

We Do More Because We Can

Naga Women in the Peace Process

Rita Manchanda



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October 2004

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“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*

Introduction*

Our narrative begins in the past from where take root the many traditions of the women of the Naga hill tribes of North East India as peace-maker – that is, a *pukrelia*¹ bursting forth in the midst of a battle holding a Y stick and appealing for an end to violence between men who are her kin through blood or marriage. These traditions have provided the social sanction in the tribal structure of Naga society for women's work in peace and reconciliation in India's longest running internal civil war over the Naga people's right to self determination. The peace building activities of Naga women's groups have produced a social consciousness in Naga society that validates women as 'making a difference' especially in reaching out to bitterly divided Naga armed factions and fostering reconciliation and healing. It has enabled a social acceptance and indeed expectation of the Naga women reaching across ethnic divides and nurturing a dialogue with the non tribal Metei peoples of the Manipur valley. It has persuaded the apex women's groups of the Naga tribes to translate their power as peace makers in the informal public space into a limited authority in the formal public sphere to the extent that no Naga delegation is considered complete without women's participation. It has persuaded the top leaders of the armed groups to recognise the women as a significant resource for peace building and reconciliation and has legitimated their leverage to claim an identity as stakeholders in a plural peace process.

In India's north east periphery, the people of the Naga hills numbering about 40 tribes, were the first to assert their distinct history as an independent people and challenge post colonial India's assertion of political control. State building in independent India was focused on a

**This is an expanded version of a study commissioned by Hunt Alternatives/Women Waging Peace as part of a series of case studies across the globe on women building peace.*

nation-state-citizen axis. The leaders of the new born state were suspicious of other identities (i.e. collective tribal identity) and therefore the Naga peoples demand for autonomy and self determination was condemned as anti national. Suppressed, it falared up as armed insurgency. Since then, fifty years of the Indian state's strategies of military subjugation and divide and rule, have failed to vanquish the armed struggle. On July 31, 1997, the Government of India (GOI) and the dominant armed group, the Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagalim, Isak-Muivah (NSCN I-M) agreed upon a ceasefire and unconditional peace negotiations at the highest level in a third country.

Arguably the 1997 accord can be seen as a successor to earlier peace accords – the 16 Point Agreement (1960) and the Shillong Agreement (1975) – which divided the Nagas and relentlessly produced multiple conflict lines. The GOI-NSCN (I-M) conflict line is but one; there is the conflict line of the NSCN Kaphlang (NSCN-K) faction. In 2001 GOI and NSCN (K) concluded a separate ceasefire agreement. The factional war between NSCN (I-M) and K continues. Also in the fratricidal war are the two residual armed factions of the 'Federal' Naga National Council (NNC) the pioneer of the Naga struggle. Indian government agencies have exploited the inter tribal rivalries within the Nagas peoples to divide the Naga national movement.

The conflict is further complicated by widening fault lines between the Naga peoples and the ethnically different peoples of the neighbouring states of the North East in the Indian Union – the *Meiteis* (non tribal) and *Kukis* (tribal) of Manipur, *Ahom* (non tribal) of Assam and the several tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. They fear a peace that could deliver a Greater Nagaland and divide their state territories. The Naga struggle is committed to unification of the Naga peoples divided internally and internationally. As the ceasefire does not extend beyond the territory of Nagaland state armed clashes continue in areas of the Naga habitat in the north eastern states further straining the peace process. Also, fifty years of a policy of co-optation, mediated through the creation of a truncated Nagaland state (1963), has produced a political-bureaucratic constituency in the state that sees its interest in the status quo ante. This 'spoiler' constituency also foments conflict. On top of this is the sluggishness in beginning substantive political negotiations.

In understanding how the ceasefire has survived these eight difficult years and that the talks are continuing through three changes of elected governments in New Delhi – we have to look at the role of the Naga mass based social organisations,² including the women's groups, to

build a broad based peace constituency. Indeed in 1997, when the ceasefire was announced, there was limited support for pursuing peace negotiations before unity was established among the four factions. Eight years later, the two armed protagonists at the peace table, the GOI and the NSCN (I-M) would find it difficult to walk away from the table without precipitating widespread popular disaffection.

Post ceasefire, civil society groups have been able to mediate for the NSCN I-M popular acceptance and legitimacy to negotiate on behalf of the Nagas at the peace table. The apex body of the Naga tribes- the Naga HoHo, the churches, the Naga Mothers Association (NMA), the Naga Women's Union of Manipur (NWUM), Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR) and the Naga Students Federation (NSF), have propagated an inclusive politics that seeks to transcend factional and tribal partisanship. In particular, the NMA and the NWUM have worked together to keep open communication channels and foster a politics of inclusion. It is in sharp contrast to the strident language of confrontation that characterises the leadership of the Naga National Movement. It is the Naga social organisations, especially the women's groups, the Naga *HoHo* and the churches that have taken the lead in evolving an indigenous model of 'truth and reconciliation' to build peace and unity.

While the I-M leadership has endorsed the programme of reconciliation, it has stopped short of declaring a ceasefire and negotiations with the NSCN (K) or Khaplang group. The fratricidal killings have been reduced but continue. Naga women's groups that have been in the forefront of mediating the inter factional violence these last twenty years, accept that the leaders have not fully responded, but as Neidonuo Angmai, the President of the Naga Mothers Association said, "come what may we can not give up our commitment to peace and a lasting solution through mutual accommodation. In order to avoid the worst (breakdown of the ceasefire) we have to continue our mission". The NMA at its seventh General Assembly meeting in Tsemenyu Town (Nagaland) in May 2003 passed a resolution re-pledging support for their nine years old campaign to *Stop All Bloodshed*.

The women have been outspoken that peace belongs not only to the warring parties at the table but is for all Naga peoples, including the peoples of the neighbouring states of Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh in the Indian Union. "Who are you fighting for, not for the 60-70 of you, but for us; not for your today but for our tomorrow", chided Dr Yangerla Ao of *Watsu Mongdang* (Ao-Naga tribal women's

organisation) challenging some fractious young Naga rebels. Such statements reflect continuing support for the Naga cause but convey too the conviction that the rebels are accountable to the people. “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 organisations, including NMA and NWUM.³

The legacy of peace accords that have divided the Nagas has made the people wary of a peace brokered behind their back. A sentiment that is commonly voiced across the board, by village women as well as the Elders of the Naga HoHo, is that for peace to be sustainable, the process has to take the Naga people into confidence. The singular aspect of the Naga peace process is that the top leaders of the NSCN (I-M) Chairman Isak Swu and the General Secretary Th Muivah, have come to recognise the strategic value of the peace mobilization of Naga social organisations, prominent among which are the women’s groups. The Naga peace model has seen a process of mutual empowerment that de-facto has made the peace process plural with multiple stakeholders.

At the second ‘Naga Consultative Meeting’ convened by the I-M 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.”⁴ The Third Bangkok Consultation in May 2003 indicated a growing sensitivity in recognising that ‘people’ included women as a constituency. Gina Shangkhram President NWUM acknowledged that in her statement at the Consultation. “The space given to Naga women in the consultative meeting is highly appreciated and is a good beginning to boost up their confidence.”⁵

Admittedly, the structured involvement of civil society remains putative and ad hoc. The habits of a culture of secrecy of an underground organisation and the historical experience of inter-tribal betrayal makes for reticence and suspicion. Moreover representatives of the institutions of the Indian state, civil and military have been reluctant to democratize the peace table⁶. The Ceasefire Monitoring Cell convenor, Lt General R. V. Kulkari tends to view the more ‘modern’ social organisations like the NPMHR, the NSF and the NMA as ‘fronts’ or dismisses them, especially the women, as ineffectual and irrelevant. This is despite his own experience as an army commander in the Naga districts where as the case study demonstrates, he should have come

across women in urban and rural areas routinely mediating the community's interests with the local Commanding Officer. Its exclusion from memory and official records is itself worth interrogating. Consequently, although GOI and the NSCN (I-M) rhetorically affirm the value of 'independent observers' to monitor the ceasefire, there has been no progress in integrating civil society into the monitoring mechanism.

