

Naga Women Making a Difference:
Peace Building in Northeastern India

By Rita Manchanda

Women Waging Peace Policy Commission

Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, Series Editor

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PROJECT BACKGROUND

Wars and internal conflicts do not end simply with the signing of peace agreements. To avoid a resurgence of violence, it is necessary to develop and support measures for strengthening the governance, security, justice, and socioeconomic capacities of a state. This is a complex task in any society, but daunting in post-conflict situations. While the international community can provide assistance and valuable resources, the local population, which has no “exit strategy,” has the greatest commitment to building sustainable peace. It is therefore essential to draw on the assets, experiences, and dedication at the local level and among all sectors of society. One sector often overlooked and underestimated is women. In most post-conflict societies women are more than 50 percent of the population and are actively engaged in peace building while addressing the basic survival needs of their families and communities. Yet they are often portrayed as passive victims, and little regard is given to their actual and potential roles in fostering security.

In October 2000, for the first time in its history, the United Nations Security Council acknowledged that women have a key role in promoting international stability by passing Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security. It called on all parties to ensure women’s participation in peace processes, from the prevention of conflict to negotiations and postwar reconstruction. The Women Waging Peace Policy Commission was established to examine peace processes with a particular focus on the contributions of women. *Naga Women Making a Difference: Peace Building in Northeastern India* chronicles the innovative approaches of Naga women who mediate among armed actors and mobilize for peace and reconciliation across conflict divides. This report documents the activities of Naga women to sustain the ceasefire, strengthen the formal peace process, and encourage the pursuit of long-term stability in northeastern India.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Key Findings

1. Using a variety of approaches, Naga women capitalize on cultural and tribal traditions of women's peace activism to play a critical role in the Indo-Naga peace process. Parties to the conflict—including Naga rebel leaders—publicly recognize the value of women's contributions to peace in the region.
2. Naga women informally negotiate with Indian security forces, underground armed opposition forces, and a variety of tribal factions and groups to protect their families and communities.
3. Conducting inter-community and inter-tribal events and ceremonies, Naga women cross conflict divides to promote peace and reconciliation, and are routinely relied on as interlocutors, mediators, and facilitators.
4. Naga women sustain an annual ceasefire by mediating between fighting factions to expand talks to include other actors, promoting dialogue designed to overcome obstacles in negotiations, and encouraging various tribes and neighboring states and communities to support peace in the region.
5. The activities of Naga women—and civil society as a whole—have transformed a stagnant peace process with little support into a broad-based popular movement that compels parties to renew the annual ceasefire and continue the search for a sustainable, nonviolent solution.

Recommendations

The **international community** should:

- support formal talks to end the decades-long conflict in northeastern India;
- facilitate a dialogue among civil society organizations, including women, from diverse regional, ethnic, and tribal backgrounds to build trust and a common platform for peace;
- encourage an inclusive process that recognizes the contributions of civil society, and women in particular, to bring stability to the region;
- build upon the role of women as traditional peacemakers in Naga society to help resolve the conflict; and
- provide women's organizations with technical and financial resources to maximize the impact of their initiatives and their access to all major actors.

The **parties to the conflict** should:

- end the culture of impunity and militarization by:
 - acknowledging the impact of the ongoing conflict on Naga society;
 - penalizing violators of human rights, particularly violence against women; and
 - instituting a process of justice and accountability.
- strengthen the efforts and initiatives of civil society, and women in particular, to bring peace to the region; and
- fully include women in official entities, as mandated by United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), beginning with formal participation in the ceasefire monitoring mechanism.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

In northeastern India, the 40 tribes of the Naga Hills challenged post-colonial India's political control 50 years ago, asserting themselves as an independent people and claiming the right to self determination. India created the formal state of Nagaland in 1963, currently inhabited by 1.2 million non-Naga and Naga people, who are spread across several states in the northeastern region.¹ The strategies of the national government, including military subjugation and "divide and rule," failed to end the Nagas' armed independence movement. The Nagas believe they are a distinct people with a unique history, not part of the political or cultural ethos of India. The struggle continues, and parties to the conflict—various armed subgroups of Naga peoples, the Government of India, the Indian state of Nagaland, and border states and tribes—have failed to negotiate a permanent peace. A ceasefire signed with the dominant armed group, the Isaak-Muivah faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim, has been renewed annually since 1997 (most recently in July 2004), while a separate ceasefire agreement with a smaller armed faction was put into place in 2001. Nonetheless, violence still occurs, negotiation is sporadic, and resolution of the conflict is not imminent.

Naga civil society, including prominent women's organizations, has built a broad-based peace constituency that has allowed the ceasefire to survive eight difficult years and three administrations in India's capital, New Delhi. Indeed, in 1997 when the ceasefire was announced, there was limited support for pursuing peace as long as the various Naga factions remained divided. However, today those parties would likely encounter widespread popular resistance if they were to consider abandoning the peace process.

As an extension of the traditional role of Naga women as peacemakers, the Naga Mothers' Association (NMA) and the Naga Women's Union of Manipur (NWUM) have worked together to negotiate informally with state and non-state actors to protect their communities, mobilize for reconciliation, sustain the ceasefire, broaden the official talks to include other actors, and forge a more inclusive process. Top leaders of the armed groups recognize women to be significant resources for stabilization.

The Conflict

By the early decades of the twentieth century, as the Indian national movement gathered momentum and discussions took place regarding the transfer of British colonial power to Indians, the Nagas made it clear to the British that they did not want to be included in the new Indian territory but instead wished to create an autonomous Naga state. On August 14, 1947, the Naga National Council (NNC), composed of members from various local Naga tribal councils, declared independence from the new Indian government. Leaders of the Indian state condemned the Naga demand for autonomy as anti-national, leading to the transformation of the Naga quest for self-rule into an armed struggle for "nothing short of sovereignty."²

In the 1950s, as the Indian government pursued both diplomatic and military strategies to end the Nagas' demands for independence, some elements of the NNC established an underground Naga government and an armed movement that included men and women. Armed confrontations between underground Nagas and the Indian government soon began. Indian troops, outnumbering Nagas ten to one,³ saturated Nagaland and were armed with extraordinary authority as a result of legislation such as the Armed Forces Special Powers Act of 1958. The ongoing conflict has militarized and brutalized Naga society. Human rights abuses, including the murder of civilians and sexual violence against women, occur with impunity.

In 1980, three well-known underground leaders—Th Muivah, Isaak Chishi Swu, and S.S. Khaplang—split from the NNC to form the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN). Inter-factional rivalry among the three leaders became increasingly violent. In 1988, the NSCN divided into the Isaak-Muivah group and the Khaplang group. Civilians were caught in the bloody crossfire of the escalating cycle of fratricidal violence, and a daily toll of unclaimed bodies was found in villages and bazaars. This moved the Naga tribal councils to establish a traditional Naga parliament in 1994, called the Naga Hoho, composed of male tribal chiefs elected by popular consensus with a specific mandate to end factional infighting and violence.

The Enduring Tension and Peace Process

In July 1997, the Isaak-Muivah faction of the NSCN and the government of India signed a ceasefire agreement and initiated peace negotiations. In 2001, formal talks were held between the Khaplang faction of the NSCN and the Indian government, and they signed a ceasefire agreement as well. Although the ceasefires have promised negotiation towards a permanent solution, dialogue has failed to resolve many political issues.

When the 1997 ceasefire agreement was announced, popular support was divided, and large sectors of the Naga people were indifferent, alienated, and even hostile. As long as the war pitted the Indian state against the Naga people, the divisions among the Nagas had been of secondary concern. The ceasefire exacerbated the violence among Naga factions. This lack of unity made the ceasefire appear unsustainable, and questions remain regarding a united Naga identity across tribes with different languages.

A second consequence of the ceasefire has been the explosion of tensions between Nagas and the ethnically different peoples of the neighboring states in the Indian Union—the Meiteis and Kukis of Manipur, the Ahom of Assam, and various tribal people in Arunachal Pradesh. The ceasefire is deliberately ambiguous as to whether the agreement extends beyond the territory of Nagaland state to all Naga-inhabited areas. Fears of a Greater Nagaland and the division of state territories have prompted violent opposition from these state governments, as well as from the majority non-Naga communities in these areas. Their opposition led to an outbreak of violence in 2001; as a result, the Indian government has backed away from the possibility of extending the ceasefire to all Naga-inhabited areas.

Women's Contributions to the Peace Process

Women have played a vital role in stopping violence throughout Naga history. As socially sanctioned peace-makers, women have historically intervened in the midst of battle and appealed for an end to violence. This cultural and traditional role has enabled Naga women to protect their communities through informal mediation, to mobilize for reconciliation, and to shape the formal peace process.

1. Protecting Communities through Informal Mediation

To mitigate ongoing violence in their communities, women negotiate with state and non-state actors. Paul

Leo, former president of the United Naga Council—the Naga tribal council in Manipur state—values the particular quality of compromise that women bring to the conflict-torn situation. “When men talk, they reinforce their rigid positions. Women are more diplomatic and willing to compromise. They can be relied upon to pacify.”⁴

Mediating Among Factions: Naga women regularly intercede to halt the inter-factional violence that plagues the Naga people. The NMA and other women's organizations attribute their role as mediators to their traditional position as respected mothers in the community. They act neutrally, maintaining the trust of all parties, and are therefore often effective in persuading armed actors to abandon violence.

Confronting Indian Security Forces: There are multiple accounts of women who directly intervene in villages and in townships to become a human barrier between civilians and soldiers. Without consideration for their own safety, women physically prevent local boys from being arrested to face torture and execution. Women negotiate with local commanding officers to secure the release of their family members. They advocate for the removal of army posts in towns and villages, as these posts often lead to skirmishes with the underground armed forces and generate terror among the civilian population.

Challenging the Underground Armed Groups: Village women also appeal to underground groups by walking to their camps and pleading with their leaders not to ambush army encampments, which would make nearby villagers vulnerable to retaliatory attacks. In urban areas, tribal elders ask that women attend their talks with the underground leaders in a strategic effort to keep the discussions peaceful. It is women who expose human rights violations, provoking the underground leadership to take corrective action. Women work through the tribal network and sometimes enlist the support of women within the underground movement, particularly when sexual abuse has occurred.

Defusing Inter-Community Tension: Although efforts to build an understanding and dialogue beyond a crisis response—even among the women—remain difficult, Naga women open channels of communication with other communities and work together to protect each other. They form coalitions with non-Naga women to rescue hostages, provide support to displaced persons, and promote inter-community social integration. Through campaigns and events, Naga women spread

the message that there can be no peace for Nagas without peace for all.

2. *Shaping and Sustaining the Formal Peace Process*

The 1997 ceasefire, which is renewed annually, has been a precarious one, strained by many factors and derailed at various points. Yet it continues to hold because Naga social organizations, particularly women, are accepted by all parties as the main stakeholders in the peace process. “Both sides can decide to break the ceasefire. But for whom, after all, are they talking—for us. We’re all stakeholders in the peace,” asserts Neidonuo Angami, president of NMA. Women’s organizations mobilize public support for formal talks, facilitate dialogue between Naga factions, and strategically advocate for mechanisms to strengthen the ceasefire.

Women also shape the formal peace process through their participation in consultations with the Isaak-Muivah group, such as in Bangkok in 2002. Civil society representation has made the official talks more representative and has expanded the agenda to reflect the concerns of the Naga people. For example, after much civil society activism, a major shift in the peace agenda occurred in 2001 when the ceasefire ground rules were expanded to protect civilians from abuse by armed parties. The clause specifically noted that the Indian army and paramilitary forces, as well as the Isaak-Muivah faction of the NSCN, would “act in a manner as not to cause harassment/damage or loss of property or injury to the civilian population.”⁵ This change in policy demonstrated recognition of the needs of a broader peace that placed civilian security at the forefront of the agenda. Despite these significant contributions, there has not been systematic integration of civil society or women in the dialogue, nor has there been a concerted effort to use civil society or women to advance the peace process.

Although neither consistent nor universal, it can be argued that women’s participation in the peace process has led to a shift in social consciousness and a growth in the negotiating power of Naga women. Awareness of women’s importance to the Isaak-Muivah faction, after prodding by NMA representatives, was evidenced by the participation of their women leaders in the third

Bangkok Consultation in 2002 and again at an assembly in Manipur in April 2003.

3. *Mobilizing for Peace and Reconciliation*

Women in the NMA and NWUM organize a variety of initiatives to promote reconciliation in Naga and non-Naga communities, the most well known of which is the NMA’s “Shed No More Blood Campaign.” On August 4, 1994, 3,000 mothers from various tribes convened in Kohima, the capital of Nagaland, to launch the initiative.⁶ In addition to public rallies, the campaign established a non-partisan Peace Team that has conducted a series of advocacy meetings with senior officials in state government as well as Indian military officers. These public and private meetings have reduced the level of tension and violence, provided space for dialogue, and created a broad desire for peace.

Conclusion

Women are integral to the Naga peace effort; without their involvement, no initiative is complete. Jo o Aier, an eminent lawyer in Kohima, notes: “In every public activity, in every public meeting, the men now ask: ‘Where are the women? We need the women.’”

The social and political recognition of NMA’s and the NWUM’s contributions has begun to translate into action, as women are increasingly requested to participate in public activities and negotiations. NMA and NWUM facilitate communication among leaders of the underground factions, participate in Naga civil society’s advocacy campaigns, and have been included in some high-level delegations and peace consultations.

Yet there remains enormous untapped potential in the role of Naga women. NMA and NWUM must be provided with technical and financial resources to maximize the impact of their initiatives and their access to all major actors. Unlike in most areas of conflict in the world, Naga women are recognized as traditional peacemakers in Naga society; this must be capitalized upon to help resolve the conflict. Given the long-standing ceasefire and little forward movement in the process, creative efforts to support and involve women systematically in the formal talks is a crucial, yet simple, way to bring the Nagas one step closer to peace.

INTRODUCTION

In northeastern India, the 40 tribes of the Naga Hills challenged post-colonial India's political control 50 years ago, asserting themselves as an independent people and claiming the right to self-determination. India created the formal state of Nagaland in 1963, currently inhabited by 1.2 million non-Naga and Naga people, who are spread across several states in the northeastern region.⁷ The strategies of the national government, including military subjugation and "divide and rule," failed to end the Nagas' armed independence movement. The struggle continues, and parties to the conflict—various armed subgroups of Naga peoples, the Government of India, the Indian state of Nagaland, and border states and tribes—have failed to negotiate a permanent peace. A ceasefire was signed with the dominant armed group, the Isaak-Muivah faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN), in 1997, while a separate ceasefire agreement with a smaller armed faction was put into place in 2001. Nonetheless, violence still occurs, negotiation is sporadic, and resolution of the conflict is not imminent.

