheres, and the environment. In addition, there is the Presidential Decree (Inpres) No. 9/2000 on Gender Mainstreaming in Development. As a result of this, a list of measures and regulations has been put in place to encourage gender mainstreaming in various fields, with negligible results. This is usually blamed on lack of dissemination to increase knowledge of what is in the law, and lack of political will to implement it. New momentum may be provided by the fact that the Ministry, with the assistance of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is now in the process of developing an Indonesian SCR 1325 National Action Plan (NAP).

Also on the positive side is the effort by civil society in Aceh to draft a Provincial Action Plan (Indonesian acronym, RAD) on SCR 1325. While this RAD may not be official and has no legal weight, it is nonetheless a good example of civil society engagement with concerns around women, peace and security and can be used as guidelines by government and non-government actors. It could also feed into the drafting of the national NAP.

Despite these efforts, Indonesia has a long way to go before ideas outlined in a NAP can be effectively implemented. There is a strong need to change the mentality of the government, political parties, mass organisations, and others. It is vital to step up the campaign for recognising the importance of women's involvement in politics and peace processes and provide education to change knowledge, attitudes and behaviour on this topic.

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68 Corner, Lorraine, *Mapping aid effectiveness and gender equality in Asia Pacific: Regional issues and trends*, (New York: UNIFEM, 2008), p. 25.

69 UU No 7/1984 on Pengesahan konvensi mengenai penghapusan segala bentuk diskriminasi terhadap wanita (Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women).

## 5. Timor Leste

Rebecca Peters

The first new country of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Timor Leste has been the subject of an intense 'nation-building' exercise by the United Nations, characterised from the outset by efforts (if not always successful) to achieve levels of consultation and inclusion rarely seen before in UN missions. This has resulted in enormous advances in the promotion of women's rights and participation in public life; unfortunately not extending to participation in peace negotiations.

### UN involvement

The UN has been a substantial presence since before the country became independent, with five consecutive UN peacekeeping or political missions since 1999. In that year, after 24 years of Indonesian occupation, the UN sponsored a referendum on Timorese independence. Pro-Indonesia militia opposed to the referendum launched a wave of brutal atrocities, leading the UN to establish a peacekeeping operation which exercised administrative authority until independence was achieved in 2002. Another peacekeeping mission provided support to the new country until 2005, when a new political mission took over. In mid-2006, on the eve of the expiration of the mission's mandate, a major crisis led the Timorese government to request a UN police force.<sup>70</sup> The result was the UN Integrated Mission in East Timor (UNMIT), which, in late 2010, had more than 2000 international, and nearly 900 local, staff.<sup>71</sup> UNMIT is scheduled to be wound up in February 2012. The UN Mission is led by one of the few women holding the post of Special Representative, Ameerah Haq.

All these UN missions have incorporated specific gender offices with high ranking staff tasked with promoting women's rights in the new nation. These

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70 UNMIT Background, [www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unmit/background.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unmit/background.shtml). Accessed January 20, 2011.

71 UNMIT Facts and Figures, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unmit/facts.shtml>. Accessed January 20, 2011.

offices have offered an entry point for lobbying by women's organisations like FOKUPERS (Forum Komunikasi Untuk Perempuan Timor Lorosa'e), founded in 1997 to support victims of the occupation, and the Rede Feto umbrella network, established in 2001 as a result of the First National Women's Congress of Timor-Leste. Working with civil society and other UN agencies, the successive gender offices have provided training, awareness programmes, planning assistance and other support to government and UN staff, parliamentarians, community organisations and the public on topics such as gender-based violence, elections, leadership and HIV/AIDS.

## Improvements in women's public representation and rights

In a traditionally conservative, largely Catholic, patriarchal society, this work has produced results. About 30 per cent of members of parliament are women and, in the Pacific region, only New Zealand has higher female representation.<sup>72</sup> Some 25 per cent of public servants are women, as are three of ten government ministers (Finance, Justice, and Solidarity).<sup>73</sup> Several articles in the national constitution are dedicated to equality between men and women. The country's first domestic violence law was passed in 2010, and a special Vulnerable Persons Unit has been created within the police to deal with victims of gender-based violence. A Secretariat for the Promotion of Equality operates within the office of the Prime Minister, with the goal of mainstreaming gender equity across government departments.

## Women's voices still muted on peace and security

Despite these advances toward equal rights, women have been absent from negotiations on matters of public security and peace. During the 2006 violent

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72 Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in National Parliaments – Situation as of 30 November 2010". [www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm](http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm) A push for a 30% women's quota in the 2001 national election was unsuccessful, largely due to opposition from UN Headquarters in New York. However UNIFEM launched an intensive program of training and support to potential female candidates, which led to women winning 27% of seats in the 2001 election. See, Ospina, Sofi with Isabel de Lima, *Participation of Women in Politics and Decision Making in Timor-Leste: A Recent History*, (Dili: UNIFEM, 2006), p. 26. [www.cdi.anu.edu.au/x\\_GEN\\_D\\_P/2006\\_TL\\_Ospina.UNIFEM.REP.pdf](http://www.cdi.anu.edu.au/x_GEN_D_P/2006_TL_Ospina.UNIFEM.REP.pdf) The 30% result in the 2007 election followed a change in the law to require every fourth candidate on political parties' ballot lists to be a woman: Art 12 of Law 6/2006, *Law on the Election of the National Parliament* [www.eastimorlawjournal.org/East\\_Timor\\_National\\_Parliament\\_Laws/Law-2006-06.pdf](http://www.eastimorlawjournal.org/East_Timor_National_Parliament_Laws/Law-2006-06.pdf). All portals accessed January 21, 2011.

73 UNMIT/ Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), *Ten Year Impact Study on Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security in Peacekeeping*, September (New York: United Nations, 2010), p. 14.

## Box 4: Background to the conflict

The former Portuguese colony of Timor Leste was invaded in 1975 by Indonesia which then occupied the country for 24 years. The occupation caused some 183,000 Timorese deaths, the displacement of more than 300,000 people and tens of thousands of human rights violations including torture, disappearances, confiscation of land, systematic and widespread sexual violence against women, forced marriages, forced sterilisations and general intimidation of the population.<sup>1</sup>

In 1999 the UN sponsored a referendum on Timorese independence. Pro-Indonesia militia launched a wave of brutal atrocities, causing the displacement of more than 50 per cent of the population (at least 400,000 people), many of whom were expelled to Indonesian West Timor. The violence left at least 1300 people dead and many more raped or seriously injured, and resulted in a near total devastation of the territory's property and infrastructure. At least 70 per cent of all buildings were burned or destroyed and property completely looted.<sup>2</sup>

This led to a succession of UN peacekeeping missions. In mid-2006, as the mission's mandate was about to end, a crisis erupted, caused by a large group of disgruntled former soldiers who had turned against the government. The violence they started soon grew more generalised as warring criminal gangs became involved. Chaos ensued: houses, offices and warehouses were looted and burned, mobs rampaged through Dili and some 40 people were murdered. About 150,000 people, or 15 per cent of the population, became displaced.<sup>3</sup> Troops from Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand and Portugal arrived to restore order and UNMIT, the current UN mission, was established.

In 2007 the country's first parliamentary elections were followed by violence. Then in early 2008, assassination attempts were made on the President and Prime Minister. A state of emergency was declared and additional Australian troops were despatched to Dili; however, the UN pointed out that in contrast to 2006, this attack did not precipitate a crisis destabilising the entire society.<sup>4</sup>

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1 CAVR, *Chega! The Report of the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in Timor Leste*, (Dili: CAVR, 2005).

2 Reiger, Caitlin and Wierda, Marieke, *The Serious Crimes Process in Timor-Leste: In Retrospect*, (New York: International Center for Transitional Justice, 2006).

3 UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Report of the United Nations Independent Special Commission of Inquiry for Timor-Leste", (Geneva: UNOHCHR, 2006), p. 42.

4 "The institutions of the State responded in an appropriate and responsible manner that respected constitutional procedures. The Prime Minister demonstrated firm and reasoned leadership; the Parliament functioned effectively as a forum for debate in response to the events; and leaders of all political parties urged their supporters to remain calm, while the general population demonstrated faith in the ability of the State to deal with the situation." UNMIT Background, [www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unmit/background.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unmit/background.shtml) Accessed January 20, 2011.



crisis, the seats at the negotiating table were for male representatives of the UN, the government, the armed forces and the 'petitioners' who had ignited the crisis – disgruntled male former soldiers who had turned against their government over claims of discrimination in the army. *"It didn't really occur to anyone to consider involving women,"* recalls Kirsty Sword Gusmao, human rights campaigner, Chair of the Alola Foundation women's group, and wife of the Prime Minister.<sup>74</sup> (See Box 3, Background to the conflict, for more information).

The women were literally on the outside: on 1 June 2006, at the height of the crisis, women and children gathered outside the Government Palace in Dili to demand peace. There they unfurled banners, sang, prayed and drew the attention of their leaders to the hardship and suffering they faced as the victims of a conflict which they had not created and did not understand. That hardship meant, for many thousands of women, fleeing with their children to makeshift camps where the danger was deemed less acute. Sword Gusmao reflected: *"In spite of the squalid conditions of these IDP camps and the lack of access to running water, basic sanitation, privacy, food and medical supplies, women succeeded in maintaining a semblance of normal routine and family life for the benefit of their children, reassuring them in times of curfew, keeping them in school and even managing to send them off each morning in crisp, laundered white uniforms. Women members of the Catholic clergy willingly transformed their tranquil convents and boarding houses into homes for thousands of desperately scared and destitute families, encouraging groups of children to sing to drown out the sounds of rocks being hurled in anger and confusion."*<sup>75</sup>

The 'petitioner' deserters numbered around 500 – about one-third of the Timorese army at the time. The violence they started was brought under control with assistance from international troops, and the current UN mission, UNMIT, was established. Most of the rebels agreed to be demobilised back to civilian life, receiving a cash subsidy and retraining to help them on their way. Some rebels were arrested (some broke out of jail soon afterwards), others remained at large.

## Continued tensions

The country's first parliamentary elections in mid-2007 were followed by another wave of violence. On 11 February 2008 a group of rebels made co-ordinated assassination attempts on President Jose Ramos Horta and Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao. The President was seriously injured and nearly died. A state

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74 Kirsty Sword Gusmao, telephone conversation with Rebecca Peters, 21 January 2011.

75 Kirsty Sword Gusmao, speech to the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Women for Peace conference, 5 March 2009, Dili.



It seems that you're only invited to talk if you're a troublemaker with a gun in your hand."

Kirsty Sword Gusmao, 2011

of emergency was declared and additional Australian troops were despatched to Dili to help restore order.

Some of the rebels were killed in the attack; others surrendered three months later. They were tried and sentenced to prison terms ranging between 10 and 16 years, but six months later President Ramos Horta pardoned them. He had also previously pardoned militia members involved in violent attacks in 1999 and 2006. The pardons have been criticised by opposition parties, human rights groups and UN officials, who maintain that pardoning violent criminals undermines the rule of law.<sup>76</sup>

During these dramatic five years, peace and security have been constantly under negotiation in Timor Leste, but women have not been part of the discussion. Says Kirsty Sword Gusmao: "*It seems that you're only invited to talk if you're a troublemaker with a gun in your hand.*"<sup>77</sup> In this respect little has changed since the time of independence, when men who had fought in the resistance "*were offered the option of joining the new East Timor Defence Force; those who chose not to, received the equivalent of USD100 along with language and computer training. Nothing comparable was offered to the women who had occupied support functions throughout the struggle.*"<sup>78</sup>

During the liberation struggle women had been also generally been excluded from negotiations, despite being extremely active campaigners in the diaspora and vitally important members of the resistance in occupied Timor. For example, the All-Inclusive Intra-East-Timorese Dialogue (AIETD) was convened on four occasions by the UN Secretary General during the 1990s, bringing together Timorese leaders from different backgrounds to discuss peacebuilding. Only one of the 30 people nominated to participate in this crucial event was a woman. Attempts to convince men that more women should participate met with little success: two of six additional participants in the third AIETD were women.<sup>79</sup> In the 1999 negotiations to end the Indonesian occupation of Timor, there were

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76 Belford, Aubrey, "Critics Say Cost of Forgiveness Is Too High in East Timor", *New York Times*, 25 October, (2010).

77 Kirsty Sword Gusmao, telephone conversation with Rebecca Peters, 21 January 2011.

78 Rehn, Elisabeth and Johnson Sirleaf, Ellen, *Women, War, Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peace-Building*, (New York: UNIFEM, 2002), p. 116.

79 Ospina, Sofi with Isabel de Lima, (2006), p. 23.



Women police officers line up during a ceremony of the national police's second anniversary in Dili, Saturday, March 27, 2004. © AP Photo/Firdia Lisnawati

no women signatories, no women mediators and no women witnesses to the agreement.<sup>80</sup>

This failure to recognise women as peace and security actors continued once the struggle had been won. After independence, two registers were established, recognising veterans and ex-combatants; among the 37,472 people listed (both living and dead) was not a single woman. Exclusion from these lists means that women missed out on many benefits – not only the cash bonus and training mentioned above, but also medical care for war injuries and scholarships for veterans' children.<sup>81</sup>

UN-sponsored efforts at security sector reform have made some progress in gender mainstreaming in the security forces of Timor Leste. Women now make up 19 per cent of the national police and the first female district commander was appointed in September 2010. However, female officers are concentrated in the 'softer' sections dealing with victim support and traffic violations, as well as office administration.<sup>82</sup> In the armed forces only 8.2 per cent of soldiers are

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80 UNIFEM, *Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections between Presence and Influence*, (New York: UNIFEM, 2009).

81 Ospina, Sofi with Isabel de Lima, (2006), p. 24.

82 UNMIT, "Timorese women police officers celebrated on International Women's Day", Press release, 9 March (2010). <http://unmit.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=156&ctl=Details&mid=2149&ItemID=8043>. Accessed January 20, 2011.

female, but deliberate steps are being taken to recruit women and to create more family-friendly working conditions. Training on human rights and gender perspectives are offered to both the police and armed forces.<sup>83</sup> Among UN police in Timor Leste, only 6 per cent are women.<sup>84</sup>

## Potential ‘way in’ for women

The most likely route for women to gain entry to peace and security negotiations appears to be at the local village or *suco* level. Women’s rights activist Filomena Barros dos Reis has worked with the Peace and Democracy Foundation to build local capacity in mediation and conflict transformation. This initiative is based on traditional Timorese conflict resolution practices, but with an important difference, namely the involvement of women. Since 2004 more than 250 people have received training. Among the programme’s successes has been the negotiation of a scheme to prevent disputes between livestock farmers living on either side of the Timor-Indonesia border. After the 2006 crisis Filomena Barros dos Reis also served on a Presidential Commission which hosted community dialogue on lessons learned from the crisis. The Commission set the precedent for a new round of reconciliation dialogue to assist in resettling people displaced by the crisis.<sup>85</sup> Supported by the UNDP, this work on community dialogue for peace has engaged substantial numbers of women in activities which previously involved only men.<sup>86</sup> As 10 out of 442 *suco* chiefs are now women, this itself may offer some opportunities with the right support.<sup>87</sup> However, the challenge remains how to connect this community-level activity to those at national level and even beyond. This could be something to build into the Timor-Leste National Action Plan on SCR 1325 which is still under development.

In 2009 Barros dos Reis co-ordinated the second International Conference on Women for Peace, hosted by the Alola Foundation in Dili.<sup>88</sup> The conference,

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83 UNMIT/DPKO, (2010), pp. 21-22.

84 Security Council Report, “Cross-Cutting Report No. 2: Women, Peace and Security,” 1 October (New York: Security Council Report, 2010).

85 UNMIT/DPKO, (2010), pp. 9-10.

86 UNDP, “Women from Southeast Asia come to Dili to promote women and peace building agenda”, Press release, 7 July (2010), [www.tl.undp.org/undp/Women%20from%20Southeast%20Asia%20come%20to%20Dili.html](http://www.tl.undp.org/undp/Women%20from%20Southeast%20Asia%20come%20to%20Dili.html). Accessed January 20, 2011.

87 UN SRSG’s speech at launch of the “2009 Community Elections Women Participation Booklet”, 5 July (2010) quoted at <http://reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/EKIM-8744EZ?OpenDocument>. Accessed January 20, 2011.

88 Alola Foundation, “Women for Peace, 2<sup>nd</sup> International conference, Narrative Report”. [www.alolafoundation.org/images/programs/publications/Alola\\_Women\\_for\\_Peace\\_Int\\_Conference.pdf](http://www.alolafoundation.org/images/programs/publications/Alola_Women_for_Peace_Int_Conference.pdf).

which brought together 350 women from around the world, provided an important boost to Timorese women's confidence in demanding that their views be taken into account in decisions and negotiations on justice, peace and conflict.