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. In July 2004 the talks were resumed in Bangkok, this time between the NSCN (I-M) and the special emissary mandated by the newly elected Congress party ruled coalition government in India. At stake was the annual extension of the ceasefire agreement. Also the emphasis in the new government's Common Minimum Programme⁷ that "the territorial integrity of existing states (within Indian Union) will be maintained", had produced uncertainties about the future of the talks. The Nagas are demanding the political integration of the Naga areas adjoining Nagaland state.

The GOI has even backed away from the territorial extension of the ceasefire to all Naga inhabited areas. The last attempt to do so in 2001 provoked violent opposition. If suspicions and anxieties are to be quelled among the neighbours, it is not the NSCN but the Naga social organisations, especially the women's groups that have to pursue the strategy of building people to people dialogues with the north east neighbours and civil society groups in the Indian heartland.

Broad Parameters of the Study

The Study is structured in two parts. The first part deals with the a synoptic history of the conflict and its impact on Naga society and picks out from women's narratives of the conflict some vignettes that highlight the victimization of women and the stirrings of Naga women's agency. Briefly, this part tracks the conclusion of the ceasefire and the space it opened up for the emergence of a Naga peoples movement for peace. It discusses the significance of the reassertion of Naga 'civil society' in the context of the organisation of power and authority in Naga society. The political field of the Naga peoples is characterised by parallel structures of authority in which the modern Nagaland state structure and bureaucracy is but one and in many ways subordinate to the authority claims of the traditional structures of tribal power.

While many of these Naga social organisations draw strength from roots in a traditional structure, the current *avatar* of the apex body of the Naga tribes, the Naga HoHo, is a reinvention of tradition. We will seek to locate within this outcrop of civil society organisations engaged in peace work, the activism of women's groups and in particular NMA and NWUM. Their operational styles provide a study in contrast – Naga Mothers mobilizing around motherhood and the Naga Women's Union of Manipur representing a more secular modern associational style. It enables us to explore the strengths and weaknesses of the two operational strategies.

The second part of the study proposes to map Naga women's role and impact in i) negotiating with state and non state armed actors to protect their communities; ii) mobilizing for peace and reconciliation between warring factions; iii) sustaining the ceasefire and peace process: bridging inter community divides iv) mobilizing mass support and democratizing the peace process.

The Naga women's story is a relatively unknown one, especially outside the region. It is hoped that through the study greater support can be mobilized to strengthen their peace building efforts. Moreover the narratives of the Naga women building peace provide a rich resource for sharing enabling strategies of stopping the violence and nurturing reconciliation, experiments with 'social repair' and healing. The contrast between the NMA and its strategy of mobilizing around motherhood and the NWUM and its secular associational style around a rights based agenda, provide valuable insights of different models for different 'protest fields'.⁸

Why Focus on the Women?

Arguably the role of women's groups could be subsumed in the gender neutral narrative of a civil society coalition and its relevance and contribution to the peace process. Why, then is there the need for a specific focus on women?

The emphasis on a gendered approach is driven by the concern to understand and evaluate the significance of Naga men saying - "*where are the women, we need the women*"; "*all sides trust the women*"; "*now, that you've come it will make all the difference*"; "*only you (women) can do it (sustain the peace)*"; "*women can pacify*". It is echoed in the women responding - "*we can't keep quiet*", "*only we can do this (reconciliation) work*"; "*it is our responsibility*", "*they trust us*", "*we are the last resort*" and "*we do more because we can*".

NMA President Neidonuo Angami's assertion "we do more because we can"- forms the leitmotif of our study. The study interrogates such statements that are increasingly heard in Naga public life and empirically examines whether there is a meaningful 'difference' in women's style of doing politics of reconciliation and what 'can' women contribute to developing an inclusive and consensual politics. Traditionally as the women in our focus group exercise⁹ in Jotsoma village explained, women's role is to reach across divides, to stop the violence and create the space to enable the growth of understanding and consensus. The study explores how Naga women have worked to keep open the channels of communication, to create space for dialogue among bitterly divided groups, thus paving the way for social healing.

Naga women claim, "we have no factions"; "we're trusted by all sides". Does the Naga experience reveal that women have a capacity to transcend their variegated tribal identities? NMA's campaign - "Shed No More Blood"¹⁰ is posited on an assertion of the universal value of all life, that is inclusive of the Indian security forces, the various Naga factions and the ethnically different neighbouring communities. It is a passionate intervention to achieve cessation of violence and disarmament. How successful has it been?

In the desperate desire for peace is 'justice' being side-stepped? In several conflicts women have been the flag bearers of the justice agenda (e.g. Mothers of the Disappeared) in the Naga National Reconciliation model, the trajectory of 'acknowledgement of truth' is supposed to lead to forgiveness and healing. Khesilie Chisi now President of NMA explained "the objective is to try and forgive and then move on if we are to have a future together". Can there be forgiveness and healing without justice?

Has the NMA been able to place itself above partisan politics? Unlike the Naga HoHo, NMA claims to carry no burden of politics. But there is the other reality of tribal identities that intersects the assertion that 'women have no factions'. There is need to problematize the sentimental logic of 'some mother's son' in the face of the NMA's ambivalent negotiations among the Naga tribes and across the inter community divides. Initiatives to reach out across the ethnic divide to the *Kuki* and *Metei* women have repeatedly foundered. Notwithstanding these caveats, what does emerge is that the women are likely to be more successful in opening a dialogue than the men.

A gender perspective enables us to explore what difference women make in relation to the agenda of the peace table. In the case of the Naga peace process civil society groups have been playing an important role in impressing upon the underground leaders of the multiple factions the changed reality over ground and the aspirations of the people in whose name the underground armed groups have been fighting and are now talking. In particular, women's groups have been raising issues of gender rights sustainable development and mobilizing against anti-people dam projects. Above all, NMA and NWUM have been in the forefront of pushing an inclusive and consensual politics that values the contribution of all. What impact has this had on the peace agenda?

The study argues that women's peace work requires a different reading of the language of doing politics. With the NMA, the language of their politics is articulated as an extension of their every day life –e.g. 'kitchen politics'. That is, providing a neutral non threatening environment to facilitate dialogue in their kitchens, the heart of a Naga home. Food is an important cultural signifier of care and trust. Motherhood politics is a defining framework for their activism. As Mothers, they are trusted by all sides, Neidonuo Angami claims. And their interventions are framed as Mother-Son – “We understand them even without them saying anything”. The emphasis on Motherhood cultural dynamics de-politicises their intervention but also crimps their social acceptability to assert claims to be in the Naga HoHo or engage with the political agenda of the peace table.

The study explores the enabling role of Naga tradition in validating women's peace activism and the limits of that validation when one of the armed protagonists- the Indian state is an outsider to the Naga social value system. An index of the shift in social consciousness, is the greater space for women's profile in public life across the board. Moreover conflict opens up spaces for what gender studies literature terms ambivalent empowerment of civilian and militant women. In the Naga national movement about 15% of the fighters are said to be women. What has been the social implications of the new roles these women have taken up? Is there a possibility of the women in the movement and the civilian women mutually strengthening each other's capacity? The study provides a glimpse into the cultural challenges that will be involved in any eventual Disarmament, Demobilization and Rehabilitation process.

Methodology

The study draws upon four phases of research spread over two years, involving interviews, participatory observation, focus group exercises, archival and secondary sources. The study involves both subjective and objective assessment of Naga women's contribution. The first phase involved participatory observation at the Naga Women's Union of Manipur (NWUM) biennial assembly of 200 women in Ukhrul district in Manipur in 2000. Subsequently as a member of an Indian civil society solidarity initiative, I went on a field trip to Nagaland in 2001. Also, I have drawn upon interviews and research done by R N Kumar and Laxmi Murthy¹¹ in April 2001.

In addition, I had the opportunity to interact with women activists from Nagaland and Manipur at a workshop in Kathmandu on 'Women Making Peace' in June 2001. More specifically, for the study I went to Delhi in January 2003 to meet the visiting leaders of the underground movement and interview Naga civil society activists there. In April-May 2003 I undertook a field trip to Nagaland and Manipur and interviewed individually and as a group about 50 women and men, across tribes, region, urban and rural divide, age, class and professional women and housewives.