Naga civil society,⁸ including prominent women's organizations, has built a broad-based peace constituency that has allowed the ceasefire to survive eight difficult years and three administrations in India's capital, New Delhi. Indeed, in 1997 when the ceasefire was announced, there was limited support for pursuing peace as long as the various Naga factions remained divided. However, today parties would likely encounter widespread popular resistance if they were to consider abandoning the peace process. Thus, the ceasefire has been renewed annually—most recently in July 2004.⁹

The traditional parliament of the Naga tribe—the Naga Hoho—and Christian churches, the Naga Mothers Association (NMA), the Naga Women's Union of Manipur (NWUM), the Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR), and the Naga Students Federation (NSF) are working to establish an inclusive form of politics that transcends factional and tribal partisanship. In this way, Naga civil society has connected the Isaak-Muivah faction of the NSCN—the dominant insurgent group and primary armed actor discussed in this study—to the Naga people, providing greater democratic legitimacy to negotiate on behalf of the Nagas at the peace table.

In particular, the NMA and the NWUM—the major Naga women's organizations and focus of this study—have worked together to intervene at the national and local level to stop the violence, bridge the divide between the various factions at official and informal levels, maintain open communication channels between the official parties and the people, participate in and mediate the peace process, and promote indigenous models of reconciliation. These activities are an extension of the traditional role of Naga women as peacemakers in the home and community, bestowing legitimacy and fostering social acceptance and even an expectation that Naga women will participate in formal and informal peace processes. Women's traditional roles as peacemakers have enabled top leaders of the armed groups to recognize them as significant resources for peace building and reconciliation, and have legitimized their claim to be stakeholders in the peace process.

This report is in two parts. Part One outlines a brief history of the conflict and its impact on Naga society, including information on the victimization of women and the role they have played in the conflict. It also discusses the 1997 ceasefire between the Indian government and the Isaak-Muivah armed group and the space it opened for the emergence of a mobilized Naga peace movement, defining the major civil society groups with a focus on NMA and NWUM. Part Two documents the informal and formal contributions Naga women have made to the peace process at local, national, and international levels. Their efforts include:

- negotiating informally with state and non-state actors to protect their communities;
- mobilizing for peace and reconciliation; and
- participating in the official peace talks to sustain the ceasefire, extend it to other actors, and forge a more inclusive process.

Outlined briefly below are the rationale for this study, underlying assumptions, an explanation of methodology, and definitions of key terms.

Rationale

The Naga Mothers have iconic status in South Asia as "women of peace." The peace-building activities of

Naga women's groups have produced a social consciousness in Naga society that recognizes the importance of women's role, especially in reaching out to bitterly divided Naga armed factions and fostering reconciliation and healing. Women's groups have successfully translated their power as informal peacemakers into an important force in the public sphere such that no peace delegation is considered complete without women's participation—a rare occurrence and one worthy of documentation.

The Naga women's story is relatively unknown, especially outside the region, but can serve as an important model for other peace processes. Naga women have drawn on their traditional roles as mothers and peace builders to play a critical role in sustaining peace. Their innovative strategies and activities to bridge the conflict divide and form an inclusive process have mobilized the community, and Naga men and women perceive their work as important and necessary.

Assumptions

While acknowledging that women are seen as traditionally peaceful in the Naga cultural context, this study does not assume that women are more peaceful by nature than men or that their mere presence guarantees inclusive negotiations or peace agreements. Empirical evidence suggests that women experience conflict differently from men, both as casualties and caretakers.¹⁰ This paper assumes that because of their experiences in times of conflict and their increased responsibilities in the home and community, women are fundamental stakeholders in the peace process and bring new perspectives to the peace table. As mothers, wives, and sisters of combatants, as victims and survivors, and as individuals with powerful community networks, women are essential to rebuilding society and providing a lasting peace.

Research Methodology

This study draws upon research conducted over two years, involving interviews, participatory observation, focus group exercises, and archival and secondary sources. First, the author engaged in participatory observation at the NWUM biennial assembly, composed of 200 women in the Ukhrul district in Manipur in 2000. Second, as a member of a civil society solidarity initiative, the author went on a field trip to Nagaland in 2001. Third, the author interacted with women activists from Nagaland and Manipur at a workshop in Katmandu on "Women Making Peace"

in June 2001. Fourth, the author met the visiting leaders of the underground movement and interviewed Naga civil society activists in Delhi in January 2003. Fifth, in April–May 2003, the author returned to Nagaland and Manipur, and interviewed individually, and as a group, about 50 women and men from rural and urban areas, of various tribes, classes, ages, and professions; they included representatives of other civil society groups—both traditional and modern—army and paramilitary commanding officers, civil servants, church leaders, academics, professional women, and housewives.

In addition, two focus group exercises were organized—one in Jotsoma village near the state capital Kohima in Nagaland and the other in an underdeveloped district headquarters in Senapati in Manipur. It was a facilitated exercise on the basis of a common questionnaire. Also, the author participated and observed a reconciliation exercise conducted by NMA with two rival underground groups in the remote district of Tuensang (Nagaland) and accompanied the NWUM on a humanitarian and reconciliation mission to Tengnuopal (Manipur) village where Kukis (a non-Naga rival tribe) had sought refuge from violence. Finally, some information in this report was drawn from extensive interviews and research by R.N. Kumar and Laxmi Murthy.¹¹

Terminology

Peace Processes and Negotiations

Just as scholars have identified the "life cycle" of conflict, current thinking in the field recognizes a life cycle of peace.¹² The establishment of peace is not a single event but rather a process characterized by progress and setbacks, successes and failures. Observers of peace processes, including those who live in societies with protracted conflict, are all too familiar with premature celebration of ceasefires and peace accords that are later violated. Even if a settlement holds, the transition to a state of peace is a long-term operation. It requires extensive logistical and financial measures to create or reestablish the physical, social, economic, and political infrastructure necessary for the country to transition toward a culture of peace.

Negotiations to end conflict and build peace involve making compromises and perhaps reaching consensus. Often parties are willing to enter into negotiations because they recognize the gains that can be made, but even "interest-based" negotiations require enemies to begin trusting each other. For people affected by vio-

lence, or those who have gone to war to fight for a cause, the notion of accepting the demands of the opponent is difficult. Typically there are fits and starts and times of advancement, followed by stagnation or even breakdown. But for peace to take root, the process of negotiating is often the first step towards building confidence and finding a middle ground; agreement is essential.

Gender

The term “gender” refers to the socially constructed—as opposed to biologically determined—identities of men and women. Gender is not the same as “sex,” and gender differences are not the same as sex differences. For instance, the ability of women to bear children is a sex, or biologically determined, difference from men; that women, in many societies, are responsible for food preparation and household chores is a gender, or socially constructed, difference.

Gender roles are assigned to men and women in early socialization. They cut across public and private spheres; are specific to a given culture at a given time; are affected by other forms of differentiation such as race, ethnicity, and class; and can change in different sociopolitical and economic contexts within a society. World Bank literature notes that in any given society, gender shapes the definitions of acceptable responsibilities and functions for men and women in terms of “social and economic activities, access to resources, and decision-making authority.”¹³

In any gender analysis, two basic factors emerge for consideration. The first, gender **mainstreaming**, highlights the implications of policies and programs for both men and women. This means that, in the con-

struction of policies and programs, it is necessary to consider how implementation will impact and affect men and women differently. As defined by United Nations Development Programme, gender mainstreaming is “taking account of gender concerns in all policy, program, administrative, and financial activities, and in organizational procedures, thereby contributing to a profound organizational transformation.”¹⁴ UNDP further notes that, “if gender mainstreaming is done effectively, the mainstream will be transformed into a process much closer to true democracy.”¹⁵

The second factor relates to gender **balance**. Men and women in decision-making positions can have a differential impact on policy and program development; thus, both men and women must be included in policy formulation. In order to integrate gender considerations comprehensively, mainstreaming and balance are both important.

This report is careful not to conflate the terms “gender” and “women.” It examines both how gender considerations (mainstreaming and balance) affect the peace process and how the participation of women has contributed to it.

Nagalim and Nagaland

In general, “Nagalim” refers to the entire traditional homeland of the Naga people, which encompasses land in four provinces of northeast India, as well as territory in Burma. The “Naga Hills” corresponds to Nagalim and is a reference to the areas historically inhabited by Nagas. “Nagaland” refers to a single political and administrative state in northeast India—one of the four states where Naga people reside.

PART ONE: THE CONFLICT AND PEACE PROCESS

The ancestral domain of the Nagas, referred to as the Naga Hills, straddles the boundary line the British drew between its territories in India and Burma. To the north is China, to the east Burma, and to the west and south India. The Nagas number about 3 million people, comprise about 40 tribes, and speak about 60 dialects.¹⁶ The 20 main tribes straddle internal Indian state borders and international lines.¹⁷

Pre-Colonialism

Nagas are an indigenous people whose way of life is integrated with their land, forest, and hills. They are a tribal society structured around secluded village republics with their own village lands. The units of households are different clans interlinked in a web of social, economic, and ritual ties. Traditionally, Nagas built fortified settlements on top of the hills and were constantly engaged in war-like activities, including inter-village head hunting. With the spread of Christianity, the Nagas abandoned many of these practices, but have also adapted Christianity to many of their traditions.

The Nagas insist that before the arrival of the British in the early nineteenth century, they had a distinct history as an independent people, despite their wars with the Ahom and Burmese kingdoms. Until the nineteenth century, their contact with the outside world was minimal. The Nagas lived in fortified, self-sufficient, sovereign village republics and engaged in fierce inter-village wars.

During this time, women played a vital role in stopping violence. Women were socially sanctioned peace-

makers, specifically termed the *demi* or the *pukrelia*.¹⁸ However, women's participation in public affairs was regarded as an ill omen, and women's handling of weapons was taboo. Among the Zeliangrong, it was taboo to kill a *demi*, and *demis* were the only ones allowed to carry the head of the slain to the bereaved family. Among the Tangkhul, a *pukrelia*, a woman married to man of a different clan, would intervene in the midst of a battle holding a Y stick and appealing for an end to violence between men who were her kin through blood or marriage.¹⁹ According to Valley Rose, editor of the Tangkhul language daily *Aja*, "the *pukrelia* would intervene between two fighting groups, stretch her arms and shout: 'Stop! Stop fighting! You on my brothers' side and you on my husband's side, stop fighting and let peace prevail for my sake.'²⁰ They carried the authority to stop the violence and if anyone dared to raise a weapon after that, he was ostracized. In another version of the *pukrelia* tradition, a wise woman could shake or whip open her *mekhala* (sarong) and, through this public shaming, stop the violence and induce a negotiated compromise.²¹

British Rule

The Treaty of Yandabo in 1826 brought the colonizing activities of the British into northeastern India. Their first encounters with the Nagas included Naga predatory raids on British Indian subjects. Eventually, the British ruled a portion of the area referred to as the Naga Hill District, but immense tracts of the Naga Hills between the British-held district and Burma remained "unadministered." The "inner-line regula-

Women in the Battle against Colonialism

The history of Naga self-rule includes the revolt of Rani Gaidinlui, a 16-year-old girl who took up the cause of "Naga Raj" first raised by her maverick cousin Jadonang.²² After he was executed by the British in 1931, Gaidinlui, using a mix of mysticism and charisma, raised an army of followers and battled the British troops for 14 months until her capture. In 1937, Jawahar Lal Nehru, who became India's first Prime Minister a decade later, was told of this freedom fighter and romanticized her in his writings. With India's independence, Nehru granted her release. Rani Gaidinlui went on to raise a private army that fought against the Naga insurgents. NWUM, in its gallery of heroic role models for Naga women, makes no mention of Rani Gaidinlui's collaborative role with the Indian government.

tion” marked the limit of the administered area beyond which British legislation did not apply. In short, British control over the Naga Hills was limited at most. Naga customary law and the village and tribal councils functioned with a great degree of autonomy.

By the early decades of the twentieth century, as the Indian national movement gathered momentum and discussions took place about the transfer of colonial power to Indians, the Nagas made it clear to the British they hoped to be excluded from the new constitutional arrangements. Led by Angami Zapu Phizo, the so-called “father of the Naga nation,” the Naga National Council (NNC) was formed in 1946 to advocate for Naga self-rule. The NNC was composed of 29 founding members drawn from the various tribal councils. Leaders of the newborn state of India condemned the Naga demand for autonomy as anti-national, turning their demand for self-rule into an armed struggle for “nothing short of sovereignty.”²³ A day before India became independent, on August 14, 1947, the NNC declared self-rule, which was reinforced by a mandate from the people in a May 1951 plebiscite.²⁴ The Indian government ignored these assertions, prompting a Naga boycott of the first Indian elections in 1952.

An Independent India and the Beginning of the Armed Struggle

Following India’s independence, the new government divided the Naga homeland into four administrative states: Nagaland, Manipur, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh. It left the Naga people a minority, often discriminated against, in all but Nagaland state. In neighboring Manipur, for example, political power is concentrated in the valley, populated by the ethnic Meiteis that comprise 65 percent of the population of Manipur. The tribal population (largely Nagas and Kukis) in the hills are the remaining 35 percent. Nearly 95 percent of the tribal population is Christian, while the Meiteis are Hindus.²⁵

The politics of the Naga people are characterized by parallel structures of authority, in which the modern Nagaland state structure and bureaucracy are in many ways subordinate to the authority of the traditional structures of tribal power. Democratically elected village and tribal councils, which exclude women, continue to regulate social life. The 1997 ceasefire, discussed below, opened up space for the re-emergence of tribal chiefs, and the Naga Hoho (Council of Tribal Chiefs) has grown in power. The United Naga

Council (UNC), the equivalent of the Hoho in Manipur state, has also become more prominent.

The Nagas give several reasons for continued conflict and an armed independence struggle. They believe they are a distinct people with a unique history, not part of the political or cultural ethos of India.²⁶ They see themselves as a culturally and socially homogenous people that have been divided by colonial powers. They assert the right to self-determination and aspire to be politically reintegrated. Ongoing discrimination within the Indian states, as well as an aggressive military response by the national government, reinforces these ideas. India has deemed Nagas “secessionist,” a “law and order problem,” and “terrorists.”²⁷ In addition, India has sought to split the Naga national movement by exploiting tribal differences and feeding internal, factional violence. Oppression and human rights abuses by all sides, particularly against civilians, including women, have brutalized Naga society. In particular, violence against civilians by the security forces, especially sexual violence against women, has driven cycles of revenge.

Indian Security Forces

First introduced in 1958, the Armed Forces Special Powers Act authorizes armed security personnel to shoot on sight (and on suspicion) anyone committing or about to commit an offense against the maintenance of public order. It mandates the deployment of the national army, central paramilitary forces organized by the state (such as the Assam Rifles and the Manipur Rifles), as well as the Indian reserve battalions. The states of Manipur and Nagaland have been declared “Disturbed Areas” and brought under the Act. No action can be instituted against a soldier without clearance from the central authority, fostering a culture of impunity for killings, arbitrary detention, disappearances, torture, rape, and destruction of property. There has been continuous demand from civil society groups for a repeal of the Act.

The Naga National Council (NNC)

With Phizo at the head and 29 tribal council leaders, the Naga National Council (NNC) was established in 1946 to represent the Nagas in consultations with the British on the transfer of power to Indian leaders. Through the NNC, the Naga political representatives hoped to safeguard their collective identity and autonomy as Naga people. As hostilities began, the NNC dominated the Naga movement and the armed strug-

gle. Military repression and political co-optation corroded and divided the NNC, and in 1980 then NNC General Secretary Th Muivah, NNC Vice President Isaak Swu, and the president of the eastern NNC, S.S. Khaplang broke away to form the Naga Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN).