Meanwhile it seems that for men with guns in their hands, the negotiations are never final. In December 2010 the leader of the rebel 'petitioners', pardoned for his crimes in 2006 and also for attempting to murder the president and prime minister in 2008, issued a public statement demanding back pay and other benefits. He threatened to regroup his rebel followers – and thus destabilise the country again – if his claims were not met.<sup>89</sup>

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89      Tempo Semanal, "Gastao Salsinha: Insists that Petitioners are Still Military Personnel and Accuses Political Leaders of Using Petitioners", 30 December, (2010). <http://temposemanaltimor.blogspot.com/2010/12/gastao-salsinha-insists-that.html>; Murdoch, Lindsay, "Rebel commander behind Dili attacks demands payout", *The Age*, 10 January, (2011).

## 6. Northeast India

Rita Manchanda

### Focus on Manipur

On 15 July 2004, a dozen women from the Manipuri mothers' group, Meira Paibis, publicly disrobed in front of the headquarters of the paramilitary Assam Rifles in Imphal, the capital of Manipur state. They held aloft a banner written in blood-red: 'Indian Army, Rape Us'. The mothers were denouncing the rape and death in custody of 33-year-old Manorma Devi, whom the security forces had accused of belonging to an insurgent group.

The Meira Paibis protest was a dramatic gesture of anti-patriarchal shaming, drawing attention to the government's arbitrary use of force in combating a hydra-headed insurgency that began in the late 1970s. The event marked the beginning of an intense campaign demanding the repeal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act of 1958 (AFSPA). (see Box 5: Background to the conflicts in northeast India). This has been led by the Meira Paibis and Apunba Lup a conglomerate of 32 civil society organisations spearheading the movement against the AFSPA).

In November 2004 the Indian government made a concession: it agreed to remove the Assam Rifles (one of India's oldest paramilitary forces) from Kangla Fort, the historic seat of the Manipur kings, and to set up a committee led by Justice Jeevan Reddy to review the AFSPA. The Reddy Committee report was submitted to the Government in June 2005, but has still not been officially released.

Manipur, a former princely state of British India, had resisted integration into the Indian Union post-independence; and briefly enjoyed sovereign status before the Maharaja was tricked into signing an instrument of merger in 1949.<sup>90</sup> Like other territories of India's frontier northeast, Manipur is the focus of several separatist insurgencies. The northeast is connected to the rest of the country by a narrow 'chicken's neck', the Siliguri Corridor. The region's remoteness is

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90 For an analytical overview of the history of political movements in the northeast see Nag Sajal, *Nationalism Separatism and Secessionism*, (New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 1999).



The Meira Paibis can be found in pink *phaneks* (sarongs) and white *inaphies* (shawls), marching in the street, braving *lathi* blows and teargas, or sitting in silent protest.”

reinforced by its differentiated ethnic, religious and linguistic mosaic. Disaffection with the Indian state has given rise to popular mobilisations and armed struggles based on multiple regional and ethnic identities. These started in the Naga Hills and then in Mizoram with Manipur ‘nationalists’ revolting in the 1970s, claiming a lost sovereignty. The struggle for independence from the Union was only one axis of conflict. In addition, there were inter-ethnic conflicts between the Naga hill tribes and the Meitei valley Hindus, between Naga and Kuki tribes in the hills, and between Meiteis and Muslims; as well as intra-ethnic conflict among different Meitei groups. In 1980, the AFSPA was extended to cover the Manipur valley.

## Women in the front lines of protest

As the state became more repressive and the conflict more militarised, the Meira Paibis emerged as the frontline of the protest against militarisation. In the 1970s, ordinary Manipuri women – traders, fisher folk and peasants – had formed local night patrols known as *Nisha Bandh* to combat drug and alcohol abuse in the wake of the state’s liberal licensing policy. The women were transformed into activists against state militarisation by an incident in April 1980: a paramilitary unit (the Central Reserve Police Force) in reprisal for a bomb blast unleashed a brutal combing operation in Lamjing, assaulting, arresting, torturing and raping people.

Since then, the Meira Paibis, with their flaming bamboo torches, have become the night patrollers of their local neighbourhoods; sounding the alarm on search and cordon operations by state security forces; protecting young men from recruitment by insurgents; raising an alarm against a ‘disappearance’; marching to the police stations and army camps; or interceding with insurgent leaders to secure the release of recruits or hostages. The Meira Paibis can be found in pink *phaneks* (sarongs) and white *inaphies* (shawls), marching in the street, braving *lathi* blows and teargas, or sitting in silent protest.

Although the mothers believe the insurgents, referred to as Underground Groups (UGs), are ‘misguided’, government agencies have branded the women ‘Mothers of Insurgents’. Ironically several of the Meira Paibis, because of their

## Box 5: Background to the conflicts in northeast India

Ouseph Tharakan, HD Centre

The northeast of India refers to the state of Sikkim plus the Seven Sisters: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. These states are surrounded by Bhutan, Bangladesh, China, Myanmar and Nepal, and are connected to the rest of India by a narrow stretch known as the Siliguri Corridor, which ranges from just 21 to 40 km wide. The northeast shares only about 2 per cent of its borders with the rest of India and is ethnically and linguistically distinct from the rest of the Union. It has 475 ethnic groups which speak 400 languages and dialects.<sup>1</sup>

Historically, the conflict in the northeast is rooted in the geographical borders created by the British for their own economic purposes (e.g. tea plantations in Assam) and as a strategic security buffer from China and Burma.<sup>2</sup> The area carved out by the British was known as Assam or Big Assam; after India's independence this was further divided into the Seven Sisters, without considering the tribal and indigenous movements or settlement patterns.

In Assam, Nagaland and Manipur, militant groups are engaged in armed conflict with the Central Government of India. Tripura and Meghalaya are also affected by insurgent movements, while Mizoram is relatively peaceful now but did experience violence in the past. In almost all these conflicts particular ethnic or tribal groups are demanding independence or greater autonomy. In some instances there are overlapping claims to territory by different groups, which further increases the complexity of the conflicts.

In the early 1950s, following the British handover of the area to India, Nagaland demanded independence.<sup>3</sup> The Naga National Council (NNC), which had formed in the late 1920s, led the push. In 1960 the NNC and the Central Government signed the 16-Point Agreement, leading to the creation of the current state of Nagaland. The agreement did not bring peace and the conflict continued until 1975 when a peace agreement between the NNC and the Union was signed in Shillong. However, some NNC leaders rejected the agreement and formed the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN), which continued to fight for an independent 'Greater Nagaland'.<sup>4</sup> Later this group split into two, the NSCN-K (Khaplang) and the NSCN-IM (Isak Muivah), (named after the group's leaders). Each faction has signed a series of ceasefires with the Union since 1997, and in recent

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1 Kojiam, Shri Radha Binod, "The impact of Insurgency activities in Northeast India on Socio-Economic Development and its solution thereof", Speech on 29 January 2010 to the 12<sup>th</sup> NERCPA Conference at Shillong at the Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research on 13 February, 2010. Accessed July 24, 2010.

2 Bhaumik, Subir, "Insurgencies in India's Northeast: Conflict, Co-option and Change", *East West Center Washington Working Papers No. 10*, (Washington: East West Center, 2007). p. 4.

3 "'Tale' of the Naga: Story in a Nutshell", Free Nagalim, Naga-American Council/GPRN, 13 March, (Washington DC: Naga-American Council, 2007). [www.nagalim.us/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=4&Itemid=7](http://www.nagalim.us/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=4&Itemid=7). Accessed July 24, 2010.

4 Bhaumik, Subir (2007), p. 2.



years their conflict has been more with each other than with the Indian Government.<sup>5</sup> In 2009 they signed a Covenant of Reconciliation, and since then the church-led Forum for Naga Reconciliation (FNR) has convened several meetings between the factions in the hope of negotiating an end to violence and a dialogue with the Government.<sup>6</sup>

The 1960s saw the emergence of insurgent groups in the Mizo Hills which, at the time, were still part of Assam. The Mizo National Famine Front (MNFF), formed to demand help for the victims of famine, evolved into the Mizo National Front (MNF) which in 1966 tried to take over towns in the Mizo Hills. The Indian army responded to these attacks and conflict continued until 1987 when the state of Mizoram was established.<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile in Tripura, resentment against the influx of Muslims from East Pakistan (pre-independence Bangladesh) during the 1960s led to the formation of the Sengkrak ('Closed Fist'), which had ties to the Mizo National Front. The Sengkrak remained active until 1971 when Bangladesh gained independence from Pakistan. However, immigrants continued to arrive, and the Tribal National Volunteers (TNV) carried on the insurgency until 1988 when a peace agreement was signed with the Central and Tripura governments.<sup>8</sup>

In Assam, anti-immigrant sentiment also underpinned the All Assam Students Union (AASU), whose campaign of violent agitation culminated with the murder of more than 1,800 Muslims in the village of Nellie in February 1983. The AASU signed a ceasefire agreement with the Union in 1985. However, another group, the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), immediately replaced it as the dominant insurgent force in the state. An underground organisation with support bases in Bangladesh, Bhutan and Myanmar, ULFA is not anti-Muslim but rather anti-Indian – it is a secessionist movement seeking independence for Assam.<sup>9</sup> In 2006 the People's Consultative Group (PCG) was established as a mediator between the ULFA and the Indian government and negotiations have continued since then. A new round of talks was initiated in February 2011.<sup>10</sup>

The other prominent insurgency in Assam involved the Bodo people, whose Bodo-land Liberation Tiger Forces (BLT) formed in 1996 to fight for a separate state. In 2003 a ceasefire was signed and the Bodoland Territory Council (BTC) was formed as an autonomous administrative body within Assam state. Hagrama Mohilary, leader of the BLT, was

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5 South Asia Terrorism Portal, "Nagaland Assessment – Year 2010". [www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/nagaland/index.html](http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/nagaland/index.html). Accessed February 25, 2011.

6 Pfluzhe, Ashikho, "Naga Reconciliation: From despondency to concrete hope", *The Morung Express*, September (2010) [www.morungexpress.com/analysis/56495.html](http://www.morungexpress.com/analysis/56495.html). Accessed February 21, 2011.

7 Bhaumik, Subir (2007), p. 2.

8 Bhaumik, Subir (2007), p. 3.

9 Bhaumik, Subir (2007), pp. 3-4; Bhattacharyya, Susanta, "The tragedy called Assam", 4 April, (2004). Ezinemark.com. <http://society.ezinemark.com/the-tragedy-called-assam-4e45e0d4a6a.html>. Accessed July 24, 2010.

10 Karmarkar, Rahul, "ULFA, Centre peace talks to begin today", *Hindustan Times*, 9 February (2011). [www.hindustantimes.com/rssfeed/Guwahati/ULFA-Centre-peace-talks-to-begin-today/Article1-660389.aspx](http://www.hindustantimes.com/rssfeed/Guwahati/ULFA-Centre-peace-talks-to-begin-today/Article1-660389.aspx). Accessed February 25, 2011.

elected as chief of the new BTC and at the 2006 elections his group joined the political mainstream by winning seats in the Assam Assembly.<sup>11</sup> Another group, the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) is still demanding greater autonomy and recognition. Formed in 1986, the NDFB was responsible for more than 300 killings before signing a ceasefire in May 2005. The ceasefire was broken and extended several times and by 2010 the conflict had escalated.<sup>12</sup> In November 2010 the central government drew up a new operational plan against the NDFB, following two days of violence which left 24 people dead.<sup>13</sup>

Manipur has had a long list of insurgent movements – estimated as some 39 current or former groups.<sup>14</sup> The strongest is the United National Liberation Front (UNLF) which was created in 1964 by youth groups demanding a free Manipur. Its Manipur People's Army (MPA) initiated an armed struggle in 1991. Other important groups include the People's Liberation Army (PLA), People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK), Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) and the Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL).<sup>15</sup> All these groups are dominated by the majority Meitei ethnic group. However, a number of militant groups represent the smaller Kuki, Paite or Zomi tribes seeking independence and/or autonomy not only from India but also from the Meitei majority. These include the Kuki Liberation Army, Kuki National Army, Kuki National Front, Kuki Revolutionary Army, United Kuki Liberation Front and Zomi Revolutionary Army. In addition, the People's United Liberation Front represents Muslims in Manipur and Naga groups, particularly NSCN (IM), demand the Naga districts in Manipur to be incorporated into an independent 'Greater Nagaland'.<sup>16</sup> All this insurgent activity made Manipur the most violent state in India's northeast in 2009.<sup>17</sup>

The state of Meghalaya was carved out of Assam in 1972, creating a state for the Hynniewtrep people in the eastern region and the Garos or Achiks in the western Garo

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11 Kumar, Anand, "Assam: Ex-Rebels Turn Kingmakers", Paper no.1836, South Asia Analysis Group, 7 June, (2006). [www.southasiaanalysis.org/%5Cpapers19%5Cpaper1836.html](http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/%5Cpapers19%5Cpaper1836.html). Accessed July 24, 2010.

12 "Incidents involving National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB)", South Asia Terrorism Portal, [www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/assam/terrorist\\_outfits/NDFB\\_tl.htm](http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/assam/terrorist_outfits/NDFB_tl.htm). Accessed February 21, 2011.

13 "Centre asks Assam government to launch offensive against NDFB rebels", *Daily News & Analysis*, 10 November, (2010). [www.dnaindia.com/india/report\\_centre-asks-assam-government-to-launch-offensive-against-ndfb-rebels\\_1464813](http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report_centre-asks-assam-government-to-launch-offensive-against-ndfb-rebels_1464813). Accessed February 21, 2011.

14 South Asia Terrorism Portal, "Terrorist / Insurgent Groups – Manipur", 28 November (2010). [www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/manipur/terrorist\\_outfits/index.html](http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/manipur/terrorist_outfits/index.html). Accessed February 21, 2011.

15 Bhaumik, Subir (2007), pp. 3, 7.

16 Goswami, Namrata, "Muivah's Visit to Manipur: Steps towards a Meaningful Reconciliation", 11 May, (New Delhi: Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, 2010) . [www.idsa.in/idsacomments/MuivahsVisittoManipurStepstowardsaMeaningfulReconciliation\\_ngoswami\\_110510](http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/MuivahsVisittoManipurStepstowardsaMeaningfulReconciliation_ngoswami_110510). Accessed February 21, 2011.

17 South Asia Terrorism Portal, "Terrorist / Insurgent Groups – Manipur", 28 November, (2010). [www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/manipur/index.html](http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/manipur/index.html). Accessed February 21, 2011.

Hills. Meghalaya has been affected by insurgency since the late 1980s, with two main insurgent groups currently reflecting this ethnic and tribal divide: the Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC) and the Achik National Volunteer Council (ANVC). The HNLC was created in 1992 by a split in the Hynniewtrep Achik Liberation Council (HALC), the first militant tribal organisation in Meghalaya. It is seeking a sovereign homeland independent from India. The ANVC was formed in December 1995 to pursue a separate 'Achik Land' within India. A 2004 ceasefire between the ANVC and the Union government has been continually extended but a breakaway group, the Garo National Liberation Army (GNLA), has refused to abide by it. In November 2010 the Meghalaya government announced it was considering a request from the ANVC, which said it would accept an autonomous Garo Hills Territorial Council along the lines of the Bodoland Territorial Council in Assam.<sup>18</sup>

In 2008 it was estimated that some 50,000 people (including civilians, Indian security forces and insurgents) have died due to the violent conflict in the northeast and hundreds of thousands have been displaced.<sup>19</sup> Figures vary on the numbers of members of insurgent groups and are hard to accurately project. Most of the groups fund their activities through extortion and kidnapping. This, combined with the administrative corruption which plagues the region, demoralises the populations and prevents economic development.<sup>20</sup> The continued use of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (1958) which grants legal immunity from prosecution to the armed forces is a major grievance in the northeast. This act has been regarded as core to the culture of impunity in the northeast (and Kashmir).<sup>21</sup>

Women in this region enjoy a certain mobility and visibility (compared with other parts of India for example).<sup>22</sup> Women are actively involved in a wide range of economic activities and have some degree of control over economic resources, particularly in Meghalaya, Manipur and Mizoram. The region has a long history of women's social movements mobilising for a variety of economic, social and political issues.

However the role of women in formal decision-making remains minimal. Few traditional institutions of governance accept women as an integral part, usually assigning them either

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18 "Govt to consider ANVC demand", *The Telegraph* (Calcutta), 30 November, (2010). [www.telegraphindia.com/1101130/jsp/northeast/story\\_13238545.jsp](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1101130/jsp/northeast/story_13238545.jsp) Accessed February 21, 2011.

19 "India's northeastern clashes: Tensions in the seven sisters", AlertNet, 22 October, (2008). [www.trust.org/alertnet/crisis-centre/crisis/indias-northeastern-clashes#detail-section2](http://www.trust.org/alertnet/crisis-centre/crisis/indias-northeastern-clashes#detail-section2). Accessed February 21, 2011.