The study draws upon two focus group exercises, 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. Interviews were also done with representatives of Naga civil society groups both traditional and modern, army -paramilitary commanding officers, civil servants, church leaders and academics, to assess whether there was an objective recognition of women's contribution to peace building.

Also, I participated and observed the Naga Mothers engage in a reconciliation exercise with two rival UG groups in the remote district of Tuensang (Nagaland) and accompanied the NWUM on a humanitarian and reconciliation mission to Tengnuopal (Manipur) village where Kukis (non Naga rival tribe) had sought refuge from violence.

Districts of Nagaland



North East India



History of the Conflict & Peace Processes

Historical Prologue

The Nagas belong to the Tibeto-Burman Mongoloid group and are estimated to number about three million¹² spread across the north eastern Himalayan wall running roughly parallel to the Brahmaputra valley and upto the Chindwin river in the east. The ancestral domain of the Nagas, referred as the Naga Hills is an area that some scholars estimate to stretch 100,000 sq kms. It straddles the boundary line the British drew between its territories in India and Burma. In the north is China, in the east Myanmar (Burma) and in the west and south India. The Nagas comprise about 40 tribes¹³ and speak about 60 dialects. The main tribes are listed as 20 in the Encyclopedia and straddle both internal borders and international borders. For example the habitat of the Tangkul tribe is divided between Manipur (India) and neighbouring Myanmar.

The British divided the Naga hills between India and Myanmar. Post independence, the government of India divided the Naga homeland across four administrative units – Nagaland, Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. It left the Naga peoples a discriminated minority in all but Nagaland state. In contiguous Manipur, the tribal hill districts make up 90 % of the land area and the Valley 10%. Political power is concentrated in the valley, populated by the ethnic *Meteis* that comprise 65% of the population. The tribals - the majority of whom are the Nagas, along with the ethnically different tribal sub group of the Kuki¹⁴-Chin-Zomis - make up 35% of the population. More than the 90% of the Nagas are Christian while the *Meteis* and Assamese are Hindus.

The Nagas insist that before the British came, they had a distinct history of being an independent peoples despite their wars with the *Ahom* and

Burmese kingdoms. Till the 19th century the contacts of the Nagas with the outside world were minimal. They lived in fortified, self sufficient sovereign village republics and engaged in fierce inter village wars involving head hunting. (Culturally the practice of head hunting was sanctified as ritually necessary to bless the new crop. And women would ceremonially carry the head.) The Treaty of Yandabo 1826 brought the colonizing activities of the British into the 'north east'. Their first encounter with the Nagas was driven by Naga predatory raids that left many British Indian subjects headless. Eventually, the British carved out a portion referred as the Naga Hill District, but immense tracts of the Naga hills in the north and east, between the district and Burma remained unadministered. Moreover even before the hill district was set up the 'the inner line regulation' separating the hills and the plains areas marked the limit of the administered area, beyond which British legislation for the plains did not apply. In short British control over the Naga hills was shadowy at best. Naga customary law and the village and tribal councils functioned with substantive autonomy.

Women's narrative of the history of the stirrings of Naga self rule has excavated the revolt of 'Rani Gaidinlui'¹⁵ a 16year old girl who took up the cause of 'Naga Raj' first raised by her maverick cousin Jadonang. 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 till she was captured and sentenced to life. Jawahar Lal Nehru on a visit to Assam in 1937, was told of this freedom fighter and romanticized her in his writings. On independence Nehru had her released. Rani Gaidinlui went on to raise a private army against the Naga insurgents. NWUM, in its gallery of heroic role models for Naga women gives pride of place to Rani Gaidinlui but makes no mention of her collaborative role with GOI.

More enduring was the struggle of the Naga National Council (NNC) which became the voice of the Naga peoples for self rule with Angami Z Phizo styled as the 'father of Naga nation'. The Naga National Council (NNC) had been constituted by 29 founding members drawn from the tribal councils with the conspicuous presence of Angami, Ao and Sema tribes. It took the lead in enunciating what remains to this day the sinews of the Naga demand – solidarity of all the Naga tribes, including those in the un-administered areas and self rule.

By the early decades of the 20th century, as the Indian national movement gathered momentum and discussions took place on the transfer of colonial power to Indians, the Nagas made it clear to the British they desired to be excluded from the new constitutional arrangements. Anxieties multiplied about the implications of an unsympathetic upper caste Hindu elite ruling over a 'backward' beef-pork eating tribal peoples. The growing security paranoia of the emerging Indian ruling elite, especially as regards the peripheries or border areas, undermined the early commitments made to the Nagas to safeguard their autonomy and drove a demand for self rule into an armed struggle for 'nothing short of sovereignty'. A day before India became independent, the NNC on Aug 14, 1947 declared independence and affirmed it by a plebiscite in May 1951.

Causes of Conflict

- The Nagas believe that they are a distinct people with a unique history.¹⁶ They have not been and are not part of the political or cultural ethos of India. They claim as a distinct nation the peoples right to self determination.
- The Nagas see themselves as a homogenous people in terms of their culture and society, divided by colonial powers. They aspire to be politically reintegrated.
- They are discriminated against reinforcing their sense of alienation.
- GOI has responded militarily to Naga aspirations deeming them secessionist, a law and order problem and terrorism. Violent oppression and human rights abuse, especially against women, has produced more violence.
- India has sought to split the Naga national movement by exploiting tribal differences that have fed factional violence and produced cycles of revenge violence.

First Phase

In the 1950s armed struggle was launched and the Indian government saturated the area with troops. They were armed with extraordinary powers through legislation like the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act 1958 that empowered the army to shoot at sight any Naga. The policy of pacification was brutal and savage, people were tortured and killed and women were beaten and raped. Villages were burnt down repeatedly, granaries, livestock and crops destroyed, fields mined and people herded

into cluster villages with no access to their fields. Those whose relatives were suspected of being in the underground were kept in concentration camps and slowly starved. When they were released after two or three years, weak and diseased, many died on the way back to their villages.

Democratic India of the plains turned a blind eye to the armed forces unrestrained campaign of forced portage, torture, rape, sexual mutilation, abduction, killings of civilians and the desecration of the Naga churches. As Nandita Haksar, a human rights campaigner commented, “We Indians look upon the Naga people as headhunters, savages and subhuman. And we look upon their demand for a separate Naga nation state as a problem of law and order”.¹⁷ Indian Prime Minister Moraji Desai’s comment “exterminate the Nagas, I will not have any compunction” represents the official attitude that sanctioned a virtual genocide.

A glimpse of that first phase (1950-60) is revealed in the voices of the Jotsoma (Angami tribe) women. It was a time when despite the hardships, everyone supported the movement. “We carried food and clothing for them (the UGs). 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.” And parents encouraged young women and men to join. “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.¹⁸ It was an overturning of the tradition. Naga women touching arms was ritually taboo.¹⁹

The village like many other Angami villages had borne the brunt of the Indian state’s military campaign. The Angamis were A Z Phizo’s tribe. The close knit interdependence of the tribe provided a staying power but carried too the seeds of division as the Indian state successfully played Angami and Chakesang against the Sema chiefs who dominated the Underground army or sought to co-opt the Ao tribes and discredit the Tangkhul tribes as ‘foreign’. A Z Phizo could not free himself from an ethnocentric view and was over dependent on his tribe. In a communication to a Chakesang member of the NNC delegation abroad (Burma) on 3 January 1984 he called for unity of the Angami and

Chakesang tribes and the excluding of all other destructive and unreliable people.²⁰

Second phase: Peace Accords that Divide and Dominate

The Indian state's carrot and stick policy weaned away the moderate section of the Naga leadership with the inducement of the 16 point agreement that delivered the gift or graft of the state of Nagaland (1963) within the Indian Union. Nagaland state comprised only 16 of the Naga tribes, leaving the ancestral domain fragmented with nearly a million Nagas spread across states of Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh in the Indian Union. Some 40% of the Naga habitat lay across the international border in Burma. The peace accord was rejected by Phizo and the violence continued. The state of Nagaland – the political and bureaucratic structure – emerged as only a minor player as it was rejected by the NNC (albeit side deals were negotiated and the government lured them with its deep pockets). General Thinoselie M Keyho, the former head of the NNC underground army explained, “We didn't recognise the government. We still don't recognise it. It was imposed on us”. The Naga movement has insisted on dealing directly with New Delhi and at the Prime Minister's level bypassing the state government. However, the capacity of the Nagaland state government to be a 'spoiler' is considerable.