The Naga Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN)

After eight years of tension and sporadic confrontations with the Indian government, the NSCN violently splintered in 1988. The two factions of the NSCN are known by the names of their respective leaders: the Isaak-Muivah faction led by Th Muivah and Isaak Swu and the Khaplang group led by Khaplang.

The Isaak-Muivah faction of the NSCN established its own underground government, the Government of the Peoples Republic of Nagalim (GPRN). The Isaak-Muivah army is estimated to be 3,000 strong and is the dominant armed insurgent force of the Naga movement. It is committed to the unification of all Naga-inhabited areas.

The Khaplang group of the NSCN enjoys support from Naga tribes in Burma as well as other tribes within India and other insurgent groups in the north-east. It functions primarily in Burma and lays no claim to Naga areas in the Indian northeast.

The Naga Tribal Councils

The traditional Naga structure of authority is vested in the tribal councils. These structures function by consensual democracy, but elders are privileged and women are often excluded. Locally, each community has a village tribal council, which sends representatives to a higher tribal council. Tribal leaders were often targeted during the military repression, and their authority eroded as a result. In response to this crisis and to the alarming factional divisions that were tearing Naga society apart, the Naga Hoho was established as the head body of the Naga tribal councils in Nagaland, as was the UNC, its counterpart in the state of Manipur. Its members are tribal elders, who also draw upon their authority in the “modern” structure of power—as senior civil servants or members of the state assembly. The position of the Naga Hoho remains conservative, and there is some criticism from the social organizations that it is too closely tied to the church.

Violent Repression of the Independence Movement

In the 1950s, restrictions were placed on the NNC, and an arrest warrant was issued for Phizo. The Indian government pursued a diplomatic and military strategy to end the Naga demands for independence. Nagas were divided, as more moderate elements sought to negotiate with the government, while others pursued more aggressive solutions. These divisions led Phizo to establish an underground Naga government and an armed movement. Armed confrontations between underground Nagas and the Indian government began.

Indian troops soon saturated the area, one soldier to every ten Nagas,²⁸ and were armed with extraordinary authority through legislation including the Armed Forces Special Powers Act of 1958, which remains in force today. According to the United States Department of State,

Under this Act, the Government has the power to declare any State or Union Territory a “disturbed area”; allows security forces to fire on any person if it is considered “necessary for the maintenance of law and order”; the authorities can arrest any person “against whom reasonable suspicion exists” . . . ; and the authorities are given immunity from prosecution for any acts committed by them in relation to the Act.²⁹

In 1958, the casualty ratio was 1,568 “hostiles” to 344 Indian forces.³⁰ Although violence has significantly decreased over the years, casualty estimates in north-eastern India since the conflict began in the mid-twentieth century range from 11,000 to much higher numbers.³¹

Government policies were brutal and savage. People were tortured and killed. Women were beaten and raped. Villages were repeatedly burnt to the ground; granaries, livestock, and crops destroyed; fields mined; and villagers herded into cluster areas with no access to their fields. Those whose relatives were suspected of being in the underground armed movement were kept in concentration camps and slowly starved. For example, between July 25, 1957 and January 28, 1958, in Chuchyimbang village in Nagaland, 800 villagers were confined in a concentration camp; 30 died, allegedly of starvation and torture.

Phizo fled to England in 1960, as democratic India turned a blind eye to the unrestrained campaign of force,

torture, rape, sexual mutilation, abduction, killings of civilians, and the desecration of Naga churches. As Nandita Haksar, a human rights campaigner observed, “We Indians look upon the Naga people as headhunters, savages, and sub-human. And we look upon their demand for a separate Naga nation state as a problem of law and order.”³² In 1977, Indian Prime Minister Moraji Desai summarized the official attitude that sanctioned a virtual genocide: “Exterminate the Nagas; I will not have any compunction.”³³

Over the years, the conflict has militarized and brutalized Naga society. The counter-insurgency politics of

co-optation has corrupted and corroded Naga society. As Kheshilie Chisi, vice-president of the Naga Mother’s Association (NMA) stated, “We do not even recognize how mentally and emotionally disturbed we are.”³⁴ The effects of the conflict are compounded by rising unemployment and frustration over an inadequate education system. The violence brings a host of consequences including alcoholism, drug addiction, and a related rise in HIV/AIDS. Naga women call attention to the continuum of insecurity—social, economic, and political—as experienced in the home, society, and across the conflict lines.

Women’s Role in the Conflict

The Naga nationalist struggle for survival required the mobilization of the community as a whole. In the early years, every Naga was involved, and every Naga was regarded as a potential enemy. “The Naga-India war must have begun in our village,” said a woman from Jotsoma.

People were living in the jungles for three months. The villages were occupied by the army. Because our fathers were underground, our mothers were taken into custody. We had to live in the open under trees in the torrential rain. The rice barns had been burnt down. There was no rice or vegetables for the children. So we women had to go to the villages late at night, quietly searching for food. So many casualties every day

Throughout the conflict, women, in particular, suffered the effects of the violence. Soldiers wreaked their vengeance on women, especially the relatives of suspected rebels. Women’s bodies were sexually violated as the enemy’s property and women were humiliated. As men fled, women were left behind, held back by the children and the aged. In addition, conflict degraded the environment and disrupted the *jhumming* (slash and burn) cycle, destroying the resources necessary for daily survival activities such as collecting fuel, food, water, and fodder. Destruction of agriculture hit women especially due to their presence as workers in this industry.³⁵

Under this pressure, Naga women supported the armed movement in many ways. They note:

We carried food and clothing for [the armed opposition]. We walked for days to reach their camps. We would cook in the dark hours of the night whenever they came quietly to the village. We carried rice in water pots and letters in our hair bands and under our hair. All the women and the elders cared for the injured fighters.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, parents encouraged young women and men to join the armed struggle. In the past, it had been taboo for Naga women to handle weapons.³⁶ Yet out of necessity and against tradition, “Many women joined and went for training with the men. And they went into battle as fully trained soldiers. Some were far more daring than the men,” the women of Jotsoma village said.

(Continued)

Initially, the NNC was reluctant to give the young women arms or training, but much had changed since the historical time when it was taboo for women to touch weapons. After women had been attacked while taking refuge in church, the leadership determined that it was time for women to receive arms and training. Women joined their fathers, husbands, and brothers in the struggle, and the Women's Federation of the NNC, a women's military and political wing, was formed in the late 1960s. Much of their work in the underground involved training new recruits, providing early warning if an army raid was imminent, and covertly raising funds for families of recruits.³⁷

During the 1970s, women were dispersed in small numbers in various cadres, perhaps six or seven women in a group of 3,000. As time passed and more women joined, women-only cadres became more common. In addition to standard military tasks, women combatants' activities included liaising with communities, sometimes running schools or opening weaving centers. Although armed and often fending off attacks, women married and had children while in the jungles. Before the ceasefire, women composed nearly 15 percent of the underground army.³⁸

Although women have been in leadership positions in the women's wing of the NNC and in the NSCN, as well as in ministerial positions of the underground government, they have not generally been afforded decision-making power. Naga women's internal struggle to change their status is ongoing. At a Tangkul tribal assembly as recent as April 2003, for example, women of the Isaak-Muivah faction voiced their frustration to tribal and faction leaders at their lack of authority and power.

Domination and Division

In 1963, the Indian government offered the Sixteen Point Agreement, which established the administrative and political state of Nagaland within the Indian Union. A symbol of the Indian state's "carrot and stick" policy, it succeeded with the more moderate voices of the Naga leadership. Yet the established borders comprised only some of the Naga tribes and left the ancestral domain fragmented with nearly a million Nagas spread across the states of Manipur, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh in the Indian Union. Although some leaders accepted the peace agreement and disarmed, Phizo rejected it, and the violence continued. General Thinoselie M. Keyho, the former head of the NNC underground army explained, "We didn't recognize the government. We still don't recognize it. It was imposed on us." The armed Naga movement continues to insist on dealing directly with New Delhi at the level of prime minister, thereby side-stepping the elected state governments in northeast India. Indeed, local government is dominated by the Congress party, which has often sought to undermine potential peace initiatives, although not without resistance from Naga social organizations.

In 1964, the Nagaland Baptist Church Council made an effort to initiate a promising Indo-Naga peace mission, which included talks at the highest levels. These efforts foundered, however, due to the determined resistance of Naga hardliners, including Phizo, who rejected any solution within the Indian Union.³⁹ As hostilities renewed in 1967, the NNC was banned, and severe military reprisals were unleashed; some of the worst incidents of human rights abuses date from this period. Meanwhile, the Naga underground opened up logistics and training links with China, prompting the church to join hands with the Nagaland state politicians to orchestrate a campaign against "Communist desecrators of the land of Christ."⁴⁰

At the military level, infiltration of the underground army through the suborning of tribal chiefs enabled the Indian forces to "clear" much of Nagaland. The Naga underground was in disarray and at its weakest. Infighting among the rebel leadership about the best approach to independence continued, as moderates were drawn toward a compromise settlement, while hardliners remained committed to an armed struggle. Several underground groups surrendered arms in agreements with the government in the early 1970s,

including the controversial 1975 Shillong Accord. The three-point agreement was signed in November 1975 by the governor of Nagaland and several underground leaders including Phizo's brother. Other underground factions condemned the agreement, and Phizo maintained silence, exiled in England.

Following the creation of the NSCN and subsequent division into the Isaak-Muivah and Khaplang groups, inter-factional rivalry increased, becoming violent. At the time of the division, more than 100 of the Isaak-Muivah group were massacred, and Isaak and Muivah themselves barely escaped. In the escalating cycle of fratricidal violence, civilians were caught in a bloody crossfire, leading to a daily toll of "unclaimed" bodies in the bazaars and villages. This prompted the NMA in 1994 to launch the peace campaign to "Stop All Bloodshed" on the principle that all lives—civilians, the underground fighters of all factions, and Indian soldiers—are valued and must be saved.

Infighting among the Naga national movement and the fracturing of Naga society moved the Naga tribal councils to come together in 1994 to establish a traditional Naga parliament, called the Naga Hoho. It is composed of Naga tribal chiefs

elected by popular consensus, empowered to speak on behalf of the Nagas. Its specific mandate is to save the unity of the Naga peoples threatened by factional infighting and fratricidal violence.

The conflict in northeast India was further complicated by widening fault lines between the Naga peoples and the ethnically different peoples of the neighboring states in the Indian Union—the Meiteis (non-tribal) and Kukis (tribal) of Manipur, the Ahom (non-tribal) people of Assam, and various tribal people in Arunachal Pradesh. Because the Naga struggle is committed to unification of the Naga peoples divided internally and internationally, neighboring groups fear a peace that could deliver a "Greater Nagaland" and divide their state territories.

Ceasefire, the Peace Process, and Ongoing Conflict

In July 1997, the Isaak-Muivah group of the NSCN and the government of India signed a ceasefire agree-

ment and initiated peace negotiations on three conditions: unconditional talks, highest-level representatives (such as the prime minister), and third-country location. Pressure to conclude a ceasefire came from within the Indian army, which was convinced the political problem could not be solved by military action. Talks of a ceasefire were taken seriously and were sustained through three changes of Indian administration.

The Khaplang group of the NSCN was not a party to the ceasefire. The "partial" ceasefire agreement saw a spurt in the Khaplang group's attacks on security forces and in fratricidal killings. In 2001, the Khaplang group signed a ceasefire agreement with the Indian government, and formal talks are ongoing. Yet there is no truce between the Khaplang group and the Isaak-Muivah faction despite repeated attempts by Naga social organizations, including women, to bring the top leaders face to face and end the violence.

When the Isaak-Muivah ceasefire agreement with the

Indian government was announced, popular support was divided, and large sectors of the Naga people were indifferent, alienated, and even hostile. With the "peace" came questions regarding a united Naga identity across tribes with differ-

ent languages.⁴¹ The lack of unity made the ceasefire appear unsustainable.

Thus, one consequence of the ceasefire has been increased attention to the continued violence between Naga factions. Currently, there are four armed underground groups, although two factions of the NNC Federal Army—Adino and Pangar—are largely inactive. The Isaak-Muivah faction of the NSCN has emerged as the dominant armed group, with forces numbering approximately 3,000. Although its leadership endorses the need for reconciliation and unity, it has not declared a ceasefire with rival Naga groups. Substantive political negotiations between factions have yet to begin, and killings have been reduced but continue. A culture of violence persists. On the Nagalim Republic Day in March 2003, for example, television footage showed a parade of some 700 new recruits of the Isaak-Muivah faction of the NSCN. Interestingly, about a fifth were young women and, from cameo interviews with them, it was evident that

*"For the women, there are no factions. We are still united. It is the men who have misunderstandings. The struggle for power has divided them."
—Jotsoma woman village elder*

most of them were college graduates. All seemed completely dedicated to the Naga cause.

A second consequence of the ceasefire has been the explosion of tensions between the Nagas and neighboring tribes. The ceasefire is deliberately ambiguous as to whether the ceasefire agreement extends beyond the territory of Nagaland state to all Naga-inhabited areas, and “the Government’s continued negotiations with Naga separatists over a ceasefire cause[s] significant unrest in neighboring states.”⁴² As a result, beyond the borders of Nagaland state, security forces are locked in a shooting war with the Isaak-Muivah faction of the NSCN and the Khaplang group of the NSCN in the Naga Hill states of Manipur, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh. Fears of a Greater Nagaland have prompted violent opposition from these state governments, as well as the majority communities of non-Naga tribes in these areas.

The Role of Civil Society

The history of the Naga conflict is threaded with various peace initiatives involving civil society, including the head body of the Naga tribal councils (the Naga Hoho) and its counterpart in Manipur (the UNC), the Baptist Church, and the Naga social organizations. Some of the leading groups include:

- Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR), a human rights organization;
- Naga Students Federation (NSF) and the All-Naga Students Organization of Manipur, the student groups; and
- Naga Mothers Association (NMA) and the Naga Women’s Union of Manipur (NWUM), the women’s groups.

For the most part, these non-governmental organizations (NGOs) draw their legitimacy from the traditional democratic structures of authority in Naga tribal society. The Naga social organizations work closely together as a family but without a hierarchy. As NMA President Neidonuo Angami explained, “We have no control over the Hoho, and it has no control over us. We all have different roles to play in this peace process. We appreciate their role and they appreciate ours.” With the emergence of a broad-based peace platform that includes the Naga Hoho, NMA, NWUM, UNC, NSF, and NPMHR, the social organizations have acquired greater legitimacy and strength.

The legacy of peace accords that have divided the Nagas has made the people wary of a peace brokered behind their backs. A sentiment that is commonly voiced across the board by village women as well as by the elders of the Naga Hoho is that for the peace to be sustainable, the process must include all sectors of the Naga people. Before the 1997 ceasefire, all that these groups could do was make appeals, issue condemnation letters, and conduct demonstrations. However, for the first time, the ceasefire and subsequent opening of public channels of communication allowed an opportunity to meet with the underground Isaak-Muivah leaders in Bangkok and Khaplang leaders in Burma.