20 Kojiam, Shri Radha Binod, "The impact of Insurgency activities in Northeast India on Socio-Economic Development and its solution thereof", Speech on 29 January 2010 to the 12<sup>th</sup> NERCPA Conference at Shillong at the Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research on 13 February, (2010). [www.c-nes.org/nycu/539.html](http://www.c-nes.org/nycu/539.html). Accessed July 24, 2010.

21 Asian Legal Resource Centre, "INDIA: AFSPA promotes armed insurgency in Manipur", Press release, 26 July, (2010). [www.alrc.net/doc/mainfile.php/alrc\\_st2010/624/](http://www.alrc.net/doc/mainfile.php/alrc_st2010/624/). Accessed 22 February, 2011.

22 North East Network, *Facilitating the Fulfilment of State Obligations Towards Women's Equality. Baseline Report. Women in Armed Conflict Situations in India*, (Malaysia: International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific, no date). [www.iwraw-ap.org/aboutus/pdf/FParmed\\_conflict.pdf](http://www.iwraw-ap.org/aboutus/pdf/FParmed_conflict.pdf). Accessed February 21, 2011.

peripheral or figurative roles.<sup>23</sup> To redress this, increased proportional representation of women in all elected bodies, and increased political activities by autonomous women's bodies has been advocated. In this regard legislation which will require a 33 per cent reservation in the national Parliament and state assemblies for women is expected to be fully finalised in 2011.<sup>24</sup> The current lower house of the national parliament has 58 women MPs – this is the first time women's representation has moved above 10 per cent.<sup>25</sup> Of this group, three women MP's represent the north-eastern states.<sup>26</sup>

Years of armed conflict in the northeast have increased the frequency and type of violence experienced by women. Some parts of the region have witnessed a resurgence of patriarchal values and norms, which have brought with them new restrictions on women and more overtly physical violence such as rape, which has been systematically used as a tactic against particular communities.<sup>27</sup>

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23 North East Network (no date).

24 British Broadcasting Corporation, "Indian Upper House Approves Women's Quota Bill", March 9, (2010). <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8557237.stm> . Accessed February 22, 2011; PRS Legislative Research, Centre for Policy Research website at [www.prsindia.org/index.php?name=Sections&action=bill\\_details&id=5&bill\\_id=684&category=60&parent\\_category=0](http://www.prsindia.org/index.php?name=Sections&action=bill_details&id=5&bill_id=684&category=60&parent_category=0). Accessed February 22, 2011.

25 PRS Legislative Research, Centre for Policy Research website [www.prsindia.org/index.php?name=Sections&action=bill\\_details&id=5&bill\\_id=684&category=60&parent\\_category=0](http://www.prsindia.org/index.php?name=Sections&action=bill_details&id=5&bill_id=684&category=60&parent_category=0). Accessed February 22, 2011

26 PRS Legislative Research (see preceding footnote).

27 North East Network, *Violence Against Women in North East India: An Enquiry*, (India: North East Network, 2004). <http://ncw.nic.in/pdfreports/Violence%20against%20women%20in%20North%20East%20India%20-%20An%20Inquiry.pdf>. Accessed February 21, 2011.

public role, are regarded with suspicion by both the armed forces and the insurgents.<sup>91</sup>

The women's protest drew its inspiration and social legitimacy from a long history of Meitei women fighting injustice. In 1904 women revolted against the British Political Agent's order forcing local men to rebuild the house of his colleague which had burned during a protest now known as *Nupi Lal I*. In 1939-40 *Nupi Lal II* saw women successfully mobilise to ban the export of rice at a time of famine. Part of the Meitei women's power derives from their control of trade and vending which gave women socio-economic authority.

### 'The Iron Lady of Manipur'

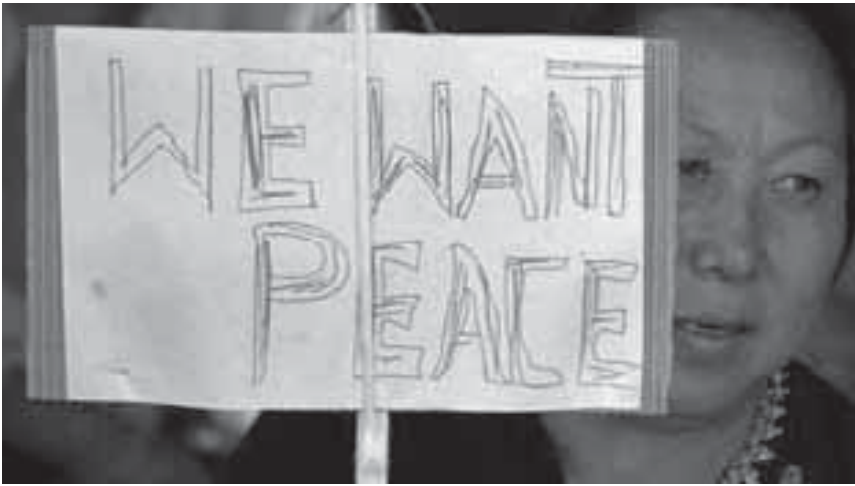
It was amidst the folklore around the *Imas'* (mothers') struggles for justice that Irom Chanu Sharmila was nurtured and grew to become a living legend as the 'Iron Lady of Manipur'. On 2 November, 2000, ten civilians waiting at a bus-stand in Malom near Imphal were gunned down by the security forces on suspicion of being insurgents. It was a routine manifestation of the abuse and misuse of power under the AFSPA. In response, 21-year-old Sharmila resolved to fast unto death to protest against state violence after the Malom massacre. This latter day Gandhian's protracted protest 'fast' has become the symbol of Manipur women's moral resistance against state militarisation.

For ten years Sharmila has been in police custody in a hospital room, force-fed via nasal tubes, and she has become known as the symbol of the nationwide mobilisation against the AFSPA. Sharmila has regularly called for the Reddy Committee report on the AFSPA to be officially released, even escaping to Delhi in 2007 to make a direct appeal to policymakers. However, the Union Home Minister, Shivraj Patil, was too busy to take notice of Irom Sharmila's *satyagraha*, or act of civil disobedience. Delhi's power elite remained indifferent but the frail, wasting Sharmila lying at Jantar Mantar (the recognised site of democratic protest) was a magnet for defenders of human rights. Eventually, the newspaper *The Hindu* leaked the recommendations of the report, revealing that the Reddy Committee had called for the AFSPA to be repealed.<sup>92</sup> In November 2010, the tenth anniversary of Sharmila's fast, human rights defenders from all

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91 Loitongbam, Babloo, "Women in Armed Conflict", in Dutta, Anuradha and Ratna Bhuyan (Eds.), *Women and Peace: Chapters from Northeast India*, (New Delhi: Akamsha Press, 2008), p. 23.

92 Section 5a of the Report called for the repeal of AFSPA as "the Act is too sketchy, too bald and quite inadequate". It added that the Act "has become a symbol of oppression, an object of hate and an instrument of discrimination and highhandedness."



Woman holds a placard during a protest on the second day of a strike in the northeastern Indian city of Imphal February 19, 2009. A 48-hour strike was called to protest the killing of a Sub-Divisional Officer and his two staff members by unidentified assailants, local media reported. © Reuters/Jinendra Maibam

over the country, inspired by the truth of her moral courage, gathered in Imphal and once again demanded an end to the AFSPA.<sup>93</sup>

## Women on the front lines, but in the back seat

However, the activism of Meira Paibis remains largely at the grassroots level, with little attempt to engage with the larger political dialogue on conflict or peace in Manipur. Each locality has its own autonomous group and leaders, and there is no apex body to provide organisational coherence. According to Pradip Phanjoubam, influential editor of the *Imphal Free Press Journal*, “*The abundance of energy, talent and enterprise all remain too raw to be able to transform into instruments needed to carve out respective and equal spaces in the bargains and negotiations for power in modern political institutions.*”<sup>94</sup>

Even when the moral authority of Meira Paibis was at its peak after the naked protest in 2004, the women members of the co-ordinating committee of Apunba Lup, played a largely passive role, allowing the men to speak for them.

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93 The Army opposes moves to amend let alone repeal the Act. In 2010 the Home Ministry suggested that it might consider amending the Act. Army Chief General V K Singh promptly responded by stating publicly that any dilution of AFSPA would constrain the force’s operational ability.

94 Phanjoubam, Pradip, “Challenges Before Women’s Movement in Manipur”, in Dutta, Anuradha and Ratna Bhuyan (Eds.), *Women and Peace: Chapters from Northeast India*, (New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, 2008), p. 101.

Moreover, the Meira Paibis movement is aging and the gap is widening between the traditional and modern women's movement. As Phanjoubam further observes, the Meira Paibis have the energy and intuition but the modern women's groups "have the head but not the vitality" to stand independently.<sup>95</sup> These modern women's groups attract literate, professional women, often socialised in the NGO culture and based in an urban milieu.<sup>96</sup> Moreover, the economic power of women, from which the Meira Paibis derived some authority, is getting increasingly weaker as evinced in the increasing numbers of women-headed subsistence households present in the traditional *Ima's* market, the epicentre of women's economic power.

## The complexity of fractured identity politics

A further challenge to the women's peace activism is the failure to transcend the divisions of identity politics. Manipur is an ethnically plural space that has seen tensions between different groups. The Meira Paibis represents only Meitei concerns and is regarded as conservative, traditional and not consistently acknowledging these identity tensions. The traditional hill/valley divide has resulted in the Nagas, who dominate the hill districts, wanting unification of all Naga territories regardless of state boundaries, and the Kukis demanding an ethnic homeland. By contrast, the Meiteis are fiercely determined to preserve the territorial integrity of all Manipur. Over the years, these contesting claims have led to tensions, most recently in mid 2010, when Naga organisations imposed a crippling two-month economic blockade of the main highway to Manipur, which passes through the neighbouring Nagaland state; two Naga protesters were killed by Manipuri police dispersing the demonstration. Valley Rose, a Naga women's activist and editor of a Tangkhul daily, posed the question: "*Are we really talking about peace or are we talking about my group and your group? And are we not creating more differences among different communities through these activities?*"<sup>97</sup>

Given the complexity of the plural space of Manipur, there is a critical need for the women of the various communities – Naga, Meitei, Kuki – to build upon the isolated efforts of Naga-Kuki women or Naga-Meitei women who have sought to open a dialogue to defuse tension. Also, there is a need for the alienation between the traditional Meira Pabis and the 'modern' women's organisations to evolve politically. Finally, while acknowledging the high-risk environment, the Meira Paibis should assert their autonomy and speak up against human rights violations by all sides, including both the armed forces and insurgents.

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95 Phanjoubam, Pradip (2008).

96 For example: Women Action for Development, Manipur Women's Gun Survivors Network.

97 Rose, Valley, "Role of Tribal Women in Peace Building in Manipur", in Dutta, Anuradha and Ratna Bhuyan (Eds.), *Women and Peace: Chapters from Northeast India*, (New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, 2008), p. 191.

## Focus on Nagaland

In January 2009, hundreds of paramilitary troops laid siege to a camp of the largest Naga armed group, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland–Isak-Muivah, (NSCN-IM) near Shirui village in Manipur, trapping civilians. For fifteen days, Naga women staged a sit-in demanding the withdrawal of the paramilitaries – their pressure worked and violence was averted. *'We're just doing our job as peacekeepers'* the women told the frustrated commanding officer.

### Naga women transform their traditional roles

Nine months later in the state capital Kohima, Naga women from a range of organisations played a key monitoring and advocacy role in a dialogue between the Home Secretary of the Government of India and Thuingaleng Muivah, General Secretary of NSCN-IM. Government officials were surprised that Muivah had invited members of Naga civil society organisations to this high level meeting.<sup>98</sup> They included the Naga Ho Ho, Naga Mothers' Association (NMA), and predominantly female representatives from the Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR). Earlier, the government had held talks, but separately, with civil society representatives including women interlocutors.

The 2010 Kohima parleys were a quiet but significant reminder of how Naga women have transformed their public role: no longer a passive ceremonial presence as the group's cultural markers, they are now participating as equal interlocutors. The interaction showed how the armed rebel nationalists and – more grudgingly – state agencies have come to accord women peace-makers a degree of recognition and legitimacy in peace negotiations.

The Naga struggle is the oldest of the ethno-nationalist conflicts challenging the post-colonial integrationist project of the Indian Union. Over the last 60 years, the conflict between the Indian state and the Naga rebel 'nationalists' has become characterised by violent internecine factionalism among the Naga tribes and inter-ethnic Naga Meitei tensions. A succession of political accords has splintered the Nagas but failed to resolve India's most protracted conflict. At the root of the Naga struggle is the demand for unification and self-determination of the peoples of 40 tribes inhabiting the Naga Hills of northeast India and northwest Burma. But violence today is driven as much by fighting within Naga

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98 Traditionally 'civil society' refers to the sphere of un-coerced voluntary collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. However in the Naga areas, as in much of the northeast, mobilisation is along kin and tribal lines so the Naga social solidarities and Naga mass organisations are based on ascriptive identities. Churches also play a powerful role: more than 90 per cent of the Nagas are Christian.



factions as between Naga armed groups and the government. The constitution of a common Naga identity transcending their multiple tribal identities is threatened by mobilisation and thus factionalism along tribal lines. Currently, the vast majority of the 2,300 fatalities related to the insurgency between 1992 and 2006 are the result of inter-factional fighting between the rival groups NSCN-IM and National Socialist Council of Nagaland–Khaplang (NSCN-K).

## Status of the protracted talks process

Dialogue between the NSCN-IM and the Union Government is still at a point of stalemate. Around 70 rounds of talks have produced little or no progress on substantive issues. The Government insists on a settlement within the ‘four corners of the Indian Constitution’ which means consistent with the existing delineation of Indian states. The Nagas demand integration into a ‘Greater Nagaland’ of the Naga Hill districts in adjacent Manipur state. In July 1997, the Union government signed a ceasefire agreement with the NSCN-IM. Manipur has blocked the extension of the ceasefire to its territory lest it legitimise Naga claims to land in the state. Following the 1997 Ceasefire Agreement, peace talks were held in Paris and Amsterdam as per the accord – at ‘the highest level’ and outside the country - between The Prime Minister (later represented by the PM’s emissary) and the NSCN-IM Chairperson Isak Chishi Swu and General Secretary Thuingaleng Muivah. The last round of talks were held on 27 February 2011 in New Delhi between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and the NSCN I-M ‘s Muivah and Swu.<sup>99</sup> Parallel to the ‘high table’ talks, NSCN-IM leaders have initiated a series of Peoples’ Consultations; the most structured being the two ‘Bangkok Consultations’ in 2002 (January and June). Here, they talked to Naga social organisations, the churches and women’s groups about the official negotiations. In turn, they heard frank criticism and ideas about what was important to the people, and what changes had occurred while the leaders were away fighting in the jungle for five decades. As Muivah stated at the January consultation, “*no agreement would be entered into without the fullest understanding of the people*”; no backdoor deals would be done.<sup>100</sup> The peace accords in the Naga conflict are popularly held to have been betrayals, thus making transparency an imperative. Civil society groups, like the Naga Mothers’ Association (NMA) and its Manipur affiliate, the Naga Women’s Union of Manipur (NWUM) have played a crucial role as sentinels of a pro-people peace process.

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99 “NSCN-IM chief lands in Dimapur”, *Assam Tribune*, 2 March, (2011). [www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=mar0311/oth05](http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=mar0311/oth05). Accessed March 3, 2011.

100 Manchanda, Rita, *We Do More Because We Can: Naga Women in the Peace Process*, (Kathmandu: South Asian Forum for Human Rights, 2004), p. 67.

## Women's peacemaking roles

Naga women's peacemaking roles span the trajectory of the conflict and peace process. The women have been peacekeepers negotiating with state and non-state actors to protect their communities; mobilising and demanding justice for atrocities, especially sexual violence; mediating to keep channels of communication open across conflict divides; monitoring and helping to sustain the ceasefire; widening the support base of the path to peace; and holding the protagonists accountable to the people in whose name the peace is being made. Welfare-oriented women's organisations have been transformed into powerful, politically-engaged 'mothers' fronts'. Naga women have emerged as the frontline of the protest against human rights violations and injustices, as manifest in the massing of Naga women in a protracted 'sit in' at Mao Gate in May 2010.<sup>101</sup> That this 'sit in' subsequently morphed into an inter-ethnic Naga-Meitei standoff, reflects the limits of the 'mothers fronts' on both sides to transcend exclusive identity affiliations.

Nonetheless, Naga women are being recognised as potent political activists, asserting their right to be equal interlocutors in the reconciliation process between Naga factions and the state. Narratives of the Naga conflict feature women shielding male fighters, lying on the road to block trucks loaded with young men destined for a brutal interrogation, securing the release of hostages from myriad militant groups and, above all, stopping factional violence. As described by women in Jotsoma village in Kohima district: *"When the Indian army came, it was women who stepped forward between the soldiers and the villagers. It is only women who can intervene. We constantly had to talk to the army. We mothers would go to the warring factions, walk to their camps and plead with them not to kill each other and not to harass the villagers."*<sup>102</sup> During the Mao Gate stand-off of May 2010, women also interceded with local authorities to prevent a confrontation between an emotionally-charged populace and Manipur armed police.