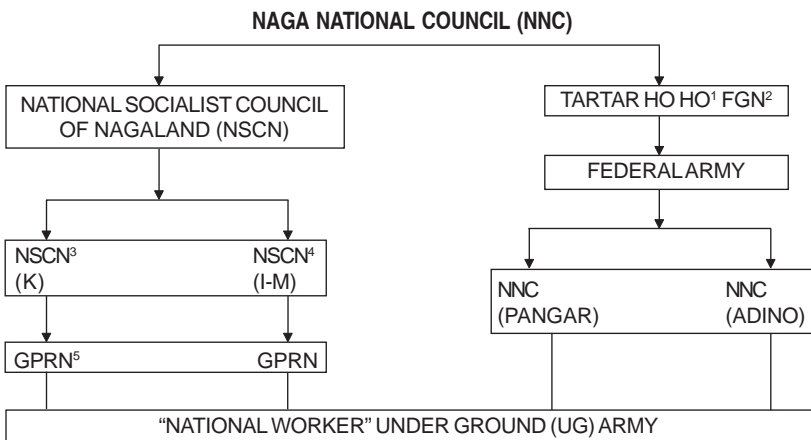
The other powerful institution was the Church or rather Churches. In 1964 the Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC)²¹ made an effort to initiate a promising Indo-Naga peace mission. It was able to mobilize support from the international community of peace activists including Bertrand Russell. It foundered on the determined resistance of Naga hardliners who rejected any solution within the Indian Union. The NNC was banned in 1967 and severe military reprisals were unleashed. Some of the worst incidents of human rights abuses date from that period. Meanwhile, the Naga underground had opened up a 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'.²²

At the military level, infiltration of the underground army through the suborning of tribal chiefs enabled the Indian forces to 'clear' much of Nagaland and the Naga underground was in disarray and at its weakest. The Nagaland Peace Council an initiative of the NBCC

got active in facilitating another peace accord, the highly controversial 1975 Shillong accord signed by a few of the UG leaders including Phizo's brother. The China group led by NNC General Secretary Th Muivah, Vice President Isak Swu and the President of Eastern NNC, SS Khaplang, condemned it. Phizo in exile in England, maintained silence.

In 1980, the united Naga national movement split and SS Khaplang, Isak Swu and Th Muivah formed the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN). It did not have the mass support base of the NNC and was bottled up in northern Nagaland state, in Burma and China. Eight years later it split into NSCN (I-M) and (K). The parting was less ideological and more to do with tribal egos. In 1988 when the NSCN split, more than 100 of the I-M group were massacred and Isak and Muivah barely escaped. Subsequently sections of the Khaplang group are accused of colluding with Nagaland political leaders and Indian military agencies.

NAGA NATIONAL MOVEMENT



1. Parliament

3. NSCN (SS Kaphlang)

5. Government Peoples Republic of Nagaland

2. Federal Government of Nagaland

4. NSCN (Isak Muivah)

With the I-M group emerging as dominant in the armed struggle, the Indian strategy was to target the Tangkhuls – Muivah’s tribe. In Manipur, GOI played the ethnic card, pitting the Kuki tribes (non Naga) against the Nagas tribes. By promising the land hungry Kuki tribes a homeland in the Naga hills in Manipur, Indian intelligence agencies were able to train and raise a Kuki army. It was a role that Kukis had historically played when the British brought them from Burma and established frontier settlements in Manipur to shield the valley against Naga raids. The Naga - Kuki conflict was particularly fierce in the early 1990s and prompted the Naga women’s groups in Manipur to initiate a peace dialogue with Kuki women.

Meanwhile, in Nagaland state, inter factional rivalry resulted in a daily toll of ‘unclaimed’ bodies in the bazaars and villages. Civilians were getting caught in the bloody cross-fire. It prompted the Naga Mothers in 1994 to launch the peace campaign to ‘Stop All Bloodshed’. The infighting among the Naga national movement and the fracturing of Naga society also moved the Naga Tribal Councils to come together and constitute the Naga HoHo (1994). Its primary objective was to bring about unity. At the 3rd Naga Ho Ho summit in Phek in March 1996, the HoHo adopted a resolution declaring from April 25, 1996 a ceasefire among the Naga factions and a General Amnesty. At the time the armed leadership did not pay it much heed.

The churches, too, tried again to intervene. The Council of Naga Baptist Churches (CNBC) in association with the Baptist Fellowship of North America tried to bring all the Naga groups together in Kathmandu in 1994 and in January 1997 in Atlanta (USA). However, the collaborationist role of the churches had made the UG leadership wary and suspicious. Rejecting an invitation to attend the Atlanta meet, Chairman of NSCN (I-M) Isak Chiswi Swu wrote to the Secretary of the Council, Rev K Nuh “repentance had to precede forgiveness not the other way around” and the Church leaders had never “condemned” their past actions.²³ However, post ceasefire, the NSCN leadership has invited select church leaders to Consultations. In the Naga hills where the cry is ‘Nagaland for Christ’ – it is important for the NSCN to shake off any suspicion of being against Christ.

Women form the congregational base of the church and as we shall discuss below have been mobilized by the church for prayer days,

peace rallies, days of atonement as well as for relief work for the conflict displaced, etc. Some of the women's groups like Watsu Mongdang, (Mokokchung) emerged because of the support of the church. And Naga Women's Union of Manipur (NWUM) has turned to the churches for financial support for some specific reconciliation initiatives. However, NMA was very aware of the ambiguous role of the church during the conflict. But as Neidonuo Angami said, "I do not blame the Church (for failing) any more than any other organisation. After all who constitutes the church? Everyone has come from a home. And all Naga homes are dysfunctional. All Naga parents are confused. We don't know what we are -Indian -non Indian..."

Third phase: 1997 Ceasefire & Peace Process

In July 1997 the NSCN (I-M) and the government of India signed a ceasefire agreement and initiated peace negotiations on the basis of talks being unconditional, at the highest level and in a third country. Pressure to conclude a ceasefire came from within the Indian army, convinced that it was a political problem that could not be solved by military action. Talks about a ceasefire were taken up seriously in 1994 by Congress government in power in New Delhi and sustained through four changes of government. The Ceasefire Agreement was initiated by the Congress, signed by the United Front Government carried forward by the BJP government and now pursued by the Congress led coalition.

As the (NSCN-K) Khaplang group was not a party to the ceasefire, the 'partial' ceasefire agreement saw a spurt in the K-group's attacks on the security forces and in fratricidal killings. Sections of the Khaplang group were manipulated or monetarily induced to become 'spoilers' of the peace process by the ruling clique in Nagaland whose survival is linked with the status quo. An encouraging development has been the Khaplang group signing a separate ceasefire agreement with the GOI in 2001. Also, the NNC Federal (Pangar) group has responded to a ceasefire agreement with the GOI. The NNC Federal (Adino) group led by Phizo's daughter in exile in England, has yet to respond.

Complicating and undermining the ceasefire, is the deliberate ambiguity over whether the ceasefire agreement extends beyond the territory of Nagaland state to all Naga inhabited areas. As a result, beyond the borders of Nagaland state, the security forces are locked in a shooting war with NSCN I-M and K in the Naga hills of Manipur, Assam and

Arunachal Pradesh. Fears of a 'Greater Nagaland' has prompted violent opposition from the state governments and the majority communities of Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. A cornerstone of Naga struggle has been the political integration of the spatially dispersed Naga domain.