The Isaak-Muivah leadership has publicly recognized the strategic value of the mobilization of Naga civil society, including women, and granted them legitimacy as stakeholders in the peace process. At the second Naga Consultative Meeting convened by the Isaak-Muivah group in Bangkok in January 2001, Th Muivah affirmed that “In all stages of political negotiations the Naga people will be consulted and their participation sought for better understanding so that past mistakes may not be repeated and transparency ensured.”⁴³ The Third Bangkok Consultation in May 2003 indicated a growing sensitivity in recognizing that “people” included women as a constituency. Gina Shangkhram, President of the NWUM, noted: “The space given to Naga women in the consultative meeting is highly appreciated and is a good beginning to boost up their confidence.”⁴⁴

Admittedly, the involvement of civil society remains ad hoc, a reflection of the culture of secrecy in an underground organization and the historical experience of inter-tribal betrayal. Although the government and the Isaak-Muivah faction of the NSCN rhetorically affirm the value of “independent observers” to monitor the ceasefire, there has been no progress in integrating civil society into the monitoring mechanism. Moreover, representatives of the institutions of the Indian state—civil and military—have appeared more reluctant to democratize the peace table, which is perceived as the realm of parties to the conflict only.⁴⁵ The Ceasefire Monitoring Cell convener, Lieutenant General R.V. Kulkari, tends to view social organizations like the NPMHR, the NSF, and the NMA as “fronts” or dismisses them, especially the women’s groups, as ineffectual and irrelevant.⁴⁶

The popular momentum in support of the peace process has served to pressure both parties to keep alive

the dialogue despite the failure to make any progress on the political issues. The new government in Delhi, elected in May 2004, has signaled its support for talks with Naga factions to continue, and the annual ceasefire agreement with the Isaak-Muivah faction of the NSCN was renewed again in July 2004. The crucial factor that could make or break the ceasefire is the opposition of the non-Naga neighboring communities to a peace process that they fear could divide their state territories. Given the 2001 outbreak in violence at the

discussion of extending the ceasefire to all Naga-inhabited areas, the government has backed away from this possibility. Violence by the Khaplang group continues, as well as clashes between the Isaak-Muivah faction of the NSCN and the Indian security forces in Naga areas in Assam. If mutual suspicions and anxieties are to be quelled, Naga social organizations, especially women's groups, will need to build "people to people" dialogues with the northeast neighbors and civil society groups in the Indian heartland.

PART TWO: WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PEACE PROCESS

The Position of Women in Contemporary Nagaland

Naga society is characterized by egalitarianism based on community interdependence for survival. This has led to the relatively high status of Naga women in the context of South Asia.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, different tribes have different social norms, including polygamy. Both men and women have equal right to divorce, but it is the woman who must leave the house and her children. Naga women are not entitled to ancestral property, and only male members inherit, although parents are increasingly leaving property to daughters.

In Nagaland, male literacy is about 72 percent and female literacy is about 61 percent—higher than the Indian national average of 54 percent for women.⁴⁸ In Manipur, the literacy rate is 72 percent for men and 48 percent for women.⁴⁹ In Nagaland and Manipur, in a culture that emphasizes warrior-like qualities, the increasing number of well-educated, professional, assertive, and often unmarried women is posing a challenge to more traditional elements of Naga society.

While women have an important status in Naga social and ritual life, equality does not extend to the economic and political spheres. In fact, participation in public life was long considered taboo for women.⁵⁰ Within the Ao tribe, for example, women were traditionally encouraged to stay far from public meetings of the elders lest some information waft into their ears and they garble it in the re-telling.

In contemporary Nagaland, women continue to be excluded from representation in the village tribal council, the basic unit of traditional political authority, and consequently from the Naga Hoho and the UNC as well.⁵¹ Although they are invited to attend, they are not part of the leadership structures. Naga women are organized through a women's wing of the various tribes, but these groups merely follow the directives of the patriarchal village tribal council. In Manipur, the NWUM has been advocating for women's representation as full members in the councils, but at best they are nominated but never elected. Chanbini Nguwruw of the Chandel district in Manipur was nominated twice as speaker to the council, but she admitted the men would not take her seriously. As for being elected, the women prefer to vote for their husbands and brothers, she said. The UNC, the head body of the

Naga tribes of Manipur, is currently reviewing its Constitution, as younger members are more open to the idea of women's formal participation.

Interestingly, women may find support from the Isaak-Muivah faction of the NSCN, which in recent years has become more open to women's inclusion in decision-making structures as a result of women's advocacy within their own ranks. In fact, women from the underground forces joined civil society women at a Tangkhul tribal assembly in April 2004 explicitly to press for women's participation in Naga society's structures of decision making.

Whereas in Manipur there is greater awareness and support for women's political participation, in Nagaland, NMA has been much less assertive. In fact, many women reject the need for women to be involved in representative politics. "It is not our tradition that women should become the chief or chairman. We [women] have our distinct role." The Naga Hoho remains steadfast in its patriarchal orientation. Dr. Akang Ao, deputy speaker, noted: "We call them when there is an issue of relevance to them. When it is Hoho business, there is no need to involve them." As with the UNC, the younger members of the Hoho, such as the speaker Keviletuo Kiewhuo, are more open to the need for women's representation. Neidonuo Angami, while affirming that the Naga Hoho representatives "always call us," admits, "I suppose they don't feel the need for women to be represented."

In the official Indian structures of electoral politics, women also have minimal representation. Ranoo Shazia, widow of a politician and the niece of the legendary Phizo, became a member of the Indian Parliament in the 1970s and, in that position, was active in pursuing a peace settlement. Hangmila Shaiza, the widow of an assassinated politician, successfully ran in the 1990 state legislative assembly elections and became the first woman to become a member of the Nagaland legislative assembly. In the civil bureaucracy, there are 4 women bureaucrats out of 59 in the senior-most ranks in Nagaland.⁵²

In sum, although Naga women's peace-building activities are socially accepted as legitimate due to tradition and history, women's active participation in political life is not. The conservative NMA concurs with this

situation, while the progressive NWUM considers the two as equally important and consistently asserts their right to representation in leadership and decision making.

Women's Organizations Working for Peace

The cultural and traditional role of women as peace-makers among the Naga legitimizes their modern-day peace activism. While this study focuses largely on the organizational activism of the major women's organizations—the NMA and the NWUM—there is a rich historical tradition of Naga, Meitei, Kuki, and Assamese women's interventions for peace in the region. (See box on page 15.) Yet it is Naga women who have iconic status as “women of peace” as a result of their sustained and substantive contribution to peace building. It is the NMA and the NWUM that have taken the lead in reaching out to other Naga and non-Naga women's organizations to promote nonviolent resolution of inter-community tensions. There have also been some sporadic initiatives from Indian women's groups, but the reluctance to engage with a struggle projected in the public sphere as “anti-national” has effectively inhibited systematic engagement.

The Naga Mothers Association (NMA)

The NMA was founded in 1984 in Kohima, the capital of Nagaland, as a voluntary organization open to all Naga women. It was designed to create a common platform to raise issues of concern to Naga women in particular and Naga society in general. Its mandate is for its members to fulfill their role as mothers to heal and make society whole and healthy. NMA's operational style is decentralized. It works through local tribal women's associations, calling upon them to send representatives to mass rallies and programs, and supporting local women's groups in their activities.

NMA's early focus was to counter the social evils in society, including alcohol abuse, drug addiction, and the spread of HIV/AIDS. Its campaigns have mobi-

lized mass awareness in urban and rural areas; it also runs a drug rehabilitation center and a hospice for AIDS patients.⁵³

Grounded in their position as mothers, NMA's peace-building activities include intervening to prevent violence, raising awareness of the importance of the peace process, and promoting reconciliation at the community level. They have bluntly criticized violence and corruption of all parties, and thus their shift in emphasis from social reform to peacemaking has not been problem-free. Given their conservative base and orientation, even within the membership, some women have communicated an uneasiness and even opposition to NMA's political activity.

“Naga Mother—she refuses to become a victim of the evils of society. She breaks through her traditional confinements, goes out into the streets and does something about it. Today she has a story to tell, not just to our own people, but to the world that women can make a difference and change society.”
—Neidonuo Angami, President, Naga Mothers Association

NMA's language of mobilization revolves around motherhood, which may prevent it from articulating a more radical women's rights agenda. NMA, for example, explicitly does not advocate for women's representation in the Naga Hoho. “We have our role to play as mothers and they theirs,” Neidonuo Angami explained. Thus, the

majority of NMA's activities are far more socially acceptable than their more outspoken counterparts in Manipur, the NWUM.

The Naga Women's Union of Manipur (NWUM)

The NWUM was formed in 1994 in preparation for the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. Although each of the 15 Naga tribes in Manipur had its own women's organization, NWUM founding members felt a common forum was needed to instill an awareness of the unity of Naga women. Unlike NMA, NWUM functions as an NGO, receiving an annual financial contribution from the village tribal councils as well as private funding from foundations and churches.

NWUM has focused on asserting women's rights, reflecting the concerns of the professional women who are its operational core. In its first General Assembly in 1994, it reaffirmed its founding principles: to promote the rights and dignity of Naga women, promote tradi-

tional values, and improve the living standard of Naga society. The resolutions passed by the General Assembly were more specific: to safeguard rights of marriage and divorce; equal rights to property and inheritance; and above all, women's right to participate in the village tribal authority.⁵⁴ On occasion, their assertiveness has been met with obstinacy. "Here come the powerful women, the men mockingly say to us," complained Shangnu, the treasurer of NWUM.

NWUM began to emphasize peace building soon after its creation, often in partnership with NMA. Manipur at the time was wracked by bloody clashes between Nagas and Kukis. NWUM has been in the forefront of the campaign to extend the ceasefire to all Naga areas and to build unity among Naga people through public rallies, seminars, and workshops. NWUM has been working with NPMHR to monitor ceasefire violations and continues to intervene to keep the peace. In its conflict transformation workshops, NWUM has taught mediation skills to Naga leaders and has participated in forums and workshops that bring Nagas, Kukis, and Meiteis together.⁵⁵ NWUM's interventions have gained it recognition as a significant resource in peace building and Naga society, exhibited by frequent invitations for the NWUM president to attend UNC meetings.

The operational styles of NMA and NWUM provide a study in contrast. Reflecting the difference in the sociopolitical conditions of Nagaland and Manipur, the two groups adopt very different strategies in their similar missions. Specifically, the NMA mobilizes around motherhood, while the NWUM represents a more secular, professional style. For NMA, motherhood politics has evoked greater protection and social acceptability, whereas NWUM has been vulnerable to social criticism in its campaigns for women's representation. Both groups are conducting peace-building efforts that are most effective in their states and with their specific constituencies.

"We Do More Because We Can"

In mapping Naga women's contribution to peace building, it should be reiterated that peace building is a process to be built at all stages: pre-conflict, conflict, and post-conflict. In the Naga situation, the 1997 ceasefire has not meant an end to the conflict; therefore, women's role in protecting their communities against violence by state and non-state actors runs concurrent with their initiatives to democratize the peace process and foster reconciliation.

The motivation for women's peace-building activities is succinctly stated by NMA president Neidonuo Angami: "We do more because we can." This section will explore women's main contributions to peace building and the strategies they have used to be effective in:

- negotiating informally with state and non-state actors to protect their communities;
- mobilizing for peace and reconciliation; and
- participating in the official peace talks to sustain the ceasefire, extend it to other actors, and forge a more inclusive process.

Protecting Communities through Informal Mediation

To mitigate the effects of ongoing violence in their communities, women intervene to negotiate with state actors and non-state groups, as well as to mediate inter-factional disputes and inter-community conflicts. In the period before the 1999 parliamentary elections, for example, NWUM records that it intervened eight times to stop violence from exploding. During the Manipur assembly elections in 2000, NWUM women intervened 10 times to defuse tension between rival factions of the underground forces, the public, and the armed groups, as well as between different communities.⁵⁹

"In a situation of anger when men can not talk to men without violence, it is mothers who can talk to the men, who can deal with anger and pacify them," said Neidonuo Angami—a sentiment voiced by scores of Naga women. "It is to do what the men cannot do," noted a woman in Jotsoma village. Women have a different way of negotiating and a capacity to defuse a tense situation. In fact, it is expected that women are needed to reach the warring factions, defuse inter-community tension, open channels of communication, and build a dialogue of understanding and trust. Yet because this is part of the traditional role that women play as peace builders in Naga society, their interventions are often categorized as "women's work," taken for granted, and rendered invisible.

Confronting the Indian Security Forces

There are many stories of women who, at the call of traditional drums, rush forward in villages and in townships to become a human barrier between men and soldiers. Without consideration for their own safety, women advocate and physically prevent local

Women's Organizations in Northeastern India

In addition to NMA and NWUM, various women's groups are active in securing peace for their communities in northeast India.

Among the Nagas, the women are organized around their tribal affiliations, and membership in women's groups is open to all adult women of the tribe. Several, such as the Tangkhul Women's Organization, emerged in response to public outrage at human rights violations and particularly incidents of sexual violence; in 1974, they demanded an impartial inquiry into atrocities by the paramilitary forces and mobilized a mass hunger strike to demand justice. Others, such as the Ao Women's Organization, began as an initiative of the church to revive customary traditions and values and the welfare of the Ao women. Yet a brutal attack by the security forces in 1994, in which 16 women were allegedly raped, prompted a widening of its mandate, and four women testified in the newly formed National Human Rights Commission, which found the army personnel guilty and awarded victim reparations.⁵⁶ The women's group continues to intercede between the security forces, the civilian population, and the underground groups. Limala Ozukum, president of the Ao Women's Organization, noted that whenever the elders negotiate with the underground groups, they always take the women with them. "We reduce the temperature; otherwise they would break into a fight. We appeal for peace in the name[s] of all our sons."

Women in Manipur, a state neighboring Nagaland with 17 armed Meitei underground groups and one of the highest deployments of Indian security forces, protect their communities by physically patrolling the streets with torches at night to warn against raids by the security forces and to deter the spread of narcotics and alcohol abuse. Most recently, following the murder of a woman in the custody of the security forces in Manipur in July 2004, Meitei women's groups have been particularly vocal for the repeal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act; their pleas have been enhanced by a petition from Indian Supreme Court lawyer Manish Goswami directly to the National Human Rights Commission.⁵⁷

Finally, the Kuki women also play an important peace-building role in their communities. In Churachanpur, Manipur, in 1995 violence between two Kuki tribes brought thousands of women to the streets in protest. They worked with the Kuki elders to broker a peace between the two tribes.⁵⁸

These are associations determined by belonging to a tribe or community. More voluntary in its associational structure is the All-Tribal Women's Organization, with its headquarters in Manipur. It cuts across the Naga-Kuki divide, providing relief to all communities affected by the conflict, promoting inter-community sports exchanges, and working with various women's groups for the release of civilian hostages and other joint activities.

boys from being arrested to face certain torture and execution. Women enter into negotiations with local commanding officers to secure the release of their family members. They advocate for the removal of army posts in towns and villages, as these posts often lead to skirmishes with the underground armed forces and generalized terror among the civilian population.