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101 Mao Gate is the border between Nagaland and Manipur and is inhabited by the Mao Naga tribes. This crisis flared over the Union Government's sudden withdrawal of permission to NSCN-IM General Secretary Thuingaleng Muivah to visit his ancestral village in Manipur after four decades of absence. Naga women staged an indefinite 'sit in' protest resulting in a curfew and rising tensions in which the Manipur government's Indian Reserve Battalion force beat the women, used tear gas, and killed two college students. The Naga Students Federation imposed a blockade that virtually shut off access to Manipur.

102 Focus group discussion with women of Jotsomo village May 2003, cited in Manchanda, Rita (2004), p. 36.



Social sanction for the Naga women’s peace activism is rooted in their traditional role as peacemakers between warring villages and tribes – as a *demi* or a *pukrelia* who steps forward in the midst of battle and halts the violence.”

Social sanction for the Naga women’s peace activism is rooted in their traditional role as peacemakers between warring villages and tribes – as a *demi* or a *pukrelia* who steps forward in the midst of battle and halts the violence. Such a role was given voice by Neidonuo Angami, then president of the NMA, who stepped forward between two fighting factions in Phek district in 1998

and demanded that they “*listen to your mother before you kill your brother*”. The emphasis on motherhood as a mobilisation strategy secures social legitimacy, de-politicising the NMA and supporting its claim to be non-partisan.

## Women transcend factional divides

A key focus of women’s peace efforts in Nagaland is the inter-factional violence which accelerated rapidly in the 1980s and 1990s. In response to the high number of killings leaving bodies unclaimed in the bazaars, the NMA led a mourning ritual in alliance with the churches. By giving each victim a dignified funeral in a tribal shawl, they made the statement that every life was precious. In 1994 the NMA launched a ‘Stop All Bloodshed’ campaign. Non-partisan ‘Peace Teams’ fanned out to district headquarters to urge an end to the violence, reaching out to factions segregated by tribe. In 2003 the NMA renewed the call to stop the bloodshed – a sad testament to the continuation of inter-factional killings. “*As Mothers, we take no sides*”, asserted Neidonuo Angami in Tuensang district, speaking first to “arrogant” NSCN-IM cadres and then to “defensive” Khaplang cadres, enabling them to vent their frustration at the lack of unity and reduce rival prejudices built on an absence of dialogue with the other.<sup>103</sup>

As so much violence continues to arise from factional antagonism, the NMA and the NWUM strive to keep open the channels of communication between these rival factions. In 1999 the women’s groups enabled indirect talks between the leaders of the NSCN-IM and NSCN-K. Four women from NMA and NWUM

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103 In April 2003, Rita Manchanda accompanied the NMA President to Tuensang district for a mission of peace and reconciliation seeking to bridge the mistrust between two groups of underground cadres from the NSCN- IM and NSCN-K groups. See Manchanda, Rita (2004), p. 48.

trekked across the Myanmar border to the headquarters of the NSCN-K to meet with its leader, S.S. Khaplang. Though Khaplang refused to be a party to the ceasefire, he agreed not to stand in the way of the peace process and to exercise restraint. On their return, NMA and NWUM representatives briefed 16 of the top NSCN-IM leaders. Naga women who traditionally were not even trusted to carry messages, had become trusted interlocutors. While repeated efforts to bring the top NSCN leaders face-to-face failed, the NMA and NWUM women in 2002 played a key role in breaking the isolation of S.S. Khaplang, appraising him of the details of the Bangkok People's Consultation on the peace process. Less high-profile but perhaps even more significant have been the incremental efforts of the Naga Mothers to break down the mistrust and prejudices between local warring factions.

In the protracted stalemate of a 'no war/no peace' process, there has been a spurt in factional violence, abetted by government counter-insurgency agencies. This has motivated Naga social groups to renew efforts through the Forum for Reconciliation, an apex body established in 2008 in Chiang Mai, Thailand. In the context of the Forum, the NMA, NWUM, the churches, Naga Ho Ho, NSF, NPMHR and other groups have been able to persuade factional leaders to curb fratricidal killings and significantly, to appeal to them to increase the participation of women in the peace process. Innovative initiatives like 'Reconciliation Soccer' have also helped defuse tension and reduce violence by encouraging sporting encounters between opposing tribes.

Naga women have frankly upbraided not only state agencies but the insurgents as well, for abusing human rights. In a meeting with S.S. Khaplang in 2002, the NMA and NWUM asked for an explanation for the killing of human rights activist Shelly Maring. As well they raised the issue of so called Metei 'undergrounds' who had found refuge in his camp, enjoying his patronage.<sup>104</sup> The women demanded to know if he knew they had blocked the construction of a highway which would have been greatly beneficial to the people.<sup>105</sup>

Naga women have specifically addressed sexual violence, working through the tribal networks and the women in the underground movement. After an incident of rape involving an NSCN-IM cadre in 1999 in Jotsoma village, the NMA worked with the women of the Chakesang tribe and NSCN-IM women leaders to secure justice. At the peak of the conflict, the women devised a strategy of 'kitchen politics'. For example, if cadres from their tribe were considering attacking a camp near the village, the women would invite them for a meal to

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104 Communication between Rita Manchanda and Gina Shankham of the Naga Women's Union of Manipur, Senapati, 4 May, 2003.

105 Manchanda, Rita (2004), p. 47.



Who are you fighting for? Not for the 60 or 70 of you, but for us.”

Dr Yangerla Ao, 2004

discuss frankly the likely consequences, such as retaliatory attacks and protracted closures of educational institutions and shops, and what they would mean for the village, to try and dissuade them from their planned attack. The women would also try to persuade them not to impose protracted curfews. As Dr Yangerla Ao of the Ao tribal women’s organisation Watsu Mongdang put it to Naga fighters who had pro-

voked violence that resulted in the closure of schools and businesses: “*Who are you fighting for? Not for the 60 or 70 of you, but for us.*”<sup>106</sup>

After the ceasefire was signed in 1997, multiple violations resulted in mutual blame which threatened the agreement’s existence. The NMA and NWUM joined a 22-member civil society Action Committee independently monitoring the ceasefire. NMA President Angami declared, “*Both sides can decide to break the ceasefire. But for whom are they talking? We’re all stakeholders in the process.*”<sup>107</sup> The Action Committee pushed for the inclusion of independent observers in the formal ceasefire mechanism. Although the government and the NSCN-IM at the Amsterdam round of talks in September 2001 agreed to include four associate members representing NGOs, no change was realised. Nonetheless, the Committee’s lobbying did result in a revision of the ceasefire ‘Ground Rules’. The original rules agreed in 1997 focussed only on ensuring the security of the two warring forces. In the formal document agreed on 13 January 2001, the rules were amended to require that the forces of the two parties not act in a manner so as to cause damage to civilian property or injury to civilian populations.

## Peace talks

In 1997 when the formal peace process began, there was very limited public support for pursuing peace negotiations before unity was established among the four warring Naga groups: the NSCN-IM and K groups, as well as the remnants of the Naga National Council (NNC) which spearheaded the Naga movement and is split into the NNC (Adino) and NNC (Pangar). Naga civil society, including the women’s groups, played a significant role in winning popular acceptance and legitimacy for the NSCN-IM to negotiate on behalf of the Nagas, while reaching out to the various factions to build unity. NMA and NWUM have been accused of partisanship toward the NSCN-IM by some associates of the Khaplang group,

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106 Manchanda, Rita (2004), p. 39.

107 Manchanda, Rita (2004), p. 52.

questioning the women's assertion that 'we take no sides'. In reality in situations of inter-factional tension the women are eagerly welcomed because they are trusted by both sides at the local and at the highest level between the NSCN-IM and K leaders.

NMA and NWUM women have lobbied the Indian Government and the NSCN-IM leaders to sincerely commit themselves to peace, emphasising that peace belongs not only to the warring parties but to all Naga peoples. In January 2001 when Muivah was arrested (on a passport violation) in Bangkok en-route to talks in Amsterdam, the NMA and other Naga social organisations kept up a battery of protest, demanding that the government intercede and commit itself seriously to the peace process.

The NMA and the NWUM have also participated in the multi-layered consultations on the peace process. The NSCN-IM invited them to the 2002 'Bangkok Consultations'. There they joined 45 other civil society organisations expressing their anxieties and aspirations about the official talks and holding the NSCN-IM leaders accountable for negotiating a peace for all Nagas. In the first meeting there were no women from the NSCN-IM group. However, the June consultation saw six senior NSCN-IM female leaders at the talks. The NMA, as a conscious strategy, has refrained from commenting on the political agenda in order to retain the trust of all sides. In contrast, its sister organisation (the NWUM in Manipur) has pursued a rights-based agenda, arguing for women's rights in marriage, divorce and property, and representation in the all-male Village Tribal Authorities and the apex body, the United Naga Council of Manipur.

## **Continuing challenges for Naga women**

Naga women have been very aware that peace for the Nagas will be difficult to achieve if conflict persists with neighbouring ethnic groups. The NMA and NWUM have started some initiatives to open a dialogue with groups of the Meira Paibis, the influential Meitei women's movement in Manipur. The NWUM, for example, works with local Meira Paibis to rescue hostages captured by Naga militant groups and has joined Meira Paibis protests in solidarity. However, Naga women activists complain that this solidarity is largely one-sided. In fact, the rift of mistrust between the Nagas and Meiteis has widened over the past decade, precipitated by the Meitei groups' violent reaction to the Indian Government's decision in 2001 to extend the India-Naga ceasefire beyond the territorial limits of Nagaland. They see this as portending to the slicing up of the territory of Manipur. The 2010 Naga-Meitei standoff has effectively pushed relations to a crisis. In September 2010 the first round of tripartite talks began between the Government of India,

the Naga in Manipur and the Meitei.<sup>108</sup> Two women were involved in these talks, Gina Shankham of the Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights and Grace Satsang of the Naga Women's Union of Manipur. Frustratingly, in the December round of talks, there were no women included. These divisions between neighbouring ethnic groups may explain why the many ethnic communities of the northeast may all oppose the Government's repressive AFSPA, but they have not yet forged a common front against it.

However, outside the region itself, cross-community solidarities are being fostered – especially in the milieu of the universities in New Delhi where large numbers of influential students and young professionals from the northeast reside. These individuals could be significant in developing a more co-operative politics in the future. Naga women of the NPMHR are in the forefront of these initiatives, even at times prompting the men of the other communities (for example, the Meitei and Kuki) to regret the passivity of their own women.<sup>109</sup>

Of course, women in Nagaland still face challenges in achieving their objectives as peacemakers. The Naga Ho Ho, the apex body of the Naga tribal organisations in Nagaland, and its counterpart in Manipur, the United Naga Council, still resist granting formal representation to women. But a generational change in their leadership is opening up spaces, though not without a backlash.<sup>110</sup> Naga society remains deeply patriarchal. In formal politics, Nagaland's state assembly still has no women representatives even though women are the most active grassroots campaigners during elections. In the 2003 election, women campaigned door-to-door for the pro-peace National People's Front against the Nagaland state Congress Party, which was seen as equivocating on the peace process.

Indian Government institutions have been much less sensitive to the value of women's peace activism and to the shifts under way in gender relations. For example, it is common practice for women to be negotiating community

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108 Kanglaonline, "First round of tripartite talks on UNC demands held at Senapati", December 3, (2010). <http://kanglaonline.com/2010/12/first-round-of-tripartite-talks-on-unc-demands-held-at-senapati/>. Accessed February 25, 2011.

109 For example, when Grace Satsang of NWUM and three other women trekked into Myanmar to talk to S.S. Khaplang in 2001, the Meitei insurgents at the camp said to them, "I don't think our Meitei women would have come here. They have not even thought of coming here." See Satsang, Grace, "Tribal Women and Peace Initiatives in Manipur" in Dutta, Anuradha and Ratna Bhuyan (Eds.), *Women and Peace: Chapters from Northeast India*, (New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, 2008), p. 194.

110 In the Pallel district of Manipur, T. Shangnu of the NWUM has led efforts to defuse inter-tribal tension between the communities at election time, as well as interceding to rescue hostages from the militants or young men taken away by the security forces. She complained that "men and women mock us", saying "here come the powerful women." Discussion with Rita Manchanda in 2004.



. . . civil society groups, including the women's groups, have a special responsibility for they have legitimised what, at times, appears like entrapment of the peoples' struggle in hollowed out peace negotiations."

isations as spokespersons for the NSCN-IM. "*They are guided by someone else,*" he said.<sup>112</sup>

welfare with local commanding officers (COs) yet Retired General R.V. Kulkarni, who from 2001 to 2007 was head of the Ceasefire Monitoring cell, expressed surprised that women should be considered a resource for defusing tension and maintaining peace.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, there is a tendency to dismiss civil society organ-

## Holding the peace table together

The fact that 13 years after the signing of the ceasefire agreement, the Government and NSCN-IM are still at the 'peace table' has much to do with civil society's role in holding the two parties accountable and preventing the talks from breaking down. In these asymmetric peace talks between the state and a militant group, Naga civil society has provided a balance. Indeed civil society groups, including the women's groups, have a special responsibility for they have legitimised what, at times, appears like entrapment of the peoples' struggle in hollowed out peace negotiations. Currently, the peace process has reached a stalemate and the Government's political will to work towards a settlement appears to be steadily weakening. Moreover, the 2010 standoff between the Nagas and Meiteis exposed the Indian Union's unwillingness to use its political weight to explore a creative resolution to an avoidable confrontation.

The Government had cleared Muivah's proposed 2010 visit to his village in Ukhrul in Manipur, keeping the Manipur authorities informed. When the Manipur Chief Minister decided to politically exploit the majority Meitei communities' insecurity about the territory of Manipur being sliced up by the demands for Greater Nagaland and refused to allow Muivah to enter, the Indian Government let the situation deteriorate before the Prime Minister intervened to request Muivah to postpone the visit. Meanwhile, the state's counter-insurgency agencies

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111 Manchanda, Rita (2004), p. 70.

112 Manchanda, Rita (2004), p. 70.



have been inciting internecine factional violence, manipulating tribal affiliations and corroding the Naga movement.

At this moment the responsibility placed on civil society – especially the Naga Mothers Association – as trusted stakeholders of the peace process is significant. More than ever it is necessary to redouble efforts at building reconciliation among the Nagas. There are some promising signs, for example the formation in 2009 of a ‘Joint Working Group’ comprising members of NSCN-IM, NSCN-K and another militant group, the Naga National Council. Given the dangerous rift between the Nagas and Meiteis, responsibility devolves even more onto the Naga and Meitei women to revitalise the tentative efforts to reach out to the other. There can be no peace for the Nagas without peace with their neighbours.

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## 7. Solomon Islands

Rebecca Peters

Armed conflict in the Solomon Islands has highlighted the very different traditional roles of men and women. The fighting was primarily among men, but especially damaging to women, who showed great courage in trying to bring the fighting to an end. Although peace accords were negotiated on several occasions over a period of six years, women were not invited to participate. As activist Dr Alice Pollard noted: *“The peace processes have been guided by the perpetrators with little input from the victims.”*<sup>113</sup> Nor, after the conflict, have women been able to participate in the most important decision-making forum, the national parliament. No women were elected to parliament in the 2001, 2006 or 2010 parliamentary elections. In fact, only one woman has ever served in the Solomon Islands parliament.

Solomon Islander identity and culture is strongly associated with tribe and island of origin within the archipelago. In the postcolonial era this cultural diversity has created challenges as people looking for work migrated from other provinces to the large island of Guadalcanal and particularly to the capital, Honiara.

### Women and ‘the tensions’

The violent conflict known as ‘the tensions’ began in 1998 with clashes between an indigenous Guadalcanal group, Isatabu Freedom Movement (IFM), and the Malaitan Eagle Force (MEF) representing immigrants from the neighbouring island of Malaita. (See Box 6, Background to the conflict, for more detail.) The conflict between these two groups tore the nation apart for two years before being replaced by a crime wave which caused the machinery of state to fail. Peace agreements were made and broken until 2003 and the arrival of a multinational

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113 Pollard, Alice Aruhe'eta, “The Women for Peace Analysis and approach”, in Liloqula, Ruth and Pollard, Alice Aruhe'eta, “Understanding Conflict In Solomon Islands: A Practical Means To Peace-making”, *State, Society and Governance in Melanesia, Discussion Paper 00/7*, (Canberra: Australian National University: 2000), p. 10.