Also violence between the factions continues to rage. Currently there are four Underground groups, though two factions of the NNC Federal Army – (Adino) and (Pangar) are largely inactive. The founder of the 'nationalist' struggle, NNC has been compromised by the politics of peace accords and tribalism. NSCN (I-M) has emerged as the dominant armed group but while its leadership endorses the need for reconciliation and unity, it has not gone on to declare a ceasefire. Moreover, the I-M leadership is quick to react with an arrogant and strident outpouring of grievances against the NNC and the Khaplang group. However, the highly respected church leader Wati Aier²⁴ remarked that there was a distinct mellowing, especially after Muivah's arrest in Thailand over using a false (South Korean) passport to travel to Amsterdam. Naga social organisations, especially NMA and NWUM had camped in Bangkok and lobbied for his release.

Substantive political negotiations have yet to begin even after eight years producing the usual difficulties of sustaining popular support during a protracted ceasefire with few obvious peace dividends, that is, beyond the significant value of the cessation of violence by the security forces.

The new government in Delhi has signaled its support for the talks to continue. The annual ceasefire agreement has been renewed. The crucial factor that could make or break the ceasefire is the opposition of the non Naga neighbouring communities to a peace process that they fear could divide their state territories. Also, a Congress led government at the Centre has reinvigorated the 'spoilers' many of whom are associated with the Congress party in the North east states.²⁵ Already there is a noticeable spurt in violence by the Khaplang group and clashes between the NSCN (I-M) and the Indian security forces in Naga areas in Assam.

Impact on Community

Nagas are an indigenous peoples whose life cycle is integrated with their land, forest and hills. It is a tribal society structured around

secluded village republics, with their own village lands. The units of households and different clans are interlinked in a web of social, economic and ritual ties. Nagas built fortified settlements on top of the hills and were constantly engaged in war like activities as inter-village head hunting had major ritual importance in the world of the Nagas. However with the spread of Christianity, the Nagas left off these practices. More than 90% of the Nagas are Christian. Indeed a Naga scholar argues that the spread of Christianity was accelerated by the army's campaign of uprooting and burning villages and interning the people as it made it impossible to continue their life cycle rituals.²⁶ The Naga world has adapted Christianity to their traditions.

Democratically²⁷ elected village and tribal councils continued to regulate social life. Traditionally women are excluded from participating in public life. The Indian armed forces pacification campaign targeted the *Gaoboras* the village elders of the tribal council. The traditional structures of power remain more meaningful than the modern structures of representative government. The ceasefire opened up space for the re-emergence of tribal chiefs as evinced in the rapidly growing power of the Naga HoHo (Council of Tribal Chiefs) as a power in public life. The Naga HoHo's equivalent in Manipur is the United Naga Council. The Churches – Baptist and Catholic exercise enormous influence and have largely supported status quo politics.

The Naga nationalist struggle for its survival required the mobilization of the community as a whole. Every Naga was involved and every Naga was regarded as a suspect. "The Naga-India war must have begun in our village," said a woman from Jotsoma village. "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. Treating injuries with natural herbs...."

The Indian state poured in troops saturating the Naga hills - one soldier to every 10 Nagas.²⁸ Extraordinary laws put the armed forces beyond the limits of constitutional safeguards. The Assam Maintenance of

Public Order Act (1953) imposed collective fines for failure to assist the forces in apprehending or discovering the rebels. The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (1958) gave powers to the Centre to declare an area disturbed, thus empowering Non Commissioned Officers to shoot and kill anyone, with virtual impunity. The Nagaland Security Regulation (1962) further undermined the authority of the civil administration. In 1958 the kill ratio was 1568 'hostiles' to 344 Indian forces. According to the Naga human rights group, NPMHR a conservative estimate would be 150,000 people killed in the last five decades.

The Indian armed forces targeted the community, desecrating churches, destroying houses, razing villages, burning granaries and field crops, herding people into cluster villages and keeping them on subsistence rations, using them for forced portorage and imposing collective fines. A near permanent curfew was imposed in many villages, including the harvest season. Those identified as relatives of the UGs, including women, children and the elderly were fenced in and guarded in concentration camps, beaten and starved. For example between July 25 to January 28, 1958, in Chuchyimbang village (Nagaland) 800 villagers were confined in a concentration camp. 30 villagers died, allegedly of starvation and torture.

Women's traditional care giving and nurturing role, during a conflict becomes particularly onerous, both in terms of immediate and long term consequences. In the Naga situation, conflict degraded the environment and disrupted the *jhumming* (slash and burn) cycle, destroying the resources necessary for daily survival activities- of providing for fuel, food, water and fodder. 80% of the population live in the rural areas dependent on *jhumming* (slash and burn) and terraced cultivation. Destruction of agriculture hit women harder because a larger percentage of women workforce is dependent on agriculture and related activities. For example, among Tangkhul Nagas women workers in agricultural sector were 94% while men were 72%. (1991 census)²⁹ Also the pattern in most conflicts as we shall see below is that when the soldiers come, the men flee and it is the women who are 'internally stuck', held back by the children and the aged. Soldiers wreck their vengeance on the women, especially the relatives of suspected rebels.

Sexual violence and torture was routine. In 'nationalist' struggles women's bodies as markers of community identity are particularly targeted.

Snapshots of women's experience of violence

Yankeli Baptist Church, Ukhrul District, Manipur- On Sunday, 11 July 1971, troops of the 1st Maratha Regiment and 8th Mountain division marched into Lotha tribe area. All the able bodied men ran into the forest. The women, children and the aged were herded together. Four girls between the ages of 11 to 17 years were dragged outside the Church and one by one taken inside, molested and then raped by the Commanding Officer on the church pulpit while his subordinates held down the girl. A pregnant woman Mrs Nzano was hit on the stomach with a stone and as a result delivered a dead baby girl. The church lies abandoned and the three surviving rape victims have moved to another village.³⁰

Grihang village, Ukhrul District: From March 3-5, 1974 Major Dharam Prakash of the 95 BSF Battalion brutally beat and molested Ngaishangla (23) the sister of an Underground (UG). On the third day she was taken to a school classroom, stripped, molested, beaten and a stick was shoved inside her vagina. She was brought profusely bleeding to the district hospital. Rape and brutal atrocities against women were particularly widespread during the combing operations in Ukhrul district. Nearby in Ngapurum village, Rose was raped by officers of the 95 BSF battalion in front of the village elders and soon after committed suicide. Anger and outrage, galvanized the women to form the East District Women's Association (*Tanghkul Shanoa Long-1979*) which organised a mass hunger strike to demand justice.³¹

Oinam village, Senapati district, Manipur On July 9, 1987, the UG raided the camp of the 29th Assam Rifles Battalion near Oinam and killed 9 soldiers, injured 3 and captured arms and ammunitions. Operation Bluebird was launched to recover the captured arms and ammunition. It covered 30 villages. For three months a reign of terror was let loose. According to the petition filed by the NPMHR before the Supreme Court, the Assam Rifles shot dead 27 people. 300 persons were tortured, some were hung upside down and given electric shocks. 3 women were raped and five molested. 125 houses were burnt down, 112 houses, 10 churches and 6 schools dismantled. S Khayala in her testimony said, "when I saw my husband again he was in great pain with bruises all over his body.