In July 1997, for example, a military convoy in Ukhrul, Manipur, was ambushed by Isaak-Muivah cadres, and three soldiers were injured; the battalion retaliated, storming into houses and schools, and abusing women and men with rifle butts and batons. They arrested many of the townsmen, closed businesses, and forced the population to flee into the jungle. In the midst of

widespread fear and panic, the Tangkhul Women's Organization began to reassure the people and restore calm and normalcy. The women appealed to the commandant of the military group to release the 40 men. These women, with representatives of the civil administration, patrolled the streets, reassured shopkeepers, and used loudspeakers to encourage those hiding in the jungle to return home.⁶⁰

In remote villages where Indian security forces have perpetrated sexual violence, village women connect with the district tribal women's organizations to launch a campaign of mass mobilization for justice. In the Ukhrul district in the mid-1970s, for example, women appealed to the courts for justice against torture, forced disappearances, and sexual violence.

In the town of Mokokchung in the mid-1990s, despite the reluctance of many to seek justice following a brutal attack on civilians, the Ao Women's Organization appealed to the National Human Rights Commission, to which four rape victims testified before a one-man inquiry commission.⁶¹ Women have also participated in fact-finding investigations as part of their advocacy efforts. Veronica Zingkhai, former president of the Tangkhul Women's Organization, recounted how she forced the security forces to acknowledge a custody death, producing as evidence a photograph she had managed to take of the tortured body.

Women's efforts and authority, in some cases, are recognized and respected by the local colonel or brigadier. In Manipur, the NWUM assisted women combatants in the underground forces, at their request, to surrender and negotiated their safety with the security authorities. In 1995, the NMA president sent a request to the governor of Nagaland and the head of the eastern command, Lieutenant General K.L. Seth, to discuss any incident involving army violence against women and children with the NMA.⁶² In some cases, the commanding officers at the local and district levels have consulted with and listened to the advice of women leaders on these issues.

"When the Indian army came, it was the women who stepped forward between the villagers and the soldiers; it is only the 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. We mothers can't stay quiet."
—Jotsoma village woman

But women's contributions are not always recognized by community leaders. In June 1998, for example, during a civilian-led protest in Manipur, violence broke out between the people and the troops sent to re-open a road. Mrs. Salle of the Senapati District Women's Association recalled how the elders urged, "You women go down and protect the men; they're beating them up." In response, Athia Mary Moroo,

president of the organization, led the women through the protesting crowd to form a human shield between the people and the soldiers. The crisis was defused when the commanding officer ordered the soldiers to withdraw.⁶³ The women went on to secure the release of two young boys arrested during the confrontation. When the Deputy Chief Minister of Manipur arrived to investigate the

incident, however, no one thought to call the women at the forefront of the crisis, and Mrs. Moroo had to insist on being heard about the day's events.⁶⁴

While women spontaneously rush out without regard for their own safety, men often prefer to telephone elected representatives. And when situations are resolved, men publicly step forward to claim credit for defusing the conflict. Yet despite threats and reprisals—and without due credit from the community—women continue on. From their own perspectives, women communicate self-confidence and pride in their responsibility, courage, commitment, and ingenuity in rescuing their "sons" from army custody or establishing accountability for someone's death.

Challenging the Underground Armed Groups⁶⁵

Village women also appeal to the underground armed groups, walking to their camps, and pleading with the leaders not to ambush army encampments, which would make nearby villagers vulnerable to retaliatory attacks. Women have devised a strategy for these negotiations, termed by the NMA as "kitchen politics."⁶⁶ In the heart of the Naga home, in an atmosphere of care and nurturing, women invite the underground members of their tribes in and speak

frankly, noting that violent actions could lead to loss of the support of the Naga people. Following the ceasefire, “kitchen politics” were extended to facilitate a dialogue between top leaders. In providing this safe space, NMA members drew upon their traditional nurturing role and responsibilities to de-politicize the discussion, making it more acceptable to the factions.

In urban areas, tribal elders ask that women attend their talks with the underground leaders in a strategic effort to keep the discussions peaceful. In Mokokchung, women of authority, such as Dr. Yangerla Ao, did not hesitate to chastise members of the underground when violence paralyzed the town, closing schools and businesses. She questioned them: “Who are you fighting for? Not the 50 or 60 of you, but for us If our people are uneducated and economically unfit, then when we have our own rule, how will it help us?”⁶⁷

It is women who secure the release of hostages held by the underground factions, and it is women who expose human rights violations by underground members, provoking the underground leadership to take action. The women work through the tribal networks and sometimes enlist the support of the women within the underground movement, particularly when sexual abuse is involved. In Nagaland in 1999, for example, when one of their members was raped by two Isaak-Muivah cadres, the leaders of the Chakesang Women’s Association and the Isaak-Muivah women leaders came together in a meeting convened by the NMA. The Isaak-Muivah women condemned the incident and issued a press statement saying that they would pressure their leadership to punish the culprit.⁶⁸ A commission of inquiry was subsequently established.⁶⁹

Mediating between NSCN Factions

The history of the Naga insurgency consists of bloody betrayals and divisions fomented by tribalism and exploited by the Indian state and the ruling elite of Nagaland. One of women’s most significant contributions to peace building in the region has been in mediating factional strife and opening up channels of communication among all groups. “All of them are our children, we care for them equally, though we do not

support their differences,” a Jotsoma village woman elder said. In 1998, for example, in an encounter that has become legendary, the president of NMA and the Naga Hoho president rushed to Phek district headquarters, which was facing infighting at the time. Neidonuo Angami rushed out of the car, and as the group was at the point of violence, implored them, “Before you kill your brother, listen to your mother.”⁷⁰

The NMA and other women’s organizations directly attribute their role as mediators in the factional violence to their traditional position as respected mothers in the community. “We are mothers, and we work as mothers. Our advantage [with the underground troops] is that we approach them as mothers and therefore we are trusted by all sides,” NMA President Neidonuo Angami emphasized. The women must be very careful, however, to remain neutral and thereby retain the trust of all groups.

In Nagaland in September 1999, a 12-hour shooting confrontation between the Khaplang group of the NSCN and the Isaak-Muivah faction terrorized the villagers, yet no one dared intervene, even to care for the injured. Village women took the initiative and appealed to the NMA and the Angami Women’s

Association, who then went to the camps of the warring factions. The NPMHR, the Red Cross Society, and government officials also appealed for a ceasefire. “Finally, they listened to us and stopped firing that day,” the local women said.

NMA President Neidonuo Angami bluntly upbraided the warring factions, “If the wishes of the people are ignored, what then do the national workers stand for?”⁷¹

In most cases, women’s appeals and interventions are made through the tribal affiliation of their groups. For example, in Kohima, the capital of Nagaland, when factional fights between the Isaak-Muivah and the Khaplang groups left bodies in the marketplace, it was the local Sema women who went with their tribal elders to appeal to the Khaplang cadres, largely of the Sema tribe, to stop the bloodshed. “Mothers went with the [local tribal elders] to appeal to the Sema underground troops because, given the prevailing tension, men cannot talk to men without more violence result-

“We reduce the temperature; otherwise they would break into a fight. We appeal for peace in the name[s] of all our sons.”
—Limala Ozukum, president of the Ao Women’s Organization

ing. We women being there kept the atmosphere calm,” said Mrs. Jakkalu, President, Women’s Congress in Kohima.

Defusing Inter-Community Tension

The Naga peace process in the northeast has caused past tribal rivalries to surface, particularly in Manipur, intensifying Naga-Kuki rivalries as well as confrontations between Meiteis in the valley and Nagas in the hills. Tension and even violent confrontation between the Nagas and neighboring communities is increasing due to the neighboring communities’ anxiety regarding the demands of Naga leaders to unify Naga-inhabited areas and dissect existing state territories. The women’s role has been to spread the message that there can be no peace for Nagas without peace for all. Naga women have built channels of communication with other communities and have worked together to protect each other. In some areas, Naga women have formed coalitions with non-Naga women to rescue hostages, provide support to displaced persons, and promote inter-community social integration through sports. However, efforts to build an understanding and dialogue beyond a crisis response—even among the women—have proved difficult.

The All-Tribal Women’s Organization (ATWO) of Manipur has been at the forefront of building communication, trust, and cooperation between the Nagas and Kukis as well as the non-tribal Meitei community. ATWO’s mandate covers both Naga and Kuki women, as its secretary is a Naga, K. Amita Tuishimi, and its president is a Kuki, M. Hechin Haokip. Their initiatives have included intervening on behalf of arrested youth of any background, visiting the injured from all sides, and supporting all displaced persons.

The NMA and NWUM have looked for opportunities to reach out to the Kuki and Meitei women to build an understanding of the value of peace for all. NWUM has been particularly successful in encouraging cross-community participation in its workshops on developing mediation skills and intergroup dialogue. NGOs including Reach-m, the Henri Martin Institute, North East Network, South Asia Forum for Human Rights,

and WISCOMP have supported some of these initiatives.⁷² Women have also participated in the NPMHR-initiated people-to-people dialogues, which included a meeting with Indian civil society groups in New Delhi in 2000⁷³ and a June 2003 meeting with the Meiteis.⁷⁴ Although donor funding has dwindled, the popularity of these workshops has made NWUM determined to continue them.

During the period before the Manipur Assembly elections in 2000, NWUM women intervened on several occasions to defuse tension and violence among different communities. Yet in June 2001, the Manipur capital, Imphal, was wracked with violence at the announcement of the ceasefire’s extension to all Naga-inhabited areas. To build a dialogue, NMA and NWUM women worked with external organizations such as the South Asia Forum for Human Rights to gather Naga, Kuki, and Meitei women together for a workshop in Katmandu, but they ultimately failed to overcome the distrust and bitterness.⁷⁵

Despite the traditional role of Naga, Kuki, and Meitei women as peacemakers within their societies, they have difficulty bridging their differences. They face pressure from their own communities, and tension, on occasion, runs very high. Despite this, the NMA and NWUM feel that only women can build a dialogue across the divide. Politically, it would be much more difficult for the men to speak together. Paul Leo, former president of UNC, values the particular quality of compromise that women bring to the conflict-torn situation. “When Meitei and Naga men talk, they reinforce their rigid positions. Women are more diplomatic and willing to compromise. They can be relied upon to pacify.”

Mobilizing for Peace and Reconciliation

At this stage, it is not the NSCN that is best positioned to explore the possibilities of mutual accommodation in northeastern India, but Naga social organizations that have taken up this responsibility. They have initiated a dialogue across the divided com-

“Mothers went with the [local tribal elders] to appeal to the Sema underground troops because, given the prevailing tension, men cannot talk to men without more violence resulting. We women being there kept the atmosphere calm,” said Mrs. Jakkalu, President, Women’s Congress in Kohima.

munities to build trust, understanding, and mutual interest. Neidonuo Angami repeatedly emphasizes the advantage that women, and mothers in particular, have in winning trust, defusing tension, creating comfort levels, and beginning the process of healing and reconciliation. "The groups will always blame each other, and they are terribly angry. However, instead of directing their anger at one another, we allow them to take it out on us. We understand and appreciate their anger and their feelings of resentment. We can put ourselves in their place," she said. It is this quality of empathy and commitment that is the framework for NMA's campaigns for peace building and reconciliation.

Naga Mothers' Campaign: "Shed No More Blood"

As inter-factional violence grew out of control in the early 1990s, the NMA decided to refocus its activities from social welfare to peace building; their first activity was to practice the Naga tradition of giving every unclaimed body a dignified funeral in the shawl of the tribe. In 1994, NMA set aside a Day of Mourning in memory of all those killed due to the political conflict, Nagas and non-Nagas, to foster a spirit of healing and reconciliation.

"Mourning Day" in Kohima on August 4, 1994, brought 3,000 mothers from various tribes together. NMA announced the establishment of a non-partisan Peace Team that would mobilize, in partnership with women's organizations in the various tribes and with church-based groups, a campaign called "Shed No More Blood."⁷⁶

To heal society, NMA asserted, women had to begin locally, from the home. "The conflict is everywhere, therefore the action must be everywhere," Neidonuo Angami said. The NMA Peace Team approached mothers in nearly all of the tribal organizations based in Kohima, urging them to appeal to the factional groups to express love and forgiveness.

On November 22, 1995, NMA organized a public peace rally in Kohima on "Human Integrity and Consequences of Killing" and called for 10 people from each tribe to be represented. The Peace Team also met the Governor, the Chief Minister, and the Commandant of the Assam-based security forces. They pressed for the withdrawal of the Armed Forces

Special Powers Act and advocated on a variety of issues, including making security forces accountable for rape.⁷⁷

At their General Assembly meeting in July 2003, NMA renewed its commitment to the "Shed No More Blood" campaign. These events and initiatives have contributed to a reduction in the level of violence, open channels of communication across all communities, and a broad desire for peace.

Ceremonies of Reconciliation: Peace Among Ourselves

Since the 1997 ceasefire, the NMA, the Naga Hoho, and the Naga Peace Council (the churches) have taken the lead in developing a model of national reconciliation imbued with concepts of the Christian faith, to which 90 percent of the Naga population adheres.⁷⁸ In the framework of "acknowledgement of truth, forgiveness, and healing," justice is not a primary focus of the program. Khesilie Chisi, current president of NMA, explained, "The objective is to try and forgive and then move on if we are to have a future together."

The reconciliation initiative was structured to mobilize the public around certain events, including a rally for peace in June 2000, a "Day of Reconciliation" in December 2001, a Naga National Prayer Day in

August 2002, and various "Days of Commemoration."

Leaders of the reconciliation program remind the armed actors that, "Those who represent the Nagas must be willing to listen to the voice of the Naga people's representatives

through the village councils, the regional bodies, the tribal Hoho, and the churches and other mass-based organizations."⁷⁹

So far the reconciliation program has had mixed results. Most encouraging, there has been a decline in internal violence, lines of communication across factional divides are open, and there is a strong sense that the people want peace. However, while endorsing the reconciliation process, the Isaak-Muivah group has yet to issue a call for ceasefire with the factions.⁸⁰ NMA is determined not to be discouraged. As Angami asserted, "Whether [the armed groups] listen or not, it

"The objective is to try and forgive and then move on if we are to have a future together."

—Khesilie Chisi, current president of NMA

Visiting Tuensang District: An Experiment in Reconciliation

In April 2003, to nurture the reconciliation process, the president and vice-president of NMA visited Tuensang district, an underdeveloped area where both Isaak-Muivah and Khaplang groups maintain camps. Since 2001, a peace zone has existed in the area as a result of the efforts of tribal-based social organizations. When Neidonuo Angami called on one of the local chiefs, soon after her arrival, he asserted, “Now that you’ve come, it will make all the difference.”

NMA met with two separate groups in Tuensang—a mixture of political and military representatives of the Isaak-Muivah and the Khaplang groups—who engaged in candid exchanges and demonstrated a willingness to trust the mothers. NMA apprised the six political and military representatives of the Khaplang group of their campaign to “Shed No More Blood,” to which they responded positively, noting they already knew about it and endorsed it. The Khaplang members appealed to the NMA to take a message to the Isaak-Muivah leadership, whom they would meet with momentarily, that they wanted unity. As Angami observed, “We ask less; they ask of us more.”