... the intolerable social and economic conditions created by the tensions made women realise they must take action in the public sphere.”

peacekeeping operation, the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI). The mission succeeded in restoring order, as well as rebuilding government institutions and the economy. It conducted a successful disarmament programme, under

which women helped persuade men to give up their guns.<sup>114</sup> RAMSI’s mandate was reviewed in 2007, and renewed in 2009.<sup>115</sup>

In terms of direct casualties the tensions could be classified as a low-intensity conflict – fewer than 200 deaths and around 450 injured. However, it involved significant trauma and upheaval, with more than 35,000 people (8 per cent of the population at the time) displaced as a result of the violence. The damage included gender-specific harms to women: sexual assault of women was extremely common.<sup>116</sup> In addition, women suffered worst from the closure of medical clinics and schools: *“It was women who were forced to give birth to their babies in the bush, and feel the guilt and fear of not being able to vaccinate their children against deadly diseases such as TB and whooping cough.”*<sup>117</sup> While men also suffered from such deprivation, women were arguably more affected because of guilt about being unable to fulfil their obligations as mothers.<sup>118</sup>

## The evolution of women’s traditional roles

Solomon Islands women traditionally played an important role in conflict resolution within the family, tribe or community, but not in the domain of public security. Social conditioning very clearly defines women’s domain as the house, the

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- 114 Muggah, Robert, “Diagnosing Demand: Assessing the Motivations and Means for Firearms Acquisition in the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea”, *State, Society and Governance in Melanesia, Discussion Paper 2004/7*, (Canberra: Australian National University), p. 8.
  - 115 Partnership Framework Between Solomon Islands Government and Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands, April 2009. See [www.ramsi.org](http://www.ramsi.org)
  - 116 Amnesty International, *Solomon Islands: Women confronting violence*, ASA 43/001/2004, (London: Amnesty International, 2004), pp. 26-29.
  - 117 Paina, Dalcy Tovosia, “Peacemaking in Solomon Islands: The experience of the Guadalcanal Women for Peace movement”, *Development Bulletin 53*, November (Canberra: Australian National University, 2000), pp. 47-48.
  - 118 Leslie, Helen, “Gendering conflict and conflict management in the Solomon Islands”, *Development Bulletin 60*, December (Canberra: Australian National University, 2002), p. 15.

## Box 6: Background to the conflict

The Solomon Islands is a group of nearly 1000 islands whose 510,000 people speak more than 60 languages.<sup>1</sup> In 2010 it ranked 124<sup>th</sup> on the UN Human Development Index, above Papua New Guinea but below Fiji, Micronesia and Timor Leste.<sup>2</sup> Illiteracy is high and most people derive their livelihoods from subsistence.<sup>3</sup>

The violent conflict known as ‘the tensions’ began in 1998, when indigenous Gwale men on Guadalcanal Island began terrorising settlers from the neighbouring island of Malaita. The attackers were angry at the government’s failure to address grievances related to compensation for loss of land and development activities, violence against indigenous people by incomers, and disrespect for indigenous Guadalcanal culture.<sup>4</sup> The attackers took the name Isatabu Freedom Movement (IFM) and, in response, a group called the Malaitan Eagle Force (MEF) was formed. In the fighting between these two militias during 1998-2000, around 150-200 people died and tens of thousands were displaced. Many thousands of settlers fled Guadalcanal to return home to other provinces, including some 25,000 who returned to Malaita. In addition, thousands of indigenous Guadalcanal people fled the capital Honiara for the safer interior of the island.

In 1999 the country was placed under a state of emergency. The Commonwealth sponsored two peace accords and a Peace Monitoring Group to support the police and begin a disarmament programme. These were insufficient to prevent a coup on 5 June 2000 when the MEF, supported by some disaffected police officers, took the Prime Minister hostage and demanded his resignation. They raided police armouries to obtain weapons, took control of the police force and subsequently Honiara itself. The Prime Minister did resign and the parliament chose an interim replacement. After a failed ceasefire, the Australian and New Zealand governments arranged a peace conference in Townsville, Queensland in October 2000. The resulting Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) called for an end to hostilities, the surrender of weapons and new elections in December 2001.

The MEF and IFM disbanded after Townsville, but the militant leaders and many politicians kept their guns, especially the high-powered weapons seized from police armouries. Crime escalated with extortion, theft and beatings becoming commonplace. Corruption was rampant, the state became ineffective and industry ground to a halt. The security agencies were outgunned and overrun by criminals, leading the Prime Minister in June 2003 to request international military assistance. The Pacific Islands Forum agreed to support a regional peacekeeping operation, led and funded by Australia and New Zealand. The Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) began operations in July 2003, with 2200 police, soldiers and civilian staff from a range of Pacific nations.

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1 Australian Government, “Solomon Islands country brief”, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, updated August 2010.

2 UNDP, Human Development Index (HDI) 2010 rankings, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics>.

3 Government of Solomon Islands, *Solomon Islands Human Development Report 2002*, (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2001), pp. 21, 47, 91.

4 McGovern, Kieren and Choulai, Bernard, “Case Study of Solomon Islands: Peace and Conflict-related Development Analysis”, Human Development Report Office, *Occasional Paper*, (New York: UN Development Programme, 2005).

garden and the church.<sup>119</sup> However, the intolerable social and economic conditions created by the tensions made women realise they must take action in the public sphere. In the midst of armed conflict they promoted non-violent methods of peacebuilding – dialogue, listening, prayer, counselling, sharing of food – and used their status as mothers to communicate with the male combatants and with other women across the country.

## A diversity of women's organisations and activities for peace

The National Council of Women (a network of church groups) had formed in the early 1980s to raise awareness about partner and family violence. During the crisis, the National Council of Women (NCW) made direct appeals to militants to disarm and organised formal exchanges of food between urban women and women outside Honiara; exchanging rice, salt, sugar and soap for bananas and vegetables. These exchanges were held at the militants' checkpoints, where the women also prayed with, and presented food to, the combatants. In 2000 the NCW invited the Governor-General, the opposition leader and foreign diplomats to a church service and asked them to persuade the two warring groups to lay down their arms.<sup>120</sup>

Another important organisation was Women for Peace, established in 2000 as a result of the crisis, in the belief that "*women should contribute to the peace process in their capacity as mothers of the nation.*"<sup>121</sup> Women For Peace (WFP) was a diverse group of Guadalcanal and Malaitan women living in Honiara; their sister group, Guadalcanal Women for Peace, was formed by women living outside the capital.<sup>122</sup> WFP worked with traditional leaders, churches, community organisations, militant groups, the national government and the international community, its activities including:<sup>123</sup>

- Meetings with both militant groups to make the fighters aware of the impact of the conflict on the lives of women and children. The WFP visitors also prayed, read the Bible and shared food with the militants, as well as offering 'words of advice from mothers'.

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119 Webber, Katherine and Johnson, Helen, "Women, peace building and political inclusion: a case study from Solomon Islands", *Hecate* 34(2): 83-99, November (Brisbane: Hecate Press, 2008).

120 Weir, Christine, "The churches in Solomon Islands and Fiji: Responses to the crises of 2000", *Development Bulletin* 53, November, (Canberra: Australian National University, 2000), p. 50. Note: The current President of the NWC, Hilda Kari, is the only woman ever to have been elected to parliament in the Solomon Islands, from 1989 to 1997.

121 Pollard, Alice (2000), p. 10.

122 Paina, Darcy Tovosia (2000), p. 48.

123 Pollard, Alice (2000), pp. 11-12.

- Meetings with government ministers, high officials and police officers.
- The Women's Appeal for Peace: a 12-point plea for peace which was broadcast across the nation, calling on decision-makers at all levels to work to end the crisis.
- Visits to families displaced by the fighting and to injured victims in hospital, bringing food, clothes, soap and babies' nappies. Like the NCW, WFP also exchanged baskets of food and essential goods with rural women, the goal being to rebuild their confidence to bring their market produce into the capital.
- Participation in forums and conferences, including the National Peace Conference organised by the Solomon Islands Christian Association on a New Zealand Navy vessel.
- Visits to communities in Malaita and Guadalcanal Provinces, where WFP members urged parents to try to draw their children away from the militant groups. They stressed the need for communities to accept and re-integrate the fighters once they returned.
- Attending some of the ceasefire talks between the Government, the MEF and the IFM. This was the closest the women came to actually sitting at the negotiating table. WFP members welcomed participants to the talks and served tea, sharing their views and opinions at the same time.

These actions by women can be seen as fitting a transformative model of human rights activism and restorative justice. The women strove for dialogue and urged compliance with human rights, rather than cataloguing or denouncing abuses. This approach can contribute to long-term prevention by reducing the potential for violence, promoting the cause of social justice and human rights, and advancing community-wide security.<sup>124</sup>

## Acknowledged but still excluded

The women's efforts during the tensions are widely acknowledged as important in mitigating the conflict and preparing a culture of peace. Yet, at moments of formal peace negotiations, women were left out. Women's groups, churches and civil society organisations participated in ceasefire discussions in June and July 2000. However, the Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) was negotiated in

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124 Snyder, Elizabeth, "Waging Peace: Women, Restorative Justice, and the Pursuit of Human Rights in the Solomon Islands", *Refugee Watch* 34, December (Kolkata, India: Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group, 2009), p. 74.



Residents search for useable canned food from a wrecked store in Chinatown in Honiara, April 20, 2006 where only ten percent of the buildings were not burnt to the ground following riots and unrest after the national election. © AP Photo/Rob Griffith

October 2000 by 143 men representing the MEF and IFM plus the national and provincial governments. All civil society groups were excluded at the insistence of the MEF.<sup>125</sup> Thus the conversation included only the war makers, not a wide array of peacemakers.

Dr Alice Pollard, one of the founders of Women For Peace, identified three sources for women's authority in solving conflict. Firstly, she believes women in the Solomon Islands are natural peacemakers, with different values from men, because their responsibilities for food production, reproduction, community work and family welfare demands co-operation. Second, women of different tribes have specific powers to stop conflict – for example, among Areare people from Malaita, a woman can stand between two warring parties and utter, 'enough is enough, stop fighting, if you continue to fight after my words, you have walked over my legs'. This is a powerful threat, since in the Areare culture it is *tambu* (taboo) for a male to make contact with or step over a woman's

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125 Fraenkel, Jon, *The Manipulation of Custom: From Uprising to Intervention in the Solomon Islands*, (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2004), pp. 98-99.



Some analysts have speculated that ultimately the reliance on women’s essential peacefulness backfired, resulting in the women’s exclusion from peace negotiations – since the contribution they had made was devalued, being perceived as simply a natural quality rather than as an actual skill.”

body, especially if they are related by kinship or marriage. The warring parties should stop fighting immediately if a woman swears in this manner, and guidelines for reconciliation and compensation apply. The third factor is the Christian religion, widely practised in the Solomons, which provides biblical support for women’s leadership in settling conflicts.<sup>126</sup>

Relying on the maternal image made women’s work as peace activists more acceptable to men, by avoiding a

direct challenge to the established power imbalance. One woman remarked that the concept of gender equality “*is sneered upon by Guadalcanal men. To them, it is a threat to their dominance and power over women. Any women’s organisations, apart from the church women’s groups, have a negative stigma attached to them . . .*”<sup>127</sup> Even in areas of matrilineal land ownership, women have lower status than men in relation to political decision-making.<sup>128</sup> Some analysts have speculated that ultimately the reliance on women’s essential peacefulness backfired, resulting in the women’s exclusion from peace negotiations – since the contribution they had made was devalued, being perceived as simply a natural quality rather than as an actual skill.<sup>129</sup>

## Transformative potential of conflict

Armed conflict inflicts great suffering on women, but in some contexts it has also proven transformative by suspending traditional strictures on women’s activities. For example, in Rwanda, Burundi, Mozambique and Timor Leste, the

126 Pollard, Alice (2000), pp. 9-10.

127 Paina, Darcy Tovosia (2000), p. 47.

128 Nelson, Gayle, “Review of the Gender Dimensions of Land-Based Conflict in the Pacific”, Land Management and Conflict Minimisation Sub-Project 2.6, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2007, p. 16.

129 Webber and Johnson, (2008).



post-violence period brought a significant expansion of women's political power and participation in public life.<sup>130</sup> This transformation has not been replicated in the Solomon Islands, the starkest indicator being the failure of women to win a seat in parliament since 1997. (Five other Pacific Island nations – Tuvalu, Tonga, Palau, Nauru and Micronesia – also have no women in parliament).<sup>131</sup> In advance of the 2010 elections the NCW and newer women's organisations like Vois Blong Mere pushed for some seats to be allocated specifically for women, but the proposal was rejected by the existing parliament. *"They said the country needed more time to discuss the idea of special measures for women"*, said Ethel Sigimanu, long-time women's rights advocate and now permanent secretary of the Ministry for Women, Youth and Children's Affairs. *"In the meantime, it is very difficult for women to get elected. Solomon Islands is still a very traditional society, and women don't have the big bucks needed for election campaigns."*<sup>132</sup>

The RAMSI peacekeeping mission did not prioritise women during its early years.<sup>133</sup> In 2006 RAMSI was criticised by Australian feminists for not having a gender unit and for being inaccessible to Solomon Islands women.<sup>134</sup> However, RAMSI's 2009 Framework lists 'equality between men and women' as one of its underlying principles, and the accompanying work plan contains sections on combating violence against women and increasing women's participation in government. Perhaps most significantly, in 2008 RAMSI hired a women's adviser, who sees the new mandate as incorporating SCR 1325.<sup>135</sup>

Ethel Sigimanu points to another positive: the new government elected in 2010 has committed itself to developing a National Action Plan on SCR 1325, and has asked the UN for assistance. She is a committee member of the Asia

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130 Whittington, Sherrill, "Women and decision-making in post-conflict transitions: Case Studies from Timor Leste and the Solomon Islands", Presentation to the Sixth Asia Pacific Congress of Women in Politics and Decision-Making, 10-12 February, (Makati City: Philippines Center for Asia Pacific Women in Politics, 2006).

131 Inter-Parliamentary Union, Women in national parliaments – Situation as of 31 December (2010). [www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm](http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm). Accessed January 22, 2011.

132 Ethel Sigimanu, telephone conversation with Rebecca Peters, 9 January 2011. The proposal was for 10 additional seats, which would have increased the total number of parliamentary seats to 60 without depriving any existing male MP of his seat.

133 Whittington, Sherrill (2006).

134 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Australian section, "Inquiry into Australia's aid program in the Pacific", Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Human Rights Sub-committee, 14 June (2006). WILPF also said RAMSI had stopped representatives of the National Council of Women from entering the national parliament building where they were going as peacemakers.

135 Horiwapu, Lisa and Bhagwan Rolls, Sharon, "1325 Policy Document Paving the way for a SIG National Action Plan", The Thirteen 25 Report, *Fem'TALK MegaZine*, femLINKPACIFIC, January (2010), p. 18.

Pacific Advisory group for SCR 1325, and the local women's group Vois Blong Mere is part of the Pacific-wide campaign for implementation of the resolution. *"We can only hope this will bring improvements in the position of women in public life in the Solomon Islands. And maybe next time we will see a woman elected to parliament."*<sup>136</sup>

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136 Ethel Sigimanu, telephone conversation with Rebecca Peters, 9 January 2011.

## 8. Nepal

Reecha Upadhyay

2010 was a pivotal and turbulent year for the Nepali peace process. The deadline for drafting the new constitution passed and had to be extended; there was little progress regarding other key tasks to complete the peace process, notably regarding the future of former combatants. Amidst all this, ethnic or identity-based politics further flourished. For these reasons, a further and final extension of the UN mission was required to mid-January 2011.

Women's participation in the Nepali peace process has, and continues to be, a narrative replete with gains and losses.<sup>137</sup> It provides an illustrative example of the ways in which women are excluded from formal peacemaking by the leadership of political parties involved in the peace talks, whilst being active at less formal levels. The parties to the Nepali peace talks initially did not include any women; their involvement was incremental. However, there were also significant policy wins, as described below.

### Conflict as a catalyst for emancipation?

To understand the role of Nepali women in the peacemaking process, it is critical to first address their roles during the violent conflict. The decade long 'People's War', fought mostly in the rural parts of the country, saw a large number of women in both combat and support roles for the People's Liberation Army (PLA). While the number is contested, it is held to be at least 20 per cent

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137 See Boyd, Sarah, *Women building peace. Locating agency and empowerment in rights-based approaches to women's community peacebuilding in Nepal*, Masters Thesis, (Melbourne: University of Melbourne, 2007); Abdela, Lesley, *Women's Meaningful Participation in Peacebuilding and Governance, Case Study – Nepal*, (Austria/Nepal: CARE, 2010); Baechler, Günther, 'A mediators perspective: women and the Nepali peace process', *Opinion Piece, Women at the Peace Table: Asia Pacific Opinion Series No. 1*, (Geneva: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2010); Manchanda, Rita, 'Nepali Women Seize the New Political Dawn. Resisting marginalisation after ten years of war', *Opinion Piece, Women at the Peace Table: Asia Pacific Opinion Series, No. 3*, (Geneva: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2010).