He was taken to the Assam Rifles camp the next day. After three days the dead body of my husband and Wakhao (a village elder) was brought to the village for burial". Others were able to take back home the destroyed bodies of husbands, sons and brothers and watch as they died, slowly. Churches were used as concentration camps. Villages were razed to the ground and in Oinam people were made to stand for hours exposed to the torrential rains and scorching sun from July 2-August 9. Two pregnant women gave birth in the rain and in full view of the villagers and the soldiers. Women and men were forced to construct a camp, build roads and carry rations for the Assam Rifles. The excesses of Operation Bluebird motivated the women of the Poumai tribe to take the initiative and break out of the siege of terror and appeal for help from the Baptist Church and Naga women leaders. Eventually, the Senapati District Women Association and the Poumai Naga Women's Association emerged.³²

Mokokchung town, Nagaland: On December 27, 1994 following an attack by NSCN (K) insurgents in which an Army colonel, the Commandant of the Manipur Light Infantry (MLI) was killed, 10 members of the Assam Rifles and 16 from MLI started indiscriminately firing in the middle of the town which was full of post Christmas holiday shoppers. People were ordered out of the shops and pushed with rifle butts to lie face down on the ground and kicked. Shops and houses were ransacked and burnt. Nine persons were shot dead and five were burnt alive and twenty five persons reported missing, 89 shops and 48 houses burnt, women were stripped and their clothes were tossed in a bonfire. Dr Yangerla Ao, a doctor examined more than 15 cases of rape and sexual molestation. The Superintendent of Police, Mokokchung who tried to intervene with the fire brigade, was chased away. The army allowed no intervention for four hours. The Red Cross Society and the Naga Doctors Human Rights Forum in a study of 115 victims of the Mokokchung incident found that 81 were victims of Post Traumatic Stress. Six years later Mokokchung town had still not recovered and a self imposed curfew prevails. However the incident galvanised the women of Mokokchung to demand justice. Four raped victims agree to testify before a Commission of Inquiry. Watsu Mongdang (1989) an organisation of Ao tribal women took

up the case and appealed to the National Human Rights Commission and eventually got justice.³³

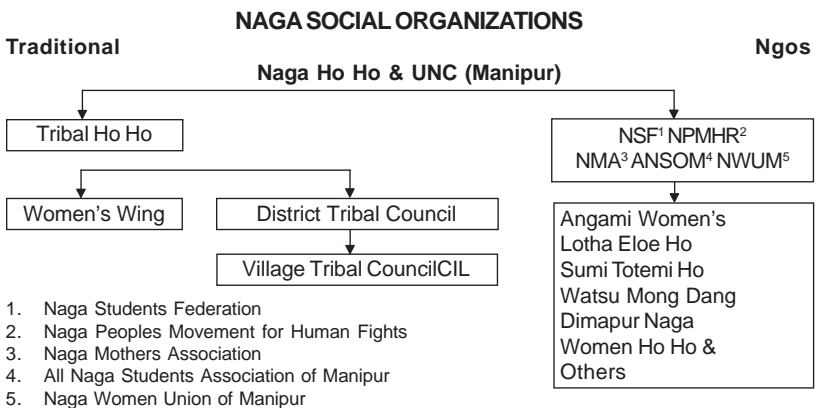
Wokha, Nagaland 9th July 2001, about 65 cadres of the NSCN (K) entered and took over Wokha town. In the days that followed they raided the camp of their rival the NSCN (I-M) and searched homes threatening the town residents. The Lotho tribal Ho appealed to the NSCN (K) leaders to avert a factional clash but in vain. On July 14, an I-M cadre returning on a bus from visiting his ailing mother, was singled out, tortured and shot dead in the city. On the same day, some village elders happened to come across Indian soldiers having a clandestine meeting with NSCN (K) boys in a remote school in Wokha village. They were ordered by their commanding officer Major O P Singh of 24 Assam Rifles to provide safe passage to the boys. When the elders returned they were accosted by the same officer for aiding the 'boys' and tortured till they were half dead. The women were ordered to carry back the battered bodies to the village. Meanwhile the Indian security forces destroyed four civilian houses claiming they were 'hiding places'. It was the Lotha Elo Ho Ho (Lotha women's organisation) which took the lead to publicly protest against the excesses of the Assam Rifles and demand accountability and justice.³⁴ Subsequently, the Lotha Women intervened to stop the factional violence and set up a 'peace zone' in Wokha.

The conflict has militarized and brutalized Naga society. The counterinsurgency politics of co-optation has corrupted and corroded Naga society. As Neidonuo Angami, stated, "we do not even recognise how mentally and emotionally disturbed we are." It has resulted in a spurt of social abuses - alcoholism and drug addiction and the related rise in HIV AIDS. NMA's early work involved campaigns against alcoholism, drug trafficking and drug rehabilitation. NMA locates the root cause of the breakdown of Naga society in the effects of the unresolved political and armed struggle. It has been compounded by rising unemployment and frustration over an inadequate education system. NMA's perspective sees a continuum of insecurity -as experienced in the home, society and across the conflict lines, i.e. social, cultural, economic and political insecurity. NMA's mandate is to fulfill their role as 'Mothers' to heal and make society whole and healthy again.

“Don’t Cease the Peace Process!”- The Peace Movement

The history of the three phases of the Naga conflict is threaded with various peace initiatives involving the institutions of the Baptist Church and the ‘Naga social organisations’. The latter encompasses the apex body of the Naga tribal councils: Naga Ho Ho and its counterpart in Manipur- the UNC; the human rights organisation Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR) and the student bodies: Naga Students Federation and the All Naga Students Organisation Manipur and the apex women’s organisation in Nagaland, NMA and in Manipur, NWUM. It is beyond the scope of this study to detail these initiatives. What is significant is that most of these NGOs draw their legitimacy from the traditional structures of authority in Naga tribal society.

The human rights organisation NPMHR (1978) is the closest to a modern style NGO and was founded by a group of Naga students as part of the surge for defending civil liberties after the country wide State of Emergency was lifted. On their return to Nagaland after exposure to radical politics at the Universities of Delhi, NPMHR became the first organisation to monitor human rights violations in the Naga areas which were virtually under martial law. NPMHR challenged the Armed Forces Special Powers Act in the Supreme Court. Predictably, it was maligned as a ‘front’ of the underground. With the emergence of the Naga HoHo and a broad based peace platform including NMA, NWUM, UNC, NSF and NPMHR – the social organisations have acquired greater social acceptability and strength.



These 'Naga social organisations' – from the mass based student organisations NSF and ANSOM to the Naga Ho Ho and UNC - work closely together as a family but without its 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." The Naga Ho Ho's mandate is to restore the unity of the Naga peoples threatened by factional infighting and fratricidal violence. Before the GOI-NSCN (I-M) ceasefire in 1997, all that the social organisations and NGOs could do was to make appeals, issue letters of condemnation and take out demonstrations. However, the ceasefire opened up for the first time, the possibility of meeting the top underground NSCN leaders the I-M in Bangkok and S.S. Khaplang in Burma.

Broadly speaking the civil society Peace Movement has mediated between the NSCN (I-M) Underground leaders and the Naga public, building a broad based support for the peace process. It has helped position the NSCN(I-M) as speaking for Naga aspirations. It has stepped forward to stop the factional violence and initiate reconciliation. It has tried to build peace amongst the Nagas as well across the - inter community divides to neighbours and to Indian civil society. As a result representatives of the Naga Peace Movement or Naga social organisations have established their claim to be plural stakeholders in the peace process.

Church leader, Wati Aier argues that the Naga social organisations have fostered a public debate on the significance of the ceasefire and the question of unity and built up public opinion in support of the view that "the peace process can't be put on hold till unity is achieved". It was support mobilized by these civil society groups that enabled the NSCN (I-M) to gain legitimacy to be the spokesperson for Naga aspirations at the peace table. Tapan Bose a human rights activist who has been close to the NSCN (I-M) leaders explained, "the NSCN (I-M) being an underground outfit, its actual contact with Naga civil society organisations was minimal. Also, it tended to be stridently righteous given the Naga national movement's history of betrayal and compromise, in which the role of the Naga political groups and the leader of the Baptist church was particularly compromised. But NSCN (I-M) leaders have grown

to recognise the need for mass support, and the need to involve the Naga Ho Ho, the Church leaders and the social organisations like NMA, NPMHR, NSF and NWUM”.

Within a month of the ceasefire, in August the Naga HoHo convened a meeting of the social and voluntary organisations including representatives of the District Tribal Councils of Nagaland and Manipur, the Baptist Church institutions, NPMHR, NMA and NSF. A 22 member *Action Committee* was set up to monitor the peace process.³⁵

In support of the ceasefire and peace process, the Naga social and voluntary organisations campaigned together to postpone the holding of Assembly elections in 1998 arguing that what was needed was ‘Solution, Not Election’- fearing that it could jeopardize the fragile peace process. They lobbied for the repeal of the ban on the NSCN (I-M), the withdrawal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act and the extension of the ceasefire to all Naga inhabited territories. The social organisations resisted the efforts of then Chief Minister S. C. Jamir to scuttle the ceasefire. Three months after the ceasefire was declared, on Oct 24, 1997, Jamir tried to get a mandate from them, to appeal to the centre not to extend the ceasefire agreement.³⁶The NMA categorically rejected the move. They had a responsibility to their children who had never experienced peace to make the ceasefire work Neidonuo Angami explained.