The exchange with the Isaak-Muivah group was again open and candid. As the Isaak-Muivah faction had emerged as the dominant underground group, NMA emphasized humility and the need to recognize the contribution and sacrifices made by all members of the NSCN. Isaak-Muivah leaders expressed appreciation for the NMA’s peace work and looked to them to do more and to continue the work of reconciliation. Angami remarked on the return journey, “Our sense of responsibility keeps growing.” The exchanges were clearly political, but again were cast as an extension of the mothers’ traditional caregiving and nurturing role.

is our responsibility to tell them what is right.” Reconciliation work is ongoing, although the Naga Hoho, along with the church, has become more traditional in its approach, leading the social organizations to pursue separate activities.

Participating in the Formal Peace Process

Sustaining the Ceasefire

The 1997 ceasefire, annually renewed again in July 2004, has been a precarious one, strained by many factors including

- unequal restrictions in the ground rules for the parties (i.e. freedom of movement—under the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, which is still in place, even unarmed members of the underground movement can be arrested);
- continuation of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act;

- activities of armed groups not parties to the ceasefire;
- ongoing inter-factional violence;
- deliberate confusion over the territorial limits of the ceasefire; and
- violent opposition from sections of neighboring states in the region.

Moreover, the peace process has yet to integrate the ceasefire into a comprehensive discussion of long-term structures to create a democratic peace. The process has nearly been derailed by many of these factors, as well as other events, including the arrest of the leader of the Isaak-Muivah group during peace talks in Bangkok, discussed below.

The ceasefire continues to hold because of Naga social organizations, whose claim as stakeholders in the peace process is accepted by all parties. “Both sides can decide to break the ceasefire. But for whom, after all,

are they talking—for us. We're all stakeholders in the peace," Neidonuo Angami asserted. In support of the peace process, women's organizations continue advocacy efforts targeted to each party, mobilization of public support, and strategies to overcome specific obstacles to the ceasefire.

Naga civil society groups actively participate in Delhi each year to convey their support for the ceasefire and peace process and to lobby for the annual extension of the ceasefire, and their statements are noted in the media.⁸¹ With the weight of rural and urban women behind them, NMA and NWUM have directly addressed appeals to the Indian prime minister and to the chairman of the Isaak-Muivah group to "act upon the ceasefire with sincerity and transparency" and immediately end ceasefire violations and ongoing violence against civilians.⁸²

The women urged both parties to create an atmosphere more conducive to the peace process. NWUM and NMA have been active in the campaign to withdraw the Armed Forces Special Powers Act and the ban on the NSCN. As a confidence-building measure,

the Naga social organizations have together appealed to both parties to restrict their armed forces to their respective designated areas.

Overcoming Obstacles

Within three months of the establishment of the ceasefire in 1997, then Chief Minister S.C. Jamir, senior member of the Congress party ruling the administrative state of Nagaland at that time, called a meeting of civil society organizations to get a mandate from them not to extend the ceasefire agreement.⁸³ He displayed statistics showing a spurt in factional killings compared to the pre-ceasefire period. However, the NMA, NPMHR, and NSF categorically rejected this move, vowing instead to support the ceasefire with all their resources. The mothers, in particular, were clear: we have a responsibility to our children who have never experienced peace to make the ceasefire work.

A major obstacle to the ongoing peace process occurred in January 2000, when Isaak-Muivah faction leader Th Muivah was arrested in Bangkok on charges of using a fake passport while en route to Amsterdam for another round of peace talks.⁸⁴ There was grave

Connecting with Local Women

It has been difficult to sustain women's mass mobilization over a protracted peace process in the midst of continued factional violence. This is particularly difficult when cutting across the rural/urban divide.

In many cases, that gap is filled by the myriad local-level interventions by village women, whose day-to-day lives are threatened, forcing their involvement in the peace process. At the local level, women spontaneously protect their communities individually and connect through the tribal networks to mobilize hunger strikes, rallies, or public sit-ins on a mass scale. NMA president Neidonuo Angami observed, "You will find those living in the villages know what is happening and they also know what might happen if the ceasefire collapses."

Angami is aware of the importance of a broad-based women's constituency to make NMA's mandate truly representative. She works to ensure that information is passed to rural women and that lines of communication remain clear among the various tribal women's groups. The Seventh NMA General Assembly in May 2003 mobilized women's mass support for the peace process across the tribal and rural/urban divide; at the convention, women passed a resolution to reaffirm their commitment to the "Shed No More Blood" campaign, the need for which is far from over.

danger of collapse of the entire process, especially as the Indian government refused to intervene on his behalf. Appeals by three former Indian prime ministers who had been part of the Indo-Naga peace process failed to break the deadlock. At that point, civil society groups, including representatives of the NMA and NWUM, set up camp in Bangkok to tirelessly lobby the Thai government for his release and for the Indian government to intervene. Partly as a result of their ongoing pressure and resulting public attention, Muivah was eventually released after eight months' imprisonment.

In addition to large, public obstacles such as this, the peace process continues to stall amid accusations and counter-accusations of violations of the ceasefire ground rules. Some fear the new Congress-led administration in New Delhi has reinvigorated some "spoilers" to the peace process, some of who are associated with the Congress party in the northeastern states, as a surge in violence has recently occurred there. Civil society groups have thus initiated and participated in fact-finding missions into ceasefire violations, maintaining their support for the process and pressuring parties to continue talks.

Addressing Contentious Issues through Advocacy and Dialogue

Whenever the ceasefire has come under pressure, a team of Naga social organizations, including the presidents of the NMA and the NWUM, rush to Delhi to act as a pressure group. Their latest intervention in support of the ceasefire occurred in May 2004 with a policy adopted by the new administration, the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) in New Delhi. The UPA's Common Minimum Programme (CMP) document affirmed that "the territorial integrity of the existing states of the Northeast will be maintained," injecting renewed tension in the peace talks.⁸⁵ As previously mentioned, one of the most controversial issues in the negotiations remains the Nagas' demand for the unification of Naga-inhabited areas and the opposition of neighboring states and people to the demand for territorial extension of the ceasefire to all of these areas.

A team of Naga social organizations went to Delhi lobbying for the annual extension of the ceasefire. These organizations also began to appeal for withdrawal of the reference to territorial integrity from the CMP. The NMA, NWUM, and other Naga social organizations have been at the front line in support of

a ceasefire without territorial limits,⁸⁶ conducting mass rallies, participating in blockades and sit-ins, and providing support to Nagas forcibly displaced from their homes in Manipur.⁸⁷ To decrease tension during the ceasefire talks, Naga women and civil society groups continued advocacy and dialogue. The ceasefire was eventually renewed despite the "territorial integrity" clause. Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio, elected in February 2004, noted that, "peace and political talk should be given a fair chance" and agreed to discussions on the CMP issue following a ceasefire renewal.⁸⁸

The ongoing activism of Naga women and civil society creates broad-based support for peace and elevates that voice to a national level, creating momentum for the annual ceasefire renewal.

Broadening the Ceasefire

Meeting with the Khaplang Group

The July 1997 ceasefire between the government of India and the Isaak-Muivah group did not include the splinter sector of the NSCN—the Khaplang group. Within days of the announcement of the ceasefire, the Khaplang group stepped up attacks on the security forces. In turn, the Isaak-Muivah group, despite their ceasefire with the government, was unrestrained in attacking the Khaplang cadres.⁸⁹ As a result of the ongoing violence, NMA took on the responsibility of facilitating a face-to-face dialogue among the Naga factional leaders in an attempt at unity and stability.

As a first step, NMA convened a joint meeting of mothers from the various tribes in 1998, as many of them had access to different factions of the Isaak-Muivah group, the Khaplang, and the other two underground groups. As a second step, two women from NMA and two from NWUM went to Bangkok in 1999 and met with the Isaak-Muivah leaders Isaak Swu and Th Muivah as part of the first of the Isaak-Muivah's consultations with civil society. "I told them that the arms and ammunition that you have belong to the Naga peoples as a whole, so please restrain yourself. I asked them to be humble as all [underground members] have contributed to the struggle and all have made sacrifices," Neidonuo Angami told the author of this study. A few weeks later, the four-woman team began an arduous journey on foot across extremely rough and dangerous terrain to cross the border into Myanmar and the Khaplang group's headquarters.

They were the first Naga civil society group to visit the Khaplang central headquarters and were honored with

a 21-gun salute as distinguished guests at their Republic Day event.⁹⁰ Over two days of events and meetings, Gina Shangkhram of NWUM recalled that Khaplang himself was keen to vent his grievances. However, he promised not to stand in the way of the peace process, although he would not be a party to the ceasefire. The women offered to facilitate a meeting of the Isaak-Muivah and the Khaplang leaders anywhere and any time. On their return to Nagaland, the women met with 16 of the top leaders of the Isaak-Muivah group at their headquarters. Naga women, who traditionally had been excluded from carrying important messages, were now being trusted as interlocutors between the two factions.

Three years later, after various setbacks including the assassination of the general secretary of the Khaplang group by Isaak-Muivah cadres, NMA and NWUM women again met with S. S. Khaplang to debrief him on the January 2002 civil society consultations with the Isaak-Muivah group in Bangkok. "Paragraph by paragraph we interpreted the context of the Bangkok declaration," Gina Shangkhram said. The meeting with Khaplang was an opportunity to inform the increasingly isolated Khaplang leadership about the ongoing violence and disruption undertaken in their name.⁹¹ It was also an occasion to share with him the many changes that had occurred in Naga society, while he had been fighting in the jungles. The meeting with Khaplang himself was particularly encouraging because he alluded to the good times when the Naga national movement was once united under Phizo's leadership. He acknowledged the wrongs committed and hoped that in his lifetime, they could be corrected. It echoed a moment of recognition by Th Muivah earlier in Bangkok when he candidly said that the Nagas would not be defeated by the Indian army, but only by the excesses of their own armed groups.

While the efforts to bring the Isaak-Muivah and Khaplang leaders face-to-face have yet to be realized, the women continue their mission for Naga unity. NMA facilitated a meeting between the Isaak-Muivah leaders and another armed faction, the NNC-Federal, in May 1999. Having won the trust of both sides, a meeting was arranged where there was to be no discussion of the politics that had bitterly divided them, but

instead a discussion of their shared history of struggle and sacrifice. And as an appreciation of the "success" in merely having the event occur, the women honored the attendees by fulfilling their role as nurturers, preparing a sumptuous feast and serving them—another example of effective "kitchen politics."

The activities of women in this area have opened a vital channel of communication between the rival factions, bringing them one step closer to peace.

Meeting with Neighboring States and Countries

In addition to bringing in other Naga factions, NMA and NWUM have reached out to the peoples of neighboring states and countries to build an understanding that peace is not only for the Naga people, but for all.

In June 2001, NMA appealed to its neighboring states, and to Burma, to "understand and appreciate the circumstantial difficulties and plight of the Nagas." It urged the people to cooperate in finding a

solution to the Indo-Naga problem, which is "positively in the interest of the people of the region as a whole."⁹²

An NMA and NWUM team has undertaken several journeys to the neighboring states of Manipur, Assam, Mizoram, and Meghalaya to meet with the governors, elected representatives, social organizations, human rights groups, and women's associations to apprise them of the peace process and allay misgivings.⁹³ Commenting on the NMA and NWUM's intervention, NSF President Achumbem Kikon remarked, "As mothers, they have access, they can get appointments and speak to all." Naga women maximize this access in order to dialogue with non-Naga communities and official representatives, addressing contentious and important issues to facilitate the formal peace process and enhance the prospects for long-term stability in the region.

Forging an Inclusive Peace Process

The leaders of the underground Naga armed groups have fought for fifty years in the jungles, while "above-ground" Naga society has undergone huge changes. Armed leaders now recognize they are out of touch from the people in whose name they have fought. Naga civil society groups have impressed upon the

*"As mothers, they have access, they can get appointments and speak to all."
—NSF President Achumbem Kikon*

underground leadership that while the people value the aspirations for which the Naga armed groups were struggling, they want peace more. “Those who represent the Nagas must be willing to listen to the voice of the Nagas . . . ,” asserts the declaration adopted at the National Reconciliation Ceremony by 132 representatives of Naga social organizations, including NMA and NWUM.⁹⁴

The Isaak-Muivah leaders, despite initial suspicions about some of these groups, especially the churches, have come to appreciate the value of the social organizations to communicate “what was politically possible.”⁹⁵ K. Padmanabhaiah, the Indian special emissary to the peace talks, added that civil society’s role has been to impress upon the leaders that “they can’t ask for the moon.” A member of the Naga Hoho, Horangse Sangtam, was equally explicit: “The last time that the Indian government made a serious peace offer in the 1960s, offering the Nagas all but sovereignty, Phizo the head of the NNC rejected it.” To Sangtam, that was a fatal misreading of the situation.

The Isaak-Muivah leaders have recognized the strategic value of the peace mobilization of Naga social organizations, especially women’s groups, and the need for their connection with these organizations. It has been necessary to mobilize popular support for the peace process and to build legitimacy for themselves as spokespersons for Naga aspirations. Tapan Bose, a human rights activist, explained,

The actual contact with the Naga peoples of the Isaak-Muivah faction of the NSCN, as an underground outfit, was minimal. . . . But its leaders have grown to recognize the need for mass support and the need to involve the Naga Hoho, the church leaders, and the social organizations like NMA, NPMHR, NSF, and NWUM.

The process has proved mutually beneficial for the underground groups and for civil society, which began with social activists and church leaders meeting in small groups with the Isaak-Muivah leadership to begin building trust. In one such meeting, the NMA and NWUM women met with the armed leaders. It was the first time since the armed struggle began, especially after the ban on the NSCN, that the top Isaak-Muivah leaders were able to interact with the Naga people. For several weeks in 1999, Isaak and Muivah were in the Niuland (Dimapur) district, the headquarters of their Parliament, meeting hundreds of Naga people.

Earlier in August 1998, the Naga social organizations had set up a 22-member Action Committee to oversee the peace process. Its goal was to eventually develop into a coordinating mechanism representing all stakeholders in the peace process, including social organizations. The government of India and the Isaak-Muivah faction of the NSCN agreed that the Ceasefire Monitoring Committee would include “four associate members representing the NGOs.”⁹⁶ Yet disputes over who should determine the representatives have stalled their appointments.⁹⁷

There was some expectation of a breakthrough in 2002 when the Isaak-Muivah faction took the initiative to convene two groups in Bangkok in a conscious effort to strengthen the peace process through the people’s participation. Chairman Isaak Swu was explicit about including the people.

Past mistakes have sufficiently taught us that no political settlement can be reached without the will and consent of the people. [Here we] reaffirm our commitment [that] we will enter into a political settlement with the Indian state only after seeking the express opinion and consent of the people. These consultation meetings reflect our commitment.⁹⁸

In January 2002, the Isaak-Muivah group invited 44 persons from the various Naga civil society organizations and the tribes of Andhra Pradesh, Manipur, Assam, and Nagaland. Three women from the NMA and NWUM participated, yet there were no women representing the Isaak-Muivah group, which elicited some criticism. NSCN Chairperson Isaak Swu firmly affirmed before the assembled gathering, “That in all stages of political negotiations, the Naga people will be consulted and their participation sought for better understanding so that past mistakes may not be repeated and transparency ensured.” Allaying misgivings, he emphasized, “No agreement would be entered into without the fullest understanding of the Naga peoples.”⁹⁹

The interaction was an opportunity to understand what was happening in the talks with the Indian emissaries, to remove suspicions, and to guard against speculation. The statement of the civil society delegation affirmed support for the ceasefire and talks between the government and the NSCN under the leadership of Isaak and Muivah, recognizing the progress as a significant achievement for all Nagas. The leaders endorsed the importance of continuing the Naga

Reconciliation Process and the need to be sensitive to the interests and fears of neighboring states and people. The consultation established the mutual need and interdependence of the armed groups, civil society, and tribal authority. It was the Naga Hoho, the churches, the NMA, NWUM, and other Naga social organizations that the Isaak-Muivah group looked to as facilitators of unity and reconciliation.