## **Box 7: Background to the conflict**

Ouseph Tharakan, HD Centre

In 1990, a broad coalition of political parties including left wing parties, forced the monarchy to give up its absolute power to rule. A new constitution was drawn up that transformed Nepal into a constitutional monarchy. However, many left wing groups felt that this new constitution did not go far enough and that it was essentially shaped by centrist parties in consultation with members of the old establishment. The main political parties were plagued by factionalism and subsequent years were characterised by lack of political stability, allegations of rampant corruption, and limited social or economic progress.

On February 4, 1996, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) presented a memorandum with 40 demands relating to nationalism, democracy and livelihood, which included among others, the abolition of royal privileges and the promulgation of a new constitution. The government ignored these demands. On February 13, the Maoist movement proclaimed a 'People's War' in Nepal with attacks on police and military installations in six districts in the western part of the country. The Maoist insurgency gradually grew in intensity and came to control a substantial part of the country, particularly rural areas.

In June 2001, the Crown Prince of Nepal shot dead nine members of his family including King Birendra. The throne was assumed by Gyanendra, the former King's brother. The same year, the first attempt at dialogue between the Government and the Maoists was undertaken but a ceasefire and talks collapsed by November. In the face of escalating violence and a parliamentary deadlock King Gyanendra dismissed the elected government in 2002 and ruled through appointed Prime Ministers. Parliament was dissolved and planned elections suspended. In April 2003, peace talks were held between the government and the Maoists which broke off after three rounds. In 2004, following street protests, the King handpicked another Prime Minister who was backed by a coalition of four political parties. In February 2005, the King sacked this government as well and assumed direct rule of the country citing the need to intensify the war against the Maoists. A state of emergency was declared and leaders of political parties and civil society were imprisoned. This proved to be a mistake by the King, and the divided political parties rallied together to form a new Seven Party Alliance (SPA). The SPA entered into dialogue with the Maoists and signed the Twelve-Point Agreement in November 2005 laying out a common vision for the resurrection of democracy and paving the way for long-lasting peace.

In April 2006 the SPA, with the support of civil society organisations and the Maoists, mobilised widespread protests and strikes which eventually forced the King to reinstate Parliament and hand over power to an interim coalition government made up of the SPA. The coalition government and the Maoists engaged in talks and agreed to a series of agreements, which eventually culminated in the signing of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in November 2006, formally marking an end to the conflict.

The CPA allowed for the Maoists to join the political mainstream and laid the groundwork for a new round of elections to form a constituent assembly. Maoist fighters were moved to cantonments monitored by a UN special mission, pending a final decision on how they would be integrated.

The election for the Constituent Assembly held in April 2008, resulted in a shake-up of the political landscape with the Maoists emerging as the single largest party while the traditionally established political parties such as the Nepali Congress (NC) and the Communist Party Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) CPN (UML) were marginalised. The elections

also established newer, regional-based parties like the Madhesi Jana Adhikar Forum (MJF) and the Terai-Madhes Democratic Party (TMDP) as actors in the political mainstream.

Subsequently, the focus on political activity was on government formation rather than on constitution writing. A Maoist-led coalition government did not last long, and was replaced by a succession of shaky coalitions. The term of the Constituent Assembly was extended by one year. The process of integrating Maoist combatants is at a standstill, and the UN special political mission ended its term in mid-January 2011.

The underlying fear of the non-Maoist political parties is that the Maoists remain committed to capturing the state and seek to do so by forming the government, influencing the writing of the new constitution, by integrating their cadres into the security sector and by retaining armed militias.

A seven-month stalemate over the selection of a new Prime Minister was only resolved in February 2011 and the new government is far from stable. There are doubts whether the new constitution can be drafted within the extended deadline. The future of Maoist armed cadres currently in cantonments remains unclear. In effect, while peace is currently holding, it is indeed very fragile and effective co-operation is needed among all political parties to implement the provisions of the CPA.

An estimated 13,000 people died as a result of the conflict from 1996 to 2006.<sup>1</sup> Many of the victims were civilians. There were also numerous instances of human rights abuses and 'disappearances' carried out by both sides, which remain unaccounted for and unresolved.

Gender-based violence, including sexual violence, was a common feature of the conflict.<sup>2</sup> Female combatants made up a sizable portion of the Maoist's military wing, with the party saying a third of its combatants were women.<sup>3</sup> However these combatants have largely been sidelined in discussions about the rehabilitation and integration process.<sup>4</sup> Female social and political activists played a crucial role in the mass movement against the monarchy in 2006 but were hardly represented in the ensuing high-level negotiations.

In a major victory for women in Nepal, the interim constitution mandated that 33 per cent of seats in the Constituent Assembly (CA) should be reserved for women. Hence there are 191 women members in the 601-member CA (29 under the majority system and 162 under the proportional representation system).<sup>5</sup> After the 1999 general elections less than six percent – 12 out of the total 205 representatives – were women.<sup>6</sup>

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1 United Nations Development Programme, Fast Facts – Nepal [www.undp.org/cpr/whats\\_new/Regions/nepal.shtml](http://www.undp.org/cpr/whats_new/Regions/nepal.shtml). Accessed February 21, 2011

2 Nepal Advocacy Forum and International Center for Transitional Justice, "Across the Lines: the Impact of Nepal's Conflict on Women" (Kathmandu/New York: Nepal Advocacy Forum and International Center for Transitional Justice, December 2010). [www.ictj.org/static/Publications/ICTJ\\_NPL\\_AcrosstheLinesDecember2010.pdf](http://www.ictj.org/static/Publications/ICTJ_NPL_AcrosstheLinesDecember2010.pdf). Accessed February 21, 2011.

3 Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), "Nepal: Reintegration challenges for Maoist female ex-combatants", 14 April (2010). [www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportId=88806](http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportId=88806). Accessed February 21, 2011.

4 Nepal Advocacy Forum and International Center for Transitional Justice (2010).

5 Inter-Parliamentary Union, PARLINE database on national parliaments – Nepal, Sambidhan Sabha (Constituent Assembly). [www.ipu.org/parline/reports/2386\\_E.htm](http://www.ipu.org/parline/reports/2386_E.htm). Accessed February 25, 2011.

6 Aryal, Mallika, "A Small Victory for Nepali Women", *Inter Press Service*, June 24, (2008). <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=42933>. Accessed February 25, 2011.



. . . the ordinary village women who joined the Maoist Army learned a new ‘liberation vocabulary’ that encouraged them to question traditional gender roles.”

UN Development Programme, 2010

and protected the PLA by not revealing their movements to the state security forces.<sup>141</sup>

For women in rural Nepal, the PLA provided an opportunity to be visible and empowered, and a means to achieve equality and justice.<sup>142</sup> Some 87 per cent of Nepali women live in rural areas and are a larger proportion of rural populations than men.<sup>143</sup> This was particularly significant as the war developed.<sup>144</sup> One view suggests that “*the ordinary village women who joined the Maoist Army learned a new ‘liberation vocabulary’ that encouraged them to question traditional gender roles.*”<sup>145</sup> In a country where marriage and family have traditionally been central to society, the war saw an increase in the number of single mothers and women as heads of households, further shifting gender roles.

and at most 40 per cent of the PLA.<sup>138</sup> (PLA combatant numbers are hard to fully grasp and complicated by reports of forced recruitment of children and youth).<sup>139</sup> Women in the Nepal Army constitute less than 2 per cent of the force.<sup>140</sup> Women officially joined the Maoist PLA as combatants but also supported the PLA by providing food and shelter,

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- 138 Ariño, María Villellas, *Nepal: a gender view of the armed conflict and the peace process*, Peacebuilding Papers, Quaderns de Construcció de Pau No. 4, School for a Culture of Peace (Barcelona: Escola de Cultura de Pau, 2008, June), p. 8.
- 139 Tiwari, Chirtra K., *Maoist Insurgency in Nepal: Internal Dimensions*, Paper 187, (India: South Asia Analysis Group, 2001). [www.southasiaanalysis.org/papers2/paper187.htm](http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/papers2/paper187.htm). Accessed December 12, 2010.
- 140 Nepal Army, “Women in Nepalese Army”. [www.nepalarmy.mil.np/wia.php](http://www.nepalarmy.mil.np/wia.php). Accessed December 12, 2010.
- 141 Leve, Lauren, “‘Failed Development’ and Rural Revolution in Nepal: Rethinking Subaltern Consciousness and Women’s Empowerment”, *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol 80, Number 1, (Washington: George Washington University, 2007), pp. 127-172.
- 142 Yami, Hisila “Women’s Role in the Nepalese Movement: Making a People’s Constitution”, *Monthly Review*, (2010). [www.monthlyreview.org/comment.php](http://www.monthlyreview.org/comment.php). Accessed December 12, 2010.
- 143 Bhadra,C, Darshan Shrestha, Ava and Thapa, Rita, “On the edge: the impact of the insurgency on Nepali women”, in Darshan Shrestha, Ava and Thapa, Rita (Eds.), *The impact of armed conflicts on women in South Asia*, (New Delhi: Manohar, 2007) p. 107.
- 144 Ariño, María Villellas, (2008), p. 7.
- 145 UN Development Programme Regional Centre for Asia, *Power, Voice and Rights: A Turning Point for Gender Equality in Asia and the Pacific*, (India: Macmillan, 2010), p. 99.

## Active at Track 2, excluded at Track 1

A critical factor that led to the Maoists' role in the People's Movement was the immense agitation for democracy by the Nepali people. The strength of the Nepali people's demand for a peaceful and democratic Nepal was manifested in public protests, following the events that led to King Gyanendra's dissolution of the Parliament in May 2002, and later after the February 2005 crackdown on dissent, which included the imprisonment of political leaders.<sup>146</sup> The pro-democracy movement, which included people from all walks of life including women, put pressure on the Seven Party Alliance (SPA) and the Maoists to sign the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in November 2006. Despite this diverse well-spring of calls for democracy, the back door negotiations between a handful of elite political leaders and the Maoists' leadership was a key feature of the brokering of the CPA in 2006.<sup>147</sup>

Prior to the peace agreement between the SPA and the Maoist rebels, Nepali women were actively involved in peacemaking in war-affected areas at the community and grassroots levels. Networks of women's organisations formed to demand peace and an end to gender-based violence. For example, Shanti Malika (literally 'peace women') is a network of women's organisations that strengthened women's involvement in peacemaking, empowered women economically and socially, and addressed the violence perpetrated by both the Maoists and the state security forces. The network brought together women from diverse political parties to demand that their voices were heard during the peace negotiations and processes.

Once the peace process formally began women were mostly sidelined from the 'formal' peace talks which were negotiated between the elite of the SPA and the Maoist leadership. The peace process in Nepal had several critical stages: the 2001 peace talks which collapsed; a second ceasefire which was agreed in January 2003 and talks that collapsed in August that year, ending a seven month truce; a unilateral ceasefire in September 2005 by the Maoists that went unreciprocated by the Government (then controlled by the King), further prompting the Maoists to negotiate with the political parties agitating against the monarchy and agreeing the November 'Twelve Point Agreement'.<sup>148</sup> They then formed an alliance against the monarchy and agreeing to a broad framework for

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146 For a chronology of key Nepalese events and history see British Broadcasting Corporation, Timeline: Nepal, updated 17 February 2011. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/1166516.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1166516.stm). Accessed February 25, 2011.

147 For a copy of the CPA see [www.unmin.org.np/downloads/keydocs/2006-11-29-peace\\_accord-MOFA.pdf](http://www.unmin.org.np/downloads/keydocs/2006-11-29-peace_accord-MOFA.pdf).

For a copy of the Interim Constitution see [www.unmin.org.np/downloads/keydocs/Interim\\_Constitution.Bilingual.UNDP.pdf](http://www.unmin.org.np/downloads/keydocs/Interim_Constitution.Bilingual.UNDP.pdf).

148 After a one-month extension of the unilateral Maoist ceasefire in December, they returned to arms, targeting the government (still controlled by the King).

an eventual peace process; and, finally in April 2006 another ceasefire with talks that held leading to the signing of the CPA in November. There were no women negotiators or representatives in any of these three stages, apart from the then Assistant Minister for Children and Social Welfare, Anuradha Koirala, who was limited to a note-taking role in the 2003 talks. Gendered concerns were not significant issues at either the 2001 or the 2003 round of talks.<sup>149</sup> Indeed, human rights issues in general were articulated by NGOs but did not become part of the agenda for formal talks until 2006. The mandate that one third of representatives on the Constituent Assembly (CA) and in district level Peace Committees must be women, were significant results of the many political talks held in 2006, bolstered by strong advocacy from women's groups.<sup>150</sup>

### **Box 8: A mediator's perspective**

Ambassador Günther Baechler, former Swiss Special Adviser for Peace Building in Nepal between 2005-2007

During the 2006 Nepal peace process, a group of 24 women were selected for training in Track One and One-and-a-Half negotiations and mediation, under the rubric of "Women to the Negotiation Table". Topics included how to negotiate effectively; bargaining; negotiation styles and approaches; the process of mediation; role-plays on mediation; strengthening the role of women within political parties and processes, and how to get to the negotiation table.

The participants also discussed the issues at stake in the peace talks, and the complicated nature of constitutional reform. They drafted a "Charter for Equality" which was endorsed by a national women's conference. The Charter is now part of the work of the Constituent Assembly. The Swiss Government sponsored a South Asian Conference on Violence against Women in Politics; they also supported workshops of women engaging with federalism and the reform of the Nepalese state. In seminars in Switzerland on federalism, the organisers ensured that there was about 50 per cent participation from women to articulate the importance of women's active inclusion. Now the Constituent Assembly is more than 30 per cent women.

Our approach as facilitators was to treat women as agents of change, and I can say without a doubt that our activities built the confidence of the women and made their advocacy and technical contributions more powerful, cogent and harder for male power holders to ignore.

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149 Communication between the Reecha Upadhyay and Bandana Rana, President of Saathi, Kathmandu, February 15, 2010. Saathi focuses on gender-based violence and was a significant actor in the development of the SCR 1325 NAP for Nepal.

150 Local Peace Committees Terms of Reference, p. 2, article 3.2 [www.peace.gov.np/uploads/Publication/LPC-ToR-Eng-%202006-10-20.pdf](http://www.peace.gov.np/uploads/Publication/LPC-ToR-Eng-%202006-10-20.pdf). Accessed February 18, 2010.



Efforts to open up more spaces for civil society, and women particularly, are further explained by Sharada Jnawali:

“... [a] track 1.5 process was initiated in 2005: the Nepal Transition To Peace Initiative (NTTP). The idea was to create a space for informal dialogue where the seven major political parties and civil society representatives could discuss their differences before making formal decisions. . . . [I]t was not understood as a settlement oriented negotiation process, but rather as a consultation that could generate new insights and be a source of technical knowledge and inspiration for the parties involved. It was a facilitation – rather than a mediation-oriented process. . . . The NTTP made a number of important contributions. . . . It also supported the creation of the Women Peace Building Network which was made up of 11 large associations, mostly with a development background, with widespread membership in the country. It attempted to work horizontally between tracks 1, 1.5 and 2 to build local capacity for peace.”<sup>151</sup>

## **Finally, seats for women at the Constituent Assembly. But voices too?**

In January 2007, following the signing of the CPA, an interim government was established by the SPA and the Maoists (formally known as the Communist Party of Nepal Maoists or CPN-M) to prepare for the CA elections. A 16-member Interim Constitution Drafting Committee was formed, which included four women. This committee included provisions to advance women's rights which were not previously protected such as granting citizenship rights to children through both maternal and paternal descent. The Interim Constitution (IC) reflects greater inclusion by ensuring the rights of women in employment, the rights of single mothers and widows and, most importantly, one-third representation of women in the Constituent Assembly and other state institutions. The advancement of women's rights under the IC and subsequently into the new constitution (currently being drafted and due in May 2011) is the result of two critical factors: the strength of the women's movement in Nepal and the rhetoric (and to some extent the implementation) of equality for women in the Maoist movement and PLA. The Maoist leadership have asserted the primacy of equality for women and demanded an end to the feudal and patriarchal structure of Nepali society. The Maoist government, on entering mainstream politics, continued to advocate for women's rights and social justice which led to the IC's inclusive provisions covering gender,

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151 Sjnawali, Sharada, “The Nepal Transition To Peace Initiative and the Women Peace Building Network: an effective way to include women?”, HD Centre Peacetalks blog post, 8 February (2011).

caste and the ethnic diversity of Nepal.<sup>152</sup> But what this means in practice remains to be seen. As stated by one observer, “*women’s rights have become another tool in the competition amongst the political parties, determined to ‘out do’ each other in the eyes of the international community.*”<sup>153</sup>

One crucial mandate of the interim government was to schedule the CA elections and to create the interim constitution. The CA elections in April 2008 were a major democratic milestone for the country. The IC’s commitment towards inclusivity assured that women, and particularly women from marginalised communities, entered the political space from which they had been traditionally excluded. For the first time in the country’s history, Dalit women were running for political office. The CA successfully elected 33 per cent women, representing a diverse range of Nepali women.<sup>154</sup> However, participation is only the first step. Bandana Rana noted that some elected women have been subject to remarks from their male counterparts such as “*You are only a quota representative: you are here to listen and learn, not to speak*”.<sup>155</sup> Despite the obstacles, women’s organisations like Didi Bahini worked with elected women CA members to build their capacity. Didi Bahini also worked with the Women’s Caucus in the CA and the Inter-Party Women’s Alliance. These two forums have been instrumental in bringing the diverse set of women together to work towards a common goal.<sup>156</sup> In fact, it is interesting to note here that the Nepali women’s movement, reflecting the country as a whole, is riven with challenges of class and ethnicity. However, the struggle for inclusion in the peace process and the election of women in the CA has provided it with a shared and cohesive objective which has enabled it largely to overcome, at least for a time, these differences.