Most significant has been the civil society mobilization in support of the Naga Reconciliation Process. Formally launched by the Naga HoHo on Dec 20, 2001, the Declaration adopted at the ceremony states, “Those who represent the Nagas must be willing to listen to the voice of the Naga people represented by the Village Councils, the Regional bodies and the tribes HoHo, besides the Churches and the mass based organisations”.

However, it was not until 2002, that the NSCN (I-M) leaders hold two consultative meetings in Bangkok to formalise and widen the interaction with civil society groups. Chairman, NSCN (I-M) Isak Swu, was explicit about taking the people with them. “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”.

GOI has been much less responsive to the need to integrate the Naga social organisations as stakeholders in the peace process. Although the GOI’s special representative to the peace process, S. Padmanabhaiah has hailed the role of civil society in sustaining the ceasefire and voiced support for expanding the peace table, neither the GOI nor the NSCN has taken a firm stand in favour of the inclusion of NGO representatives in the ceasefire monitoring process, the first step in democratising the peace table.³⁷

Also, weighing down on the peace table are the anxieties of the neighbours of the Nagas who fear that peace could de-stabilise their communities and eat into the territorial integrity of their states. At this stage, it is not the NSCN (I-M) that is best positioned to explore the possibilities of a mutual accommodation. The Naga social organisations recognise that they have to take up this responsibility to build a people to people dialogue across the divided communities and begin a debate and build trust and understanding of mutual interests. However, the movement has been slow and held back by distrust and acrimony

The election of pro-peace National Peoples Front to Nagaland State Assembly in 2003 has given a further impetus to the peace platform. The NPF was strongly backed by civil society groups and particularly by women who went door to door campaigning to defeat the ruling Congress party in Nagaland. The NPF was supported by the Bharatiya Janata Party. Ironically while at the national level, the BJP is perceived as an anti-democratic rightist, Hindu hegemonic party, at the state level in Nagaland it is viewed as pro-peace and pro democracy. In contrast, the Congress party that at the national level is seen as a secular and more broad based party, is viewed at the state level as anti peace and anti human rights. The contradiction reflects the history of Nagaland that has been ruled largely by the Congress leader SC Jamir who has collaborated with the Indian security forces to ruthlessly suppress the Naga struggle, manipulated factional divides and stymied initiatives towards peace. The return of the Congress party at the centre has raised concern and anxiety amongst civil society groups in Nagaland.

Women's Mobilization

The justification for fore-grounding women's interventions for peace building inheres in Neidonuo Angami's assertion, "we do more because we can". In order to understand and audit the nature of Naga women's mobilization for peace we need to locate it in women's place in Naga society and track the emergence of a shift in social consciousness. And this shift will be indexed to women's expanding place in the public sphere. It will enable us to socially contextualize our profile of the two apex Naga women's organisation –NMA and NWUM and the contrasting cultural dynamics of their interventions for peace.

Naga Women: A place of one's own

Naga society is characterised by a marked sense of egalitarianism based on community interdependence for survival and this transcends gender. Indeed there is no gender based division of agricultural activities³⁸ Hammendorf the chronicler of the 'Naked Nagas' wrote about the high status of the Naga women in relation to other women in South Asia.³⁹ Different tribes have different social norms. The Konyak tribes practice polygamy. Codification of the customary law of the Nagas by the 'colonial' rulers further disadvantaged women. Both men and women have equal right to divorce but it is the woman who must leave behind the house, children and take only the 'bride price'. Society is patriarchal and roles are gendered but the birth of a 'girl child' is not considered inauspicious, as in most parts of India. More disturbing and confusing is the deteriorating sex ratio 909 to 1000 males (2001 census).

More than 80 % of Naga society lives in its villages. It should be added that in Naga society the urban rural divide has been mitigated by a conscious culture of remaining rurally integrated. In Nagaland state's capital Kohima, the urban population remains connected with the people of their tribe in the villages and the districts.

In Nagaland female literacy is about 61 % and male literacy about 72% and is much higher than the national average. In Manipur the overall female literacy rate is 48% and 72% for men. In Nagaland and Manipur the increasing number of well educated, professional and assertive

women is posing a challenge to the still conservative Naga society. A noticeable number of educated urban women are unmarried.

Young Naga feminists like Dolly Kikon and Khatoli Khala, are critical of the continuing gender bias in present day Naga society.⁴⁰ While women have an important status in Naga social and ritual life, equality does not extend to economic and political power. Naga women are not entitled to ancestral property, only male members inherit, though parents are increasingly apportioning acquired property to daughters. Traditionally Naga society was structured in readiness for war and war like masculine qualities were highly valued. Women for, whom touching a weapon was taboo, were relegated to the private space of the feminine sphere. Participation in public life too was considered taboo for women. Among the Ao tribe, women were not encouraged to pass by the public meeting space of the elders lest some information waft into their ears and they garble it in the re-telling. Women were thought incapable of carrying important messages from one village to another.⁴¹

In contemporary Nagaland, women continue to be excluded from representation in the village tribal council, the basic unit of traditional political authority and consequently, the Naga HoHo and the UNC.⁴² Naga women are organised in the women's wing of the different tribes but these organisations merely follow the directives of the patriarchal Village Tribal Council. In Manipur, the NWUM has been agitating for women's representation in the Village Tribal Councils. At best women are nominated. Chanbini Nguwruw of Chandel district Manipur managed to get herself nominated for two terms as Speaker to the VTC. However, 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 United Naga Council, the apex body of the Naga tribes of Manipur, is reviewing its Constitution and women activists have been lobbying for women to be accepted as capable of representing the tribe in the Village Tribal Council.

The shifts in social consciousness and the growth in the negotiating power of Naga women, was discernible at an assembly in Ukhrul district Manipur of the Tangkul Naga tribe in April 2003. Present were several of the top ranking NSCN (I-M) Tangkul leaders and cadres of which

several were women Kilosners (Ministers) in the Government of the Peoples Republic of Nagalim (GPRN). Also there were members of the women's military wing headed by a Lt Col. Mrs Muivah was also present. At the end of the discussions, the list of recommendations included women's representation in the Village Tribal Authority. Despite the opposition of the elders, the recommendation was carried. Valley Rose the editor of the Tangkul language daily *Aja* was there. She said the NSCN (I-M) women voiced their dissatisfaction with the lack of decision making authority. Conversation with Mrs. Kitoli, the former head of the women's wing of the NSCN (K) and widow of its General Secretary, Dally Mungro, reinforced the impression that the underground organisations have not demonstrated gender sensitive structures of decision making. During the January 2002 Consultations with Naga social organisations, the NSCN (I-M) had none of their women leaders present. It was an issue that was raised by the NWUM and the NMA with the NSCN (I-M) leadership and at the May consultations six women representatives of the I-M were there.

Whereas in Manipur, there is greater awareness and aggressive support for political participation of women in Nagaland, NMA has been much less assertive. In Jotsoma village, near the capital Kohima, a majority of the Angami tribal women in the control group rejected that there was any 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 Ho Ho, the apex body of the representatives of all the Naga tribes, remains steadfast in its patriarchal orientation. Dr Akang Ao, Deputy Sepaker of the organisation, brushed aside any need for women's representation in the Naga Ho Ho. "We call them when there is an issue of relevance to them, when it is Ho Ho business, there is no need to involve them". The younger members of HoHo, like the Publicity Secretary, Keviletuo Kiewhuo are more open to the democratic need for women's representation in the HoHo. Neidonuo Angami while affirming that the Naga HoHo "always call us", admits, "I suppose they don't feel the need for women to be represented because we are there". NMA has in its own way backed women's greater participation in decision making. At its seventh general assembly meeting in Tsemenyou town in May 2003, it feted a Sema tribal woman from Avovohne village who when she learnt of a reserved seat for women in the Village tribal Development Board, lobbied for it.