The May 2002 consultation was widened to encompass 110 representatives from 30 Naga organizations focusing on the theme of “Strengthening the Peace Strategy.”¹⁰⁰ It reiterated the commitment made by NSCN to seek the opinion and consent of the people in order to strengthen the peace process. “We will not go ahead leaving the people behind,” Isaak Swu affirmed.¹⁰¹ Whereas in the January meeting there were no Isaak-Muivah women, this time there were six senior female Isaak-Muivah representatives. There were also five women from civil society groups, including NWUM and other tribal women’s organizations. NMA did not attend. Angami explained, “We always represent the women. We thought it would help to get other organizations to have the exposure to encourage wider mobilization.”

Since the 2002 meetings, consultation with civil society has been ad hoc. At issue are not only trust but competing centers of power. The Naga Hoho does not want to be seen as compromising its independence by identifying too closely with the Isaak-Muivah group. It wants to maintain its distance as well as its identity as an authority representing the Naga tribal organizations. NMA and NWUM do not carry that kind of political baggage or power aspirations, and trust is more easily facilitated. The Isaak-Muivah leadership has said that it has come to value the role of the women, reflected in the presence of Isaak-Muivah women in the second consultation.

The capacity of the Naga social organizations to negotiate a structured role as stakeholders in the peace process has been weakened by a lack of appreciation and significance of Naga civil society on the part of the Indian government and its bureaucratic and military institutions. Institutions of the state, especially in a situation of “nationalist” conflict, are not structured to recognize or respect the “civilian” victim’s voice, and in

the post-conflict period often seem unable to value civil society, particularly women, as necessary for peace building. Although the government and the Isaak-Muivah faction had agreed that the ceasefire monitoring structure would include “four associate members representing the NGOs,” the head of the monitoring group, General (Ret.) R. V. Kulkarni, decided to nominate four representatives—two from the Naga Hoho and two from Baptist churches.¹⁰² Neinglo Krome, convener of the civil society Action Committee, rejected the invitation to the meeting. He wanted the

Action Committee to nominate its own representatives, not the government or the Isaak-Muivah group.¹⁰³

Substantive political negotiations have yet to begin at the peace table.

It is too early to indicate whether civil society groups will be able to influence and democratize the peace agenda. The Naga social organizations have been deliberately reticent on sensitive issues, such as unification and sovereignty.¹⁰⁴ But it can be argued that the presence and agendas of civil society have made an impact on the overall tone and issues under consideration by the parties. Overall, the major shift in the peace table agenda occurred when the ceasefire ground rules were expanded in 2001 to protect civilians from abuse of authority by the armed parties. The clause specifically noted that the Indian army and paramilitary forces, as well as the Isaak-Muivah group, would “act in a manner as not to cause harassment/damage or loss of property or injury to the civilian population.”¹⁰⁵ The change demonstrated recognition of the need for a broader peace table that places civilian security concerns at the forefront of the agenda.

There is also greater awareness of other concerns of civil society, such as ecological, developmental, and women’s issues. Although not consistent across the board,¹⁰⁶ it can be argued that women’s participation in the peace process has led to a shift in social consciousness and growth in the negotiating power of Naga women. For example, the NPMHR issued a declaration in 2000 commending the “positive participation” of women members in its activities and their contribution to the struggle.¹⁰⁷ Awareness of women’s importance to the Isaak-Muivah group was evidenced by the participation of their women leaders in the third Bangkok Consultation in 2002 and again at an assem-

“Women are 50 percent of the population and should have a voice.”
—Paul Leo, former President of the UNC

bly in Manipur in April 2003. Several of the top-ranking Isaak-Muivah leaders and cadres were there, including women ministers of the underground Isaak-Muivah government, the women's military wing, as well as Mrs. Muivah. Valley Rose, editor of the Tangkhul language daily *Aja*, noted that the Isaak-Muivah women voiced their dissatisfaction with their

lack of decision-making authority in these meetings. At the discussions' end, recommendations included women's representation in the village tribal authority; despite the opposition of the elders, it passed. The Isaak-Muivah faction continually notes that the Naga "women of peace" must be seated at the table.

CONCLUSION

Using a variety of approaches, Naga women capitalize on cultural and tribal traditions of women's peace activism to play a critical role in the Indo-Naga peace process. Naga women informally negotiate with Indian security forces, underground armed opposition forces, and a variety of tribal factions and groups to protect their families and communities. Conducting inter-community and inter-tribal events and ceremonies, Naga women cross conflict divides to promote peace and reconciliation and are routinely relied on as interlocutors, mediators, and facilitators.

Naga women sustain an annual ceasefire by mediating between fighting factions to expand talks to include other actors, promoting dialogue designed to overcome obstacles in negotiations, and encouraging various tribes and neighboring states and communities to support peace in the region. The activities of Naga women—and civil society as a whole—have transformed a stagnant peace process with little support into a broad-based popular movement that compels parties to renew the annual ceasefire and continue the search for a sustainable, nonviolent solution.

In every aspect of the Naga peace process, no intervention, from the local to the highest level, is seen as complete without women's presence. JoJo Aier, an eminent lawyer in Kohima, noted that "In every public activity, in every public meeting, the men now ask: 'Where are the women? We need the women.'" "The social and political recognition of NMA's and NWUM's contri-

butions to peace is a direct result of women's numerous activities to protect their communities, sustain the ceasefire, mobilize for reconciliation, and mediate for peace.

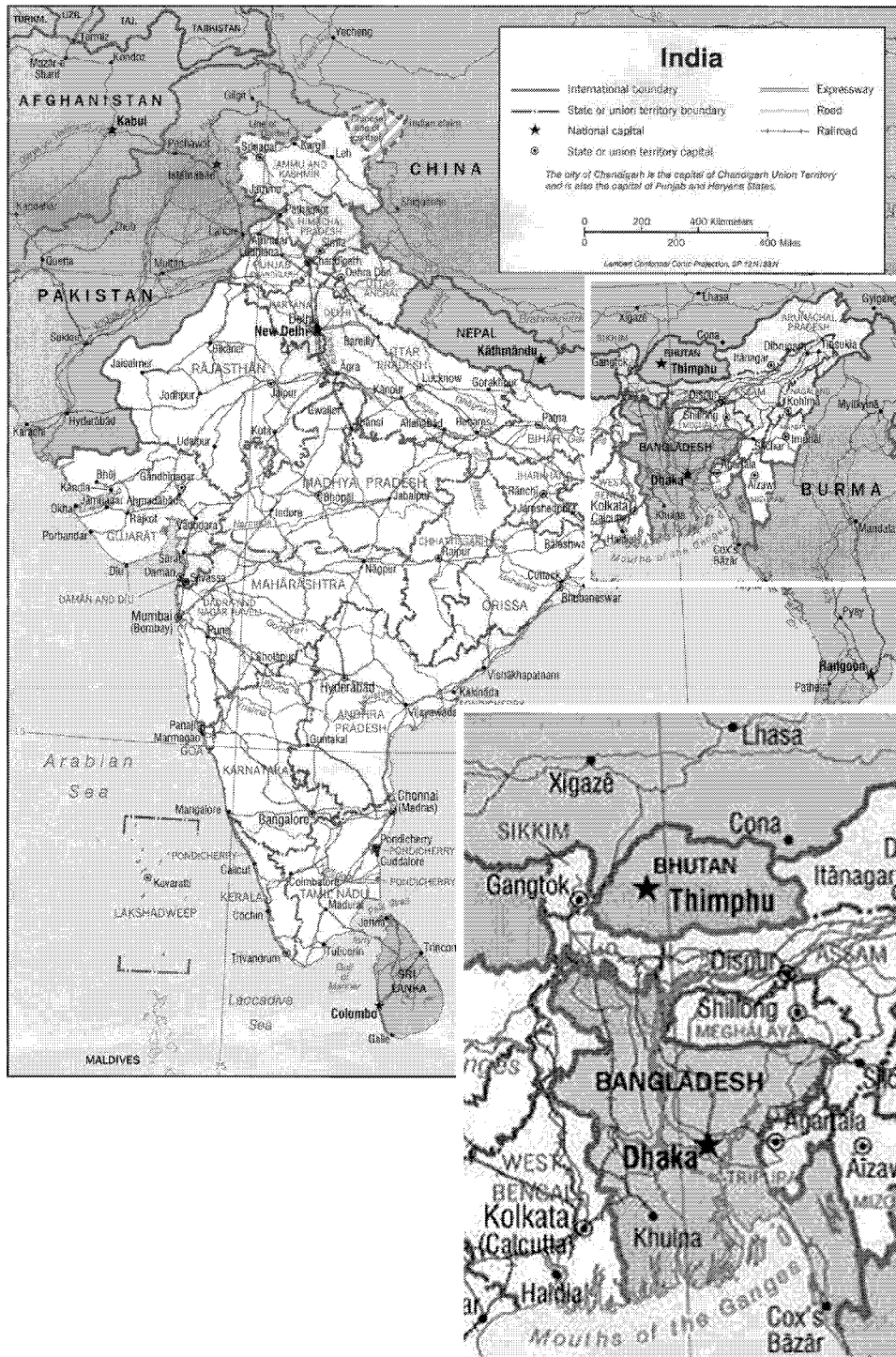
This acknowledgement has begun to translate into action, as women are increasingly requested to participate in public activities, meetings, and negotiations. Paul Leo, former President of the UNC, justifies women's participation in all delegations as follows: "Women are 50 percent of the population and should have a voice." NMA and NWUM facilitate communication among the leaders of the underground factions, participate in Naga civil society's advocacy campaigns, and have been included in some high-level delegations and peace consultations.

Yet there remains enormous untapped potential in the role of Naga women. NMA and NWUM must be provided with technical and financial resources to maximize the impact of their initiatives and their access to all major actors. Unlike in most areas of conflict in the world, Naga women are recog-

nized as traditional peacemakers in Naga society; this must be capitalized upon to help resolve the conflict. Given the long-standing ceasefire and little forward movement in the process, creative efforts to support and involve women systematically in the formal talks is a crucial, yet simple, way to bring Naga one step closer to peace.

"In every public activity, in every public meeting, the men now ask: 'Where are the women? We need the women.'"
—Jo Jo Aier, an eminent lawyer in Kohima

APPENDIX 1: MAP OF INDIA—FOCUS ON NORTHEASTERN INDIA



Source: University of Texas 11 November 2004 <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/india_pol01.jpg>.

APPENDIX 2: LIST OF ACRONYMS

ATWO	All-Tribal Women's Organization of Manipur
CMP	Common Minimum Programme
GPRN	Government of the People's Republic of Nagalim
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NMA	Naga Mothers Association
NNC	Naga National Council
NPMHR	Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights
NSCN	National Socialist Council of Nagalim
NSF	Naga Students' Federation
NWUM	Naga Women's Union of Manipur
UN	United Nations
UNC	United Naga Council
UPA	United Progressive Alliance
WISCOMP	Women in Security, Conflict Management, and Peace

APPENDIX 3: GLOSSARY

Armed Forces Special Powers Act is a 1958 bill passed by the Indian government that authorizes armed security personnel to shoot on sight (and on suspicion) anyone committing or about to commit an offence against the maintenance of public order. It mandates the deployment of the national army, central paramilitary forces organized by state, and the Indian reserve battalions. No action can be instituted against a soldier without clearance from the central authority, fostering a culture of impunity.

Arunachal Pradesh is a state in northeastern India in which Nagas and various other groups reside.

Assam is a state in northeastern India in which Ahoms and Nagas reside.

The term *demi* refers to women's traditionally sanctioned role as peacemakers, including Zeliangrong women's duty as the only individuals allowed to carry the head of the slain to the bereaved family.

Imphal is the capital of Manipur state in northeastern India.

Isaak-Muivah faction is the primary armed faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim, fighting for self-determination of the Naga people.

The **Khaplang group** is an armed faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim, fighting for self-determination of the Naga people.

Kohima is the capital of Nagaland state in northeastern India.

Manipur is a state in northeastern India in which Kukis, Meiteis, and Nagas reside.

A *mekhala* is a sarong, which a wise Naga woman might traditionally shake or whip open and, through this public shaming, stop violence and induce a negotiated compromise.

Nagaland refers to a single political and administrative state in northeast India—one of the four states where Naga people reside.

Nagalim refers to the entire traditional homeland of the Naga people, which encompasses land in four provinces of northeastern India, as well as territory in Burma.

The **Naga Hills** is a reference to the areas historically inhabited by the 40 Naga tribes in northeastern India.

The **Naga Hoho** is an unofficial parliament of the chiefs of Naga tribal councils. It was created in 1994 and is composed of male tribal chiefs elected by popular consensus with a specific mandate to end factional infighting and violence.

The term *pukrelia*, in reference to women's traditionally sanctioned role as peacemakers, is defined as a Naga woman married to man of a different clan who would intervene in the midst of a battle, appealing for an end to violence between men who were her kin through blood or marriage.

APPENDIX 4: TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS

Ancient and medieval period	Nagas live in fortified, self-sufficient village republics
1826	Treaty of Yandabo is signed between Great Britain and Myanmar, leading to British colonization of the Naga Hills
1946	Formation of the Naga National Council (NNC)
August 14, 1947	NNC declares Naga self-rule
August 15, 1947	Indian independence from Great Britain
May 1951	Naga plebescite reaffirms Naga self-determination
1952	Nagas boycott the first Indian national elections
Early 1950s	Tensions continue to grow between the Indian government and the NNC, leading to the formation of an NNC underground armed movement and the beginning of violent confrontations
1958	Indian government passes the Armed Forces Special Powers Act
1963	Some Naga leaders sign the Sixteen Point Agreement with the Government of India, yet violence continues
1967	Indian government bans the NNC
1975	Some underground groups surrender their arms under the Shillong Accord, yet violence continues
1980	NNC General Secretary Th Muivah, NNC Vice President Isaak Swu, and President of the Eastern NNC S. S. Khaplang break away to form the Naga Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN)
1988	NSCN splinters into two factions—the Isaak-Muivah group and the Khaplang group—leading to intense violence between the two factions
1994	Naga Mothers' Association launches the "Shed No More Blood" campaign in an effort to curb the violence
1997	Ceasefire is signed between the Isaak-Muivah faction of the NSCN and the government of India; ceasefire has been renewed annually as recently as July 2004
2001	Ceasefire is signed between the Khaplang faction of the NSCN and the government of India

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⁸Naga "social" or "voluntary" organizations are rooted in community identity, rather than the free will of an individual to join and later change their commitment to a cause—as is the case in "civil society." Thus, the terms "social" or "voluntary" organizations are used throughout this report to refer to the major so-called "civil society" actors. See: Kaviraj, Sudipto and Sunil Khilnani. *Civil Society: History and Possibilities*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

⁹Dholabhai, Nishit. "Nagas Hail Truce Extension." *The Telegraph* 3 August 2004. 28 September 2004 <http://www.nscnonline.org/webpages/nagas_hail_truce_extension.htm>.