The IC, the CA elections and the drafting of the new constitution were all important steps in the peace process in Nepal. But peace in Nepal is not yet fully realised. Nepali politics have been disrupted by the stepping down of elected Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal; the death of Girija Prasad Koirala (leader of the Nepal Congress Party and a significant figure in the brokering of

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152 Tamrakar, Tek, *Nepal Interim Constitution 2007 and New Constitution: Social Inclusion*, Nepal Dalitinfo, March 1, (2007) <http://nepal dalitinfo.net/2007/03/04/198/>. Accessed December 12, 2010.

153 Discussion between Cate Buchanan, HD Centre, and anonymous Nepali, Sydney, July 8, 2010.

154 Jagarn Nepal, *Women Empowerment Bulletin, Women in First Republic Government*, (2010). <http://jagarnnepal.org/userfiles/images/news/2010/Feb/we%205th%20issue.pdf>. Accessed December 12, 2010.

155 Presentation by Bandana Rana, at CSDN/EPLO meeting on Women’s Participation in Peace Processes, Brussels, November 23, 2010.

156 Conversation between Reecha Upadhyay and Saloni Singh, Executive Director of Didi Bahini, Kathmandu, May 15, 2010.



A woman shouts slogans at a civil protest, against the atrocities of the Maoist rebels, in front of the Nepali prime minister's residence in the capital October 12, 2006. Negotiators struggled to seal a last-minute peace deal between Nepal's Maoist rebels and the government on Thursday, hours before their leaders were due to resume talks. © Reuters/Gopal Chitrakar

the peace agreement); and the incomplete DDR and much-needed security sector reform processes. In addition to the political schisms in the central government, clashes between regional and ethnic political groups continue in many parts of the country. As Nepal struggles to consolidate peace, issues of justice, reparation and reconciliation (especially for survivors of gender-based violence from both the state security forces and the PLA) security sector reform will be critical to ensure an inclusive democracy.

## **UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in Nepal**

The efforts of women peacemakers in Nepal, and the use of SCR 1325, remained on the margins of the formal processes until the formation of the new government in 2006. For example, in 2006 the Institute of *Human Rights Communication Nepal* developed campaigns like the Community Women Peace Volunteers in five districts to advance SCR 1325 with activities such as monitoring for gender-based violence in cantonment areas. However, many initiatives were small in scale, operating mostly at the policy level (led by a coalition of Kathmandu-based NGOs



If not for the advocacy space provided by the mandate of 1325, given the patriarchal structure and the lack of political will, things in Nepal would not be happening as quickly as they are. 1325 has enabled a wider set of conversations to occur at the highest level of policy making.”

Bandana Rana, 2010

and the UN agencies) without any national or local co-ordination mechanisms.

Nepal has, however, already upheld one important element of SCR 1325, namely the inclusion of women in parliament and its decision-making process. By ensuring at least 33 per cent of the CA consists of women, Nepal has taken a remarkable step towards integrating gender equality and women’s needs into the country’s new constitution. How this translates into gains for women’s rights remains to be seen, given that not all women parliamentarians are knowledgeable about gender issues or interested in advancing them – just as most men do not see it as within their area of interest.

International norms such as SCR 1325 are likely to play a more decisive mobilising role in the post-peace accord era: *“The fact that it is an international instrument has also served to raise the profile of these demands, which had previously been widely ignored.”*<sup>157</sup> In October 2010, the SCR 1325 High Level Steering Committee led by the Deputy Prime Minister endorsed the Nepal 1325 and 1820 National Action Plan, the result of a two year process started in 2008 by UN agencies and members of the Peace Support Working Group (PSWG).<sup>158</sup> As of February 2011, the government has adopted the plan, making Nepal the first country in South Asia to do so. By developing the NAP, Nepal has helped create new spaces for dialogue and a tool for the government to realise its promise towards a gender-balanced approach to building peace in the country. Bandana Rana, a member of the NAP drafting committee has reflected: *“If not for the advocacy space provided by the mandate of 1325, given the patriarchal structure and the lack of political will, things in Nepal would not be happening*

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157 Ariño, María Villellas, (2008), p. 11.

158 PSWG is a consortium of UN agencies, bilateral and multilateral donors working for the implementation of SCR 1325 in Nepal since 2007.

as quickly as they are. 1325 has enabled a wider set of conversations to occur at the highest level of policy making.”<sup>159</sup>

## Looking forward

The CPA and constitution-drafting process in Nepal are historic steps towards an inclusive democratic republic. But there are serious challenges for the peace process including the integration of the PLA members remaining in cantonment into the national army, a significant step in the peace process.<sup>160</sup> This is a particular concern for women combatants and supporters who have faced considerable stigma, quite distinct from that of their male counterparts, when returning back to their communities and are less likely to participate in verification processes. They also have particular needs in terms of their access to, for example, employment opportunities and social services. Therefore it is critical that the new mechanisms articulated in the IC and the NAP are implemented to ensure adequate considerations are given to gender, caste and ethnic diversity in the DDR and security system reform processes. Integrated women PLA members should be given equal opportunities to train to enter the nation’s security sector at the decision-making levels which requires dedicated technical support and corresponding funding resources. Processes of reconciliation for women who experienced gender-based violence must be instituted prior to re-integration and special attention must be paid to ensure women who have been identified as combatants are not at risk of violence in their communities.

The other equally difficult challenge for Nepali women is to ensure that the gains in representation also translate into creating spaces for grassroots women entering the political space for the first time. They must have adequate training to meaningfully participate in the traditionally patriarchal political system. It is therefore crucial that organisations such as Didi Bahini and Jagaran Nepal continue their efforts to train and work closely with CA members to push for capacity-building, gender equality and inclusive democratic institutional structures as the country moves forward.

Along with the challenges there are also many opportunities as Nepal moves forward. The opportunities for women to enter the political realm will help move gender equality forward in the local and national agendas. Adequate

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159 Conversation between Cate Buchanan, HD Centre and Bandana Rana in Kathmandu, July 15, 2010.

160 Guruswamy, Menaka, “Integration of the Army and the New Constitutionalism in Nepal”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, February 27, 2010.

training for women to enter politics and support structures for female politicians will be crucial to ensure women are making meaningful contributions to the country's peacebuilding process. The high level of international interest and enthusiasm around the NAP must be optimised and converted into hard political and fiscal currency by 1325 advocates inside and outside Nepal to make a constructive reality of its implementation.

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## 9. Suggestions

Based on the actual experiences described above by peace process participants including mediators, facilitators, conflict parties, observers and analysts, the HD Centre offers some strategic and practical suggestions for how to improve peace process results through the increased participation of women and greater inclusion of gendered perspectives and priorities.

### **Gender analysis is a technical skill – include it as such**

Mediators bring in experts on issues including power-sharing, autonomy arrangements, security and violence reduction and should do so consistently for gender expertise. A gender expert would ideally be brought in as early as possible and work at all levels of the peace process. Experts can advise, support and provide or arrange training as needed for all involved including third parties and conflict parties. They can look not only at the substance of the conflict and peace agreement but also at the process and its products (agendas, position papers, draft agreements and other significant documents). Women who are experts in other areas (constitutional reform, security, etc) should also be actively sought. Gender experts can specifically provide analysis and advice on how to make improvements where needed and weave a gendered approach into the fabric of the final agreement and implementation strategies – to do so, they need to have access to the full range of discussions and agreements under consideration (important in the cases of confidential talks). Such experts can also assist mediators and facilitators to build in broader and deeper consultations with women/women's groups in the conflict-afflicted area. To build links with local civil society, a local consultant rather than an international one is likely to be the most effective choice. An international adviser could also be recruited to work in concert with the local expert.

## **Briefings on gender**

Conflict parties and third party actors frequently solicit briefings on a range of themes at various stages of peace processes. Gender can be considered both as a stand-alone theme as well as an issue to incorporate across other briefings, for example, gender concerns relating to land redistribution and tenure. Such briefings can include a number of viewpoints from women and men on gender issues in the conflict setting(s) in order to better appreciate the history and nature of gender relations in the area, as well as the contemporary challenges and aspirations that can be realised in various clauses of peace agreements and implementation strategies.

## **Commission or request papers**

Other ways to solicit input on gender concerns include commissioning technical input and position papers. Relevant technical input into peace processes is invaluable. Peace process facilitators should contact and support women's organisations to input into the process; for example through papers on the status of women, their priorities, gender concerns, or specific topics such as security system reform, employment, protection and justice. As the process unfolds, women's groups and/or gender experts can be asked to comment on all aspects of the process and the emerging agreement(s), not just the sections deemed to be about women, for example social welfare, anything to do with children or war survivors. By presenting issues critical to building peace from the point of view of different groups, including women, this will help demystify the idea of gender analysis and gendered perspectives for all peace process actors (see Annex 2, Resources for conflict parties and mediators, and Annex 3, Pointers for mediation teams).

## **Map the structures in the conflict resolution process and have them analysed by a gender expert**

As part of conflict mapping, ensure that a focus on gender is coherently included. This is also an opportunity to look for champions on important issues and to get, and keep, their support to push on women's rights and holistic approaches to gender. Ensure any units or working groups that are set up to work on women's rights or gender issues have titles and are set up with institutional relationships that confer power and not marginalisation (linking them to a PM's office for example). In addition, make sure they have proper financial and organisational support to be effective (see Annex 2, Resources for conflict parties and mediators, and Annex 3, Pointers for mediation teams).



## **Reference international law on women's rights in peace agreements to build credibility, leverage and confidence**

A growing and consistent set of examples show that important legal instruments and norms on women's rights such as the Beijing Platform of Action, SCR 1325 and CEDAW help women validate their claims, argue for greater participation and lay the foundations for long term strengthening of women's rights. Generic references to human rights norms are not enough as these are typically not specific enough to realise progress for women's rights. Mediators and conflict parties can be instrumental in ensuring robust inclusion of international law and treaties in peace agreements and implementation strategies (see Annex 1, Key international norms).

## **Create and support safe spaces for women to prepare for participation**

Women need secure spaces where they can meet and organise themselves before peace talks begin (and post-agreement to discuss implementation strategies). Information needs to be shared and common agendas identified, especially when bridging the divide between different sides of the conflict. A series of meetings can enable women to develop positions, ideas and strategies. Ideally, the women themselves would be asked how they would like to organise such a process. Identifying and securing the services of impartial conveners is also important to enable a range of women to participate. Such gatherings could also include, or be linked to, a '1325 support group' which can monitor and support the process. The group(s) can be offered organisational support (for example, how to prepare agendas and position papers) as participants may not already have these skills. A means of communication should also be developed to enable dialogue with the conflict parties as well as briefings for mediators, facilitators and donors.

## **Find ways to include a critical mass of women, not just a single token one**

It takes a determined woman, or indeed man, to successfully push for women's rights when she or he is the only one doing so. HD posits that a critical mass of both women and men in mediation and negotiation teams are necessary to positively shift the dynamics in a mediation process – both for the inclusion of gender issues, as well as for support to more sustainable peace agreements. The pattern of international practice in this area would suggest that striving for 40 per cent women, 40 per cent men, and 20 per cent undefined (40/40/20

approach), is required for this critical mass to be achieved. This can be done through quotas or by framing formal agreements which determine the gender-balance of delegations. Particular sensitivity is required in conflicts with ethnic and/or social class tensions. While this can be sensitive, quotas are a proven way to pry open spaces that can be filled by women. They can be designed and communicated as a first step only and be made time-bound and linked to transitional arrangements to help manage negative reactions. History suggests that when male leaders are pressed into including women, they often choose low ranking or weaker individuals. Thus, the expertise and experience of women should be considered in the same way that men are selected to participate in negotiating panels: on merit, representativeness and capacity. Mediation teams, building on research already in place from their mapping, will be able to offer constructive suggestions on capable candidates to consider.

### **Allow women's voices in, even when they themselves are not present**

In contexts where harshly gender-stereotyped traditions and cultures make women's presence incredibly difficult (though peace process facilitators should be careful not to use this as an excuse for not going as far as they can), the emphasis may need to shift to finding other ways in which women's voices can be heard in the negotiations. This could mean finding and supporting male members of the negotiating teams willing to raise women's rights and gender concerns; creating a separate group (through the kinds of consultations mentioned below) that meets in parallel where women can be informed of, and are able to discuss, the topics brought up in the official peace talks. They can also provide specific inputs as suggested below. Even if it is hard for such groups to meet and influence their own 'representatives' (conflict parties) they can meet with the international community which will build their credibility and their confidence. All these measures require minimal funding and expert support to be effective.

### **Ensure the included few can carry the voices of many**

Map the constituencies of the female representative(s) under consideration for the peace talks to understand who they represent (or could represent) from the communities outside. This means undertaking a proper consultation, ideally involving local organisations/networks, to identify well supported representatives. This will be time consuming but is an investment worth making. The same networks should be used (not only by female representatives) to identify the needs and concerns of the women on the ground so they can be properly included in

discussions. Where ethnic and class division are conflict drivers (or simply contextual concerns) nuanced consideration of which women are identified as representatives will be a vital part of a mediation team's work.

### **Make practical arrangements which support women's participation**

In order to ensure women's participation, practical obstructions need to be identified and removed before the formal negotiations. This could include mediators and facilitators exploring, as much as practically possible, alternative childcare such as paying for extended family to come to peace talk venues so small children are nearby; paying for appropriate and quality childcare; covering transport/subsistence costs; ensuring facilities are appropriate (e.g. women's toilets and prayer spaces); supporting dependents left behind; as well as ensuring protection and security during travel and participation. Mediators should seek female participant's views regularly during the process regarding whether they are able to dedicate themselves appropriately to the process or whether more could be done to support them. Ideally this aspect could be planned and funding sought for this as part of seeking grants for peace process support; it will not be expensive but could make a critical difference. These costs should be built into the overall budget, not seen as an optional extra. Similarly ensuring women are not overlooked in terms of involvement in the peace implementation stage due to these technical issues is equally critical (see Annex 3 Pointers for mediation teams).

### **Peacemaking community to lead by example**

Attempts by the international community to push for a gender-sensitive peace process will only be more effective if the international delegation *itself* has a sufficient number of women as well as women leaders, and pays detailed attention to gender concerns across the board, including seeking out the technical skills needed. More effort is needed to continuously identify and appoint women to fill positions in delegations including mediation roles. The 40/40/20 approach and standard should be applied equally in this area.

### **Donor action**

Many of the suggestions made above need time and some imagination but all will require some resources. Donors need to show they are making real strides in implementing international norms but often they need help and good ideas for funding this work. Grant proposals for peace process support can include sections

on the implementation of norms with activities such as those suggested above. Donors can also be canvassed for recommendations for, for example, good gender experts with specific technical expertise. Donors can also support and participate in SCR 1325 support groups for specific processes as well as fund women's participation. In addition, they can contribute to other areas including helping to publish and disseminate papers as well as helping with the development and, even more importantly, the implementation of National Action Plans for SCR 1325. Donors are also able to request certain criteria be met related to gender including insisting on gender mapping; gender advisers being appointed; attention to logistical issues for women's participation; training within mediation teams and conflict parties as well for women's networks on peace processes.

## Document experiences

A commitment to publishing information and analysis on efforts in this area is crucial for sharing ideas, learning lessons and forging networks. Various forms are possible including: commissioning short opinion pieces from those directly involved in peace processes, undertaking a Q&A with significant people and publishing articles. Getting more information into the public domain also makes the mediation sector more transparent. Drawing upon the 2010 indicators, developed by the UN Secretary General on women, peace and security matters, in documenting activities is one way to build information for better policy and practice in this area (see Annex 1, Key international norms).