In the parallel modern structures of electoral politics, women have minimal representation. Valley Rose a feminist activist, editor and co founder of NWUM, contested the 1996 parliamentary elections in Manipur but was defeated. Hangmila Shaiza, the widow of an established politician who was assassinated, contested the 1990 Nagaland assembly elections and became the first women MLA. Ranoo Shazia, the widow of another politician and the niece of the legendary Phizo, became a Member of the Indian Parliament in 1970s and was active in pursuing a peace settlement. Currently, there are two women nominated as metropolitan councilors in Kohima, the capital of Nagaland. There is no women elected representative at the state assembly level.

In the civil bureaucracy, there are four women bureaucrats out of 59 in the senior most ranks in Nagaland. For Naga women the legal, medical, educational and ecclesiastical professions are opening up. However, while some women have become theologians and have risen to the rank of Bishops, they are discriminated against in the church hierarchy as women. Women form the backbone of the church but as the congregation. The Naga Students Federation, a secular mass based social organisation, has reservations for women to be nominated in each federating (tribal) unit. However, it does not appear to be anything more than tokenism. Vivi Ngudhi broke new ground when she challenged the 'tea lady' syndrome and was twice elected as General Secretary of the NSF. Currently, there are no women office bearers. Much more open to women is the Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR), that grew out of the democratic ferment of national politics in the 1970s that influenced a group of Naga university students in Delhi.

In documenting women's mobilizations for peace, yardsticks such as membership numbers or the visibility of orthodox tactics of disorder such as public rallies and protests demos are not necessarily the best gauge by which women's movements can be judged. Many do not keep written records of their meetings and in certain cultures as in this case, depend more on informal networks and kinship groups rather than organised party or associational membership. It is a caveat that we need to keep in mind as we walk around myriad experiments of women's peace work in the Naga hills.

'Pukrelia' and other traditions

Our narrative, as mentioned in the beginning takes its inspiration from the inter village head hunting days when women played a vital role in stopping the violence. She was the socially sanctioned peacemaker, the 'pukrelia' of the Tangkhul tribe or the 'demi' of the Zelianrong tribe.⁴³ Among the Zelianrong, it was taboo to kill a Demi, and they were the only ones allowed to carry the head of the slain to the bereaved family.

The *Pukrelia* in Tangkhul language means a woman married to a man belonging to a different clan or village or tribe. (Clans are exogamous) According to Valley Rose 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."⁴⁴ In another version of the *pukrelia* tradition, in Senapati district among some tribes, there is a tradition that when two villages are at war and the death toll is rising, a wise woman has the prerogative to step forward and shake or whip open her *mekhala* (sarong) and by this shaming intervention stop the violence and induce a negotiated compromise.⁴⁵

They carried the authority to stop the violence and if anyone dared to raise a weapon after that, he was ostracised. It is the *pukrelia* and the *demi* cultural traditions that provide the legitimizing social framework for the Naga women's peace activism. While the study focuses largely on the organisational activism of the apex bodies -NWUM and NMA, its setting is India's North East region which has a rich historical tradition of not only Naga but Meitei, Kuki and Assamese women's interventions for peace. To take one example - in Manipur, the non tribal Meitei community of the Imphal valley has produced the *Meira Paibis*. The Meira Paibis or torch bearers, draw upon a hallowed tradition of women as peace makers of the Meitei community as historically evinced in the 1904 *Nupi Lan* women's revolt and again in 1939.

Its modern successor is the Meira Paibis and their mobilization to protect Meitei society from the excesses of the security forces. Manipur is criss-crossed by 17 armed Meitei underground groups (in addition to the Naga and Kuki undergrounds) and has one of the highest deployment of Indian security forces. The neighbourhood cells of the Meira Paibis have taken up the tradition of protecting 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.⁴⁶ Unlike the Naga Women's organizations Meira Paibis have no apex organisation.

Naga Women's Organisational Activism

Among the Nagas, the women are organised around their tribal affiliation and membership is open to all adult women of the tribe. NMA and NWUM are the apex organisations of all the Naga tribal women's organisations in Nagaland and Manipur. Several of the most active women's organisations in Nagaland and Manipur emerged as a direct response to women's mobilization against atrocities by the security forces, especially the systematic use of rape and sexual violence against the women. For example, Tanghkul Shano Long (Tanghkul Women's Organisation) emerged in Ukhrul (Manipur) in response to public outrage at human rights violations and particularly incidents of rape. TSL in 1974 demanded an impartial inquiry into the atrocities by the paramilitary forces and mobilized a mass hunger strike to demand justice. Others like Watsu Mongdang (Ao women's organisation) began as an initiative of the church in 1989 to revive customary traditions and values and the welfare of the Ao women. However, the brutal attack by the security forces on Mokokchung town in December 1994 in which 16 women were allegedly raped, prompted Watsu Mongdang to widen its mandate. Four of the women agreed to come forward to testify. The newly set up National Human Rights Commission was contacted and set up a one man commission of inquiry. The Army personnel were found guilty and ex gratia payment of 200,000 Indian rupees was to be made to each victim.⁴⁷ Since then Watsu Mongdang has been interceding between the security forces and the civilian population and with the underground. Limala Ozukum President of Watsu Mongdang told me (2001) that whenever the elders go to talk to the underground groups, they always take the us women with them. "We reduce the temperature otherwise they would break into a fight. We appeal for peace in the name of all our sons", she said.⁴⁸

These are associations determined by belonging to a tribe. More voluntary in its associational structure is the All Tribal Women's Organisation with its headquarters in Pallel district, Manipur. It cuts across Naga - Kuki divide. Its Secretary is a Naga, K Amita Tuishimi and

its President, a Kuki, M. Hechin Haokip. It has been active in reaching out to all communities, providing relief to the conflict affected internally displaced Kukis, promoting inter communitarian sports exchanges and working with the Meira Paibis for the release of civilian hostages.

In the North East, it is the Naga women who have iconic status as Women of Peace as a consequence of their sustained and substantive contribution to peace building. It is the NMA and the NWUM that has taken the lead in reaching out to the Meira Paibis and the Kuki Women's Organisations to build a dialogue to promote non violent resolution of inter community tensions.

In exploring the dynamics of women's peace work, the study will discuss whether the women of the North East have been able to transcend their competing community rivalries and work together. There have also been some sporadic initiatives from national women's groups but the reluctance to engage with a struggle projected in the public sphere as 'anti-national' has effectively inhibited Indian women's organisations from engaging with systematic violence against women in Nagaland.

Naga Mothers Association

Naga Mothers Association was founded on February 14, 1984 in Kohima as a voluntary organisation open to all Naga women. It was designed to meet the need for a common platform to raise issues of concern to Naga women in particular and Naga society in general. Its headquarters are in Kohima and there is a core group of elected office bearers in Kohima. The organisation has no structure of rules and conditions. All the district tribal women's organisations are its members and through them it reaches the grassroots as in its state wide 'Stop All Bloodshed' campaign. NMA's core calls upon the tribal organizations to send representatives to mass rallies and programmes in Kohima and it supports local women's groups in making interventions to stop violence. Its 7th General Assembly was held in May 2003 and was hosted by the Rengma (tribal) Mothers Association.

NMA's motto is 'human integrity' and its early focus was to counter the social evils in society - alcohol abuse, drug addiction and the spread of AIDS. NMA's three elected Presidents Sano Vamuzo, Neidonuo Angami and Khesilie Chisi, have located these social evils in the political problems facing Naga society. Drug abuse was rampant

and heroin was available on the streets of Kohima at a ridiculously low rate. Highway 39 passed straight through Kohima from Burma's heroin producing area –the Golden Triangle. There was a massive mobilization of Naga Mothers whose children were victims to check drug trafficking and in many cases the Mothers took the law in their own hands.

One such incident involved the apprehension of an Ao woman drug trafficker and her drug addict son. They were tied up in an open public space and badly beaten. Ao women appealed to the Naga Mothers to hand her over to their tribal women's organisation. The Mothers refused. Eventually the woman had to be hospitalised. In hospital she was shot dead. The NMA President was Sano Vamuzo the wife of the leader of the Opposition. The Chief Minister S C Jamir was of the Ao