¹⁰Machel, Graça. *Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*. New York: United Nations Children's Fund, 1996. 9 November 2004 <http://www.unicef.org/graca/a51-306_en.pdf>.

¹¹Kumar and Murthy.

¹²Lund, Michael S. "Early Warning and Preventive Diplomacy." *Managing Global Chaos*. Eds. Chester Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1996. 379–402.

¹³"Measuring the Quality of Governance." The World Bank, 14 July 2003. 18 August 2003 <<http://web.world-bank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:20119698~menuPK:34457~pagePK:34370~piPK:34424~theSitePK:4607,00.html>>.

¹⁴"Capacity Building." *Gender in Development*. New York: United Nations Development Programme, 2000. 25 May 2004 <http://www.sdn.undp.org/gender/capacity/gm_intro.html>.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶See: Kumar and Murthy; Vashum, R. *Indo-Naga Conflict: Problems and Resolution*. New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 2001; and Vashum, R. *Nagas' Right to Self Determination: An Anthropological-Historical Perspective*. New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 2000.

¹⁷According to Vashum, the Naga tribes in northeastern India include 13 tribes in Nagaland, 15 in Manipur, 3 in Arunachal, and 2 in Assam; in Myanmar there are an additional 15 tribes in two states.

¹⁸Kikon, Dolly. "Political Mobilization of Women in Nagaland: A Sociological Background." *Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights: 25 Years*. Kohima, Nagaland: NPMHR, 2000; and Rose, Valley. "Pukrelia." *Rasunriang 2001*. Imphal, Manipur: National Women's Union of Manipur, 2001. 19–21.

¹⁹For elaboration, see: Luithui, Shimreichon. "Women for Peace in Nagalim." *Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights: 25 Years*. Kohima, Nagaland: NPMHR, 2000. 120–124; and Rose.

²⁰Rose 19.

²¹Pamei, Aram. "Naga Women and Culture." *Raisunriang* 1996. Imphal, Manipur: National Women's Union of Manipur, 1996. 27–32.

²²Pamei, Aram. "Rani Gaidinliu." *Raisunriang* 2001. Imphal, Manipur: National Women's Union of Manipur, 2001. 31.

²³For texts of A.Z. Phizo's Declaration of Self Determination (1951) and his reaction to the Peace Mission (1964–1968), see: Lasuh, Wetshokhrolo and V.K. Nuh. Eds. *The Naga Chronicle*. New Delhi: Regency Publications, 2002. For an analysis of Phizo's responses, see Kumar and Murthy 55, 59–60.

²⁴The plebiscite was conducted unilaterally by Phizo, who obtained thumbprints of men only; no women were allowed to participate.

²⁵See: *Census of India 2001*. For an analysis of Manipur's multi-ethnic mix, see: Shimray, U.A. "Women's Work in Naga Society: Household Work, Workforce Participation and Division of Labour." *Economic and Political Weekly* 39, 17 (2004): 1698–1711; and "Summary Report on the Conditions of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from the Imphal Valley to the Naga Hills Areas of Manipur: A Repercussion of the Indo-Naga Casefire." *NPMHR Report on Internally Displaced Persons*. Kohima, Nagaland: NPMHR, 2003. 9 November 2004 <<http://www.npmhr.org/reports/displaced.htm>>.

²⁶See: Lasuh and Nuh 77–98.

²⁷Nandita Haksar, an influential human rights campaigner for the Naga cause, said, "We [Indians] look upon the Naga people as headhunters, savages, and subhuman. And we look upon their demand for a separate Naga state as a problem of law and order." In Luithui, Luingham and Nandita Haksar. *Nagaland File*. New Delhi: Lancer Publishers, 1984.

²⁸Mullick. Furthermore, Subir Bhaumick, a BBC journalist, claims the ratio was one soldier for one male Naga (*Insurgent Crossfire: Northeast India*. New Delhi: Lancer Publishers, 1996).

²⁹"India." *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2003*. Washington, DC: United States Department of State, 2004. 28 September 2004 <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27947.htm>>.

³⁰Mullick.

³¹"India—Northeast." *Armed Conflicts Report 2003*. Ontario, Canada: Project Ploughshares, 2004. 28 September 2004 <<http://www.ploughshares.ca/content/ACR/ACR00/ACR00-IndiaNortheast.html>>. For higher estimates, see the Naga People's Movement for Human Rights at <www.npmhr.org>.

³²Luithui and Haksar.

³³Qtd. in Lasuh and Nuh 327. See same reference for the full text of the proceedings of the talks between A. Z. Phizo and Prime Minister Moraji Desai.

³⁴Unless otherwise noted, all quotes are from interviews conducted by the author in 2002, 2003, and 2004.

³⁵Shimray.

³⁶Ibid. 1706.

³⁷For further information, see: Banerjee, Paula. "Between Two Armed Patriarchies." *Women, War, and Peace in South Asia*. Ed. Rita Manchanda. Delhi: Sage Publications, 2001. 159–160. This chapter documents Mrs. Mou's account of her life underground. Although she participated in combat, her main duties were training other recruits, warning villages about a possible army raid, and providing support to the needy families of the underground combatants. As a Naga woman, she also cooked, although she had to get up at dawn to do so.

³⁸This estimate is based on the author's personal communication with Mrs. Kitoli, former head of the women's wing of the Khaplang faction, and with representatives of the Isaak-Muivah group.

³⁹For documents on the churches' peace mission, see Lasuh and Nuh.

- ⁴⁰Nibedon, Nirmal. *Nagaland: The Night of the Guerrillas*. 1978. New Delhi: Lancer Publishers, 2000.
- ⁴¹Kumar and Murthy 99. The influential former Director General of Police K. P. S. Gill argued in a 2001 article that the Nagas are not a single, politically and culturally homogenous people ("Managing NE: More Foresight Needed." *The Pioneer* 30 June 2001. 9 November 2004 <<http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/kpsgill/terrorism/Jun30Pio.htm>>).
- ⁴²"India—Northeast."
- ⁴³Muivah, Th. Address. Naga Consultation Meeting: Strengthening the Peace Strategy. Bangkok. 7–12 January 2002.
- ⁴⁴Shangkham, Gina. Address. The Naga Consultative Meeting. Bangkok. 6–10 May 2002.
- ⁴⁵"Peace table," as it is used here, encompasses the overall process of negotiations and post-conflict social and political reconstruction.
- ⁴⁶Kulkarni, General R. V. Personal interview. April 2003.
- ⁴⁷Von Fürer-Haimendorf, Christoph. *The Naked Nagas: Head-Hunters of Assam in Peace and War*. Calcutta: AMS Press, 1976.
- ⁴⁸*Statistical Handbook of Manipur 2002*. Lamphelpat, Manipur: Manipur Department of Economics and Statistics, 2002.
- ⁴⁹*Statistical Handbook of Nagaland 2001*. Kohima, Nagaland: Nagaland Department of Economics and Statistics, 2001.
- ⁵⁰Banerjee; Kikon, Dolly. "Naga Women." *NPMHR Newsletter* July 2002; and Khala, Kitoli. "The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act and Its Impact on Women in Nagaland." *Perspectives* 5. New Delhi: Women in Security, Conflict Management, and Peace, 2003. 42–43.
- ⁵¹Shangkham, Gina. "Naga Women Today." *Raisunriang* 1995. Imphal, Manipur: National Women's Union of Manipur, 1995. The exception is in the Maran Khullen village in the Senapati district, Manipur, where Mrs. Hinga Karangnamei became the chief of the 23 clans of the Maram tribe following her husband's death in 1996.
- ⁵²Statistical Handbook of Nagaland 2001.
- ⁵³*Naga Mothers Millennium Challenge*. Kohima, Nagaland: Naga Mothers Association, n.d.
- ⁵⁴*Annual Reports*. Imphal, Manipur: Naga Women's Union of Manipur, n.d; Leo, Paul. "Naga Women and Human Rights." *Raisunriang* 1998. Imphal, Manipur: National Women's Union of Manipur, 1998. 14–15.
- ⁵⁵These include the Henri Martyn Institute's women's study tour and the South Asia Forum for Human Rights' workshop, Women Making Peace.
- ⁵⁶Goswami, Roshmi. "Women in Armed Conflict: Ground Realities from Northeast India." Human Security in the New Millennium. Women in Security, Conflict Management, and Peace Symposium. New Delhi. August 2000. For a description of cases before the National Human Rights Commission since its inception related to women, see: <<http://www.nhrc.nic.in/>>.
- ⁵⁷"Manipur Woman's Killing: Petition Before NHRC." *PTI* 20 July 2004. 9 November 2004 <<http://www.rediff.com/news/2004/jul/20mani.htm>>.
- ⁵⁸For more information, see: Manchanda, Rita. Ed. *Women, War, and Peace in South Asia*. Delhi: Sage Publications, 2001. 31.
- ⁵⁹*Raisunriang* 2001. Imphal, Manipur: National Women's Union of Manipur, 2001.
- ⁶⁰Banerjee 164.

⁶¹Goswami; and Khala.

⁶²Chenoy, Anuradha M. *Militarism and Women in South Asia*. New Delhi: Kali for Women, 2002. 134.

⁶³See: Morro, Athia Mary. "An Event Never to be Forgotten." *Raisunriang 2001*. Imphal, Manipur: National Women's Union of Manipur, 2001.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵The Nagas favor the term "national workers" to represent the members of the Naga National Movement—both military and political cadres. They also use the term "the Underground" or "UGs." Terminology outside Nagaland includes "rebels," "militants," and "terrorists."

⁶⁶See Neidonuo's references to "kitchen politics" in: Manchanda, Rita, Bandita Sijapati, and Rebecca Gang. *Women Making Peace*. Proc. of Strengthening Women's Role in Peace Processes, 25–28 June 2001, South Asia Forum for Human Rights. Kathmandu: SAFHR, 2002.

⁶⁷Ao, Yangerla. Personal interview. 2001.

⁶⁸Angami, Neidonuo. Interview by Kumar and Laxmi. April 2001.

⁶⁹Angami, Neidonuo. Interview by Kumar and Laxmi. March 2001.

⁷⁰Angami, Neichu. Personal communication. 2002–2004.

⁷¹Anonymous women in Jotsoma village. Focus group. 2002–2004.

⁷²*Raisunriang 2001* 8–9.

⁷³Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights: 25 Years. Kohima, Nagaland: NPMHR, 2000. 144–145.

⁷⁴Ibid. 140–141.

⁷⁵Manchanda, Sijapati, and Gang.

⁷⁶NMA Records. Provided to the author.

⁷⁷NMA Records. Provided to the author.

⁷⁸*Census of India 2001*.

⁷⁹Lasuh and Nuh 612.

⁸⁰Ibid. 632.

⁸¹See Dholabhai, for example, in reporting about the July 2004 ceasefire renewal: "The response of non-governmental organizations, which have been urging for an extension of the ceasefire, has been positive. However, the general opinion is that Delhi will have to display sincerity and break the ice before it wins the trust of the rebels."

⁸²Naga Mothers Association. Letter to Indian Prime Minister and Chairman NSCN. 26 August 2003. Provided to the author.

⁸³Kumar and Murthy 132.

⁸⁴Political circumstances did not permit Muivah to travel on an Indian passport.

⁸⁵"Centre to Extend Truce with NSCN(IM)." *The Assam Tribune* 20 June 2004.

⁸⁶National Women's Union of Manipur, et al. Memorandum to Atal Bihari Vajpayee. 22 June 2001. Provided to the author.

⁸⁷Gina Shangkhram of NWUM addressed a humanitarian appeal to Deputy Commissioners of the districts of Senapati, Ukhrul, Chandel, and Tamenglong in Manipur on September 18, 2001. For more information, see:

“Summary Report on the Conditions of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from the Imphal Valley to the Naga Hills Areas of Manipur: A Repercussion of the Indo-Naga Ceasefire.” 75–85.

⁸⁸Dholabhai.

⁸⁹See: Bhushan, Bharat. Interview with Th Muivah. *The Hindustan Times* 7 November 1998; and Kumar and Murthy 92. After the ceasefire, Khaplang group cadres launched attacks on Indian security forces in Nagaland, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh. Kidnappings and extortion also increased.

⁹⁰In October 1998, a civil society delegation had traveled to Myanmar and met Khaplang at a camp. See the brief report of this meeting in: *Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights: 25 Years*. 96–98.

⁹¹Shangkham, Gina. Personal interview. January and May 2003.

⁹²Press Release, 17 June 2001. Kohima, Nagaland: Naga Mothers Association, 2001.

⁹³*Nagaland Post* 17 December 2003.

⁹⁴Text of the declaration can be found in: Lasuh and Nuh 610–618.

⁹⁵Kumar 90.

⁹⁶Qtd. in Lasuh and Nuh 478–479.

⁹⁷Lasuh and Nuh 478–479.

⁹⁸Transcript

⁹⁹Swu, Isaak. Address. Naga Consultation Meeting: Strengthening the Peace Strategy. Bangkok. 7–12 January 2002.

¹⁰⁰Naga Consultation Meeting: Strengthening the Peace Strategy. Bangkok. 6–10 May 2002.

¹⁰¹Swu, Isaak. Address. Naga Consultation Meeting. Bangkok. 6–10 May 2002.

¹⁰²Kulkarni, R.V. Letter of invitation. 11 February 1998. Provided to the author.

¹⁰³Lasuh and Nuh 478–479.

¹⁰⁴“Centre to Extend Truce with NSCN (IM).”

¹⁰⁵Qtd. in Kumar 136–137.

¹⁰⁶There has been no discussion, for example, of any role women combatants would play in disarmament programs. In addition, conversations with Mrs. Kitoli in April 2003, the former head of the women’s wing of the NSCN Khaplang group, reinforced the impression that the underground organizations have not fully demonstrated gender-sensitive structures of decision making.

¹⁰⁷“One Step Back, Two Steps Forward.” *Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights: 25 Years*. Kohima, Nagaland: NPMHR, 2000. 104.

ABOUT WOMEN WAGING PEACE

Women Waging Peace, an operating program of Hunt Alternatives Fund, advocates for the full participation of women in formal and informal peace processes around the world. More than 400 women peace builders in the “Waging” network, all demonstrated leaders with varied backgrounds, perspectives, and skills, bring a vast array of expertise to the peacemaking process. They have met with over 3,000 policy shapers to collaborate on fresh, workable solutions to long-standing conflicts.

ABOUT THE POLICY COMMISSION

The Policy Commission is conducting a series of case studies to document women’s contributions to peace processes across conflict areas worldwide. The studies focus on women’s activities in conflict prevention, pre-negotiation and negotiations, and post-conflict reconstruction—including governance; disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration; and transitional justice and reconciliation. This body of work is pragmatic and operational, offering suggestions, guidelines, and models to encourage policymakers to include women and gender perspectives in their program designs.

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