## Annex 1

### Key international norms

#### Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (1979)

[www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/index.htm](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/index.htm) and  
[www.unwomen.org/about-us/guiding-documents/](http://www.unwomen.org/about-us/guiding-documents/)

Often referred to as the international bill of rights for women, this Convention or CEDAW comprises a single, comprehensive and internationally binding instrument to eliminate discrimination against women. Developed by the UN Commission on the Status of Women, the Convention addresses the advancement of women, describes the meaning of equality and sets forth guidelines on how to achieve it. It also provides an agenda for action as those countries that ratify it agree to take concrete steps to improve the status of women and end discrimination and violence against women. It focuses on three main areas: civil rights and the legal status of women, reproductive rights and cultural factors influencing gender relations. CEDAW is the only human rights treaty which affirms the reproductive rights of women and targets culture and tradition as influential forces shaping gender roles and family relations. It affirms women's rights to acquire, change or retain their nationality and the nationality of their children. States parties also agree to take appropriate measures against all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of women. Currently 186 states are party to the Convention.

#### Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)

[www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/index.html](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/index.html)  
[www.unwomen.org/about-us/guiding-documents/](http://www.unwomen.org/about-us/guiding-documents/)

This document is known as the most comprehensive global policy framework to achieve the goals of gender equality, development and peace. Adopted by governments at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, this document sets forth governments' commitments to enhance women's rights. The aim of the conference was to assess progress since the Nairobi World Conference on Women in 1985 and to adopt a platform for action, concentrating on significant issues identified as obstacles to the advancement of women in the world.

It identified 12 significant issues: poverty; education and training; health; violence against women; armed conflict; economy; power and decision-making; institutional mechanisms; human rights; media; environment; and girls.

The Platform for Action has been reviewed under the auspices of the Commission on the Status of Women at 5 year intervals. In addition to below, summaries of these processes and their outcomes can be accessed at [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/index.html](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/index.html)

### **Beijing +5 review (2000)**

In addition to further action on the 12 critical areas of concern the +5 review in 2000 addressed areas which had gained importance since the Beijing Conference. Emphasis was placed on women's access to decision-making particularly in peacekeeping processes; gender-sensitive approaches to HIV/AIDS and humanitarian crises; changing patterns of migratory flows; new technologies; violence against women, including trafficking and in armed conflict; and the realisation of women's full enjoyment of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights. Actions also addressed the challenges presented by globalisation to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. See [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/followup/beijing+5.htm](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/followup/beijing+5.htm)

### **Beijing +10 review (2005)**

As with the +5 review, the +10 review showed progress, but of a patchy nature, and emphasised some critical areas for attention including poverty reduction; women in decision-making roles in the public and private sectors; employment inequality; and unequal access to social and economic resources. In addition the review considered how efforts to meet Millennium Development Goal 3 (see below) on the promotion and empowerment of women could be used to channel and focus efforts to meet the commitments of the Platform for Action.

The review highlighted some cross cutting themes for more progress on women's rights:

- The need to improve the availability, quality and use of sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics.
- The importance of increased efforts to involve of men and boys.
- The potential for effective collaboration between governments and women's organisations and activists.

The need to recognise and act on the specific needs of particular groups of women.

See [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/beijingat10/](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/beijingat10/)

## Beijing +15 review (2010)

Whilst registering significant progress in education and the development of gender-sensitive legislation and policies, the +15 review in 2010 noted that progress remained uneven, and disparities (for example, in relation to location, economic status, ethnicity, age and disability) remain factor hampering a clearer picture of obstacles and impediments both at regional and global level.

The review again highlighted cross-cutting themes in need of action to advance women's rights:

- Under representation of women in decision-making positions in all sectors.
- Violence against women.
- The limited involvement of men and boys.
- Women's disproportionate domestic and care burden.
- Persistent prevalence of negative gender stereotyping.

It also emphasised the need to move beyond policy and legislation to implementation, and highlighted the critical role of political will and leadership.

See [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing15/outcomes.html](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing15/outcomes.html) and [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing15/media/Beijing15\\_Backgrounder\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing15/media/Beijing15_Backgrounder_FINAL.pdf)

## United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000)

[www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1325%282000%29](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1325%282000%29)

SCR 1325 was adopted in 2000 by the UN Security Council to set out policy objectives relating to the impact of violent conflict and post-war recovery on women and girls. It calls on all actors (state and non-state) involved in violent conflict and its resolution to take into account a range of issues: measures to end gender-based violence and impunity for perpetrators of gender and sexual violence; the inclusion of women in decision-making related to peacebuilding; as well as integrating gender perspectives in peacekeeping missions. It also outlines the importance of training on gender and women's rights among military observers, police, human rights and humanitarian personnel. It particularly calls for peace negotiations to include women at all levels of decision-making.

## United Nations Security Council Resolution 1820 (2008)

[www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1820%282008%29](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1820%282008%29)

SCR 1820 urges UN Member States to recognise the use of sexual violence as a 'tool' of war and to prosecute perpetrators of such violence during armed conflict, treating them as war crimes and crimes against humanity. It also stresses

the need to exclude sexual violence crimes from amnesty provisions in peace agreements and any peacebuilding measures which follow from those agreements. It also urges the UN to train military and humanitarian personnel to prevent, recognise and respond to sexual violence against civilians. States are called upon to strengthen their capacities, including in health and other sectors, to prevent and respond to sexual violence in conflict situations.

### **United Nations Security Council Resolution 1888 (2009)**

**[www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1888%282009%29](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1888%282009%29)**

SCR 1888 urges the Secretary General to appoint a Special Rapporteur to provide leadership, co-ordination and advocacy to implement SCR 1325 and 1820 and to work through the existing inter-agency initiative, the 'United Nations Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict'. This was advanced in February 2010 with the appointment of Margot Wallström as the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. The resolution urges states to pursue legal and judicial reform to bring perpetrators of sexual violence to account and facilitate appropriate redress by victims and survivors. Women's protection advisers are called for among the UN cohort of gender advisers and within human rights protection units. The UN is called upon to strengthen existing mechanisms for monitoring, and reporting on, the protection of women and children from sexual and gender-based violence.

### **Security Council Resolution 1889 (2009)**

**[www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1889%282009%29](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1889%282009%29)**

SCR 1889 aims to strengthen the implementation and monitoring of SCR 1325. It reiterates its mandate for increasing women's participation and reinforces calls for mainstreaming gender perspectives in all decision-making processes, especially in the early stages of post-war peacebuilding. In particular, SCR 1889 calls for the development of indicators and reporting, increasing women's participation, and strengthening law enforcement and ending impunity.

### **Security Council Resolution 1960 (2010)**

**[www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1960%282010%29](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1960%282010%29)**

This resolution was passed at the tenth anniversary of SCR 1325 because of Security Council concern on the slow progress on the issue of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict, in particular against women and children. Among



many re-affirmations of points in previous resolutions, it also mandated the creation of a monitoring and reporting mechanism for sexual violence during conflict which compiles data and lists of perpetrators.<sup>161</sup>

## Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 3

[www.undp.org/mdg/goal3.shtml](http://www.undp.org/mdg/goal3.shtml)

MDG 3 is the third of the eight Millennium Development Goals adopted by world leaders in the year 2000 to be achieved by 2015. The MDGs provide concrete, numerical benchmarks for tackling extreme poverty in its many dimensions. The MDGs also provide a framework for the entire international community to work together towards a common end – making sure that human development reaches everyone, everywhere. The eight MDGs break down into 21 quantifiable targets that are measured by 60 indicators.

MDG 3 seeks to promote gender equality and empower women, with a specific target to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015. The indicators it uses are:

- Ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education.
- Share of women in waged employment in the non-agricultural sector.
- Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments.

To review progress, see [www.undp.org/mdg/progress.shtml](http://www.undp.org/mdg/progress.shtml)

## UN Indicators on women, peace and security (2010)

[www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/Indicators/sg\\_report\\_on\\_1889-op17.pdf](http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/Indicators/sg_report_on_1889-op17.pdf)

In 2010 the Secretary General released a set of 26 indicators covering a range of scenarios and issues relating to women, gender, peace and security. Using these indicators to set and measure progress is one way to contribute to building information and evidence for future policymaking and operational activities.

Background and other documents on these indicators can be found at [www.peacewomen.org/security\\_council\\_monitor/indicators](http://www.peacewomen.org/security_council_monitor/indicators)

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161 There was significant outcry from civil society that this resolution had been passed without adequate consultation with women, that it still treats women only as victims and does not recognise the roles their agency and increased participation can, and could, play in reducing their vulnerability to this phenomenon. See, Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, "Letter: UNSCR 1960 and The Need for Focus on Full Implementation of UNSCR 1325 Open Letter to Member States of the Security Council, Re: Res 1960 (Appeals & Demonstrations)", 7 January, (2011), [www.peacewomen.org/portal\\_initiative\\_initiative.php?id=829](http://www.peacewomen.org/portal_initiative_initiative.php?id=829). Accessed January 25, 2011.

## Annex 2

### Resources for conflict parties and mediators

#### Some leading websites on women's rights, gender and peacemaking

- UN Women: [www.unwomen.org/](http://www.unwomen.org/) - in particular on Peace and Security: [www.unwomen.org/focus-areas/?show=Peace\\_and\\_Security](http://www.unwomen.org/focus-areas/?show=Peace_and_Security)
- WomenWarPeace: [www.womenwarpeace.org](http://www.womenwarpeace.org)
- UN: provides information and resources on gender equality and the empowerment of women [www.un.org/womenwatch](http://www.un.org/womenwatch)
- UN Peacemaker: an online mediation support tool for international peacemaking professionals and an extensive databank of modern peace agreements <http://peacemaker.unlb.org/index1.php>
- The NGO Working Group on Women Peace and Security [www.womenpeacesecurity.org/](http://www.womenpeacesecurity.org/)
- Siyanda is an online database of gender and development materials from around the world. It is also an interactive space where practitioners can share ideas, experiences and resources [www.siyanda.org](http://www.siyanda.org)
- WISCOMP: Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace has a strong focus on South Asian peace processes [www.wiscomp.org/](http://www.wiscomp.org/)
- Peace Women: a project of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) which monitors the UN Security Council, the UN system, and provides a hub of information-sharing on women, peace and security [www.peacewomen.org](http://www.peacewomen.org)
- Institute for Inclusive Security: takes an active role on research and documentation, partnerships, and training. [www.inclusivesecurity.org](http://www.inclusivesecurity.org)
- Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice: [www.sandiego.edu/peacestudies/ipj/](http://www.sandiego.edu/peacestudies/ipj/) in particular the Women Peace Makers Program [www.sandiego.edu/peacestudies/ipj/programs/women\\_peace\\_makers/index.php](http://www.sandiego.edu/peacestudies/ipj/programs/women_peace_makers/index.php)

- FEMLINK Pacific: has a strong focus on peace processes in the Pacific [www.femlinkpacific.org.fj](http://www.femlinkpacific.org.fj)
- International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) provides resources and networking on women's participation in peace, justice and reconciliation efforts [www.icanpeacework.org](http://www.icanpeacework.org)
- United States Institute for Peace Centers for Innovation, Gender and Peacebuilding initiative [www.usip.org/programs/centers/gender-and-peacebuilding-initiative](http://www.usip.org/programs/centers/gender-and-peacebuilding-initiative)
- Women in International Security: <http://wiis.georgetown.edu/>
- Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue: [www.hdcentre.org/projects/gender-mediation](http://www.hdcentre.org/projects/gender-mediation)

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## Annex 3

### Pointers for mediation teams

Understanding the ways in which peace processes should include and reflect gender perspectives is a baseline requirement for the peacemaking community. These simple pointers have been formulated with this in mind and represent the core elements that should be considered in briefings, mapping, planning and consultation. The pointers have not been formulated as questions, rather as issues and themes that should be considered. They are not comprehensive, but offer a starting point for anyone involved in a mediation process to use. The 2010 UN Indicators on women, peace and security should also be drawn upon.

#### Status of women

- Level of literacy among men and women, girls and boys.
- Educational attainment levels amongst men and women, girls and boys.
- Status of maternal health.
- Number of women in national and state level parliaments, noting the decision-making levels women have reached.
- Number of women in the national cabinet or inner ministry.
- Level and type of property ownership by women; status of property law with regards to women (especially with regard to, for example widows/single headed households, other types of households which may have resulted from the conflict, inheritance laws)
- Roles of women associated with significant powerful male actors (for example, the wife of a president).
- Roles of women and girls in significant economic sectors.
- Status of matrimonial law and associated rights.
- Status of civil society generally (open/closed, mature/developing/nascent).

- Status of women's movement/civil society groups (see below on women's groups).

## Violence against women (VAW)

- Incidence and prevalence of VAW and leading forms, specifically including war/conflict related sexual violence.
- Overview of the laws and policies in place.
- Scope of sexual violence services in conflict areas.
- Measures possible, or in place, for prosecution for sexual violence (for example mobile forensic evidence collection teams, mobile courts).

## Conflict impacts

- Map the different impacts of the conflict on women and men, girls and boys.
- Disaggregate (or request) data by sex (for example, population, conflict deaths, displacement, involvement in armed forces/rebel groups/political parties, roles in significant economic sectors).
- Identify 'gains' women may have accrued due to the conflict not only 'losses' (for example, greater freedom, empowerment, economic or other forms of control).

## Fighting forces and the security sector

- Numbers of men and women in armed groups, armies, militia and other armed entities.
- Types of roles women (and girls) play in fighting forces: including as combatants, messengers, support crews and 'camp followers'.
- Incidence and prevalence of forced recruitment of women and girls.
- Level and types of leadership positions women hold (formal and informal).
- Incidence and prevalence of sexual violence by fighting forces towards civilians and members of fighting forces.
- Incidence and prevalence of sexual exploitation by peacekeepers.
- Kinds of issues women involved in any of the groups above may face after demobilisation and as part of reintegration.
- Numbers and roles of women in the police service, intelligence service, military, judiciary and the prison service.

## Ceasefires

- The inclusion of gender-specific clauses in past ceasefire agreement(s) including, but not limited to, cessation of all forms of sexual violence; the forced recruitment or involvement of boys and girls in fighting forces; and women's involvement in monitoring processes.
- Monitoring mechanisms in previous ceasefires and how this can be improved on in future agreements, particularly with regard to gender-based violence.
- Capacity for training of ceasefire monitoring teams on monitoring and preventing gender and sexual violence.
- Number of women on ceasefire monitoring teams.

## Peace negotiations

- Possibility to resource conflict parties with information packs on relevant norms and standards (see see Annex 2, Resources for conflict parties and mediators).
- Roles women have (and have had) in the peace talks.
- Ways in which women can be more included utilising the approach and standard of having representation/inclusion of 40 per cent women, 40 per cent men and 20 per cent undefined (the 40/40/20 approach).
- Feasibility of advocating for a women's representative/s to be included as a thematic participant in the peace talks.
- Feasibility of setting a quota for women's participation.
- Ability of the talks to conduct consultations with women's representatives more generally.
- Ways in which women's views and rights are being understood and included in discussions on issues such as power-sharing, resource management, land tenure, DDR, security/violence reduction, justice and accountability (among other issues).
- The possibility of logistical support to enable women to be at the negotiations (for example, transport, security, childcare and appropriate facilities).

## Peace agreements

- Feasibility of framing the agreement with a reference to international norms (Annex 1, Key international norms).



- The inclusion of gender-specific clauses and language in previous peace agreements.
- Monitoring mechanisms in previous agreements and how these can be improved on in future agreements, particularly with regard to women's rights and gender-specific policies.
- Review of agreement language for gender sensitivity.
- Types of implementation mechanisms including information on the sustainability (funding, human resources), timeframes, mandates, review processes and accountability.
- Gender parity of implementation committees, commissions working groups.

### **Mediation team(s)**

- Approach of team leader to gender issues.
- Gender mix of mediation team(s).
- Possibilities to improve the gender mix utilising the 40/40/20 approach and standard.
- Appointment of a gender adviser/expert.
- Mentoring strategies to build expertise on gender within the team as well to increase the seniority of women in the team.
- Training needs of mediation team.
- Regular review of the mediation team's efforts and goals on gender (for example, an overview review every quarter and a detailed review every 6-12 months).

### **Conflict parties panels/teams**

- Gender mix of conflict parties panels/teams.
- Possibilities to improve gender mix utilising the 40/40/20 approach and standard.
- Opportunities for increasing the numbers of women, including resources available to do so.
- Opportunities and support for male panel/team members to raise women's rights and gender issues.
- Ways/methods for conflict parties, mediators and other facilitators to communicate with women's groups and networks.

## Support for international norms

- Existence of a 'Groups of Friends' for the peace process; focus on gender and involvement of women in that process.
- National signature and ratification of international treaties and standards related to women's rights (see Annex 1, Key international norms).
- Signature and ratification of relevant regional agreements.
- Implementation strategies and/or progress in advancing treaties and norms at the national and regional level.

## Women's organisations and networks

- Types of women's groups and networks.
- Outreach to women's groups and networks.
- Links between women's groups and the representatives/delegates at the peace talks.
- Level and capacity of women that can be involved in the peace process.

## Information

- Information or analysis that needs to be developed.
- Information that can be made public on gender issues in the peace process.
- Feasibility of conducting public events (for example, forums and briefings) on gender, women's rights and the peace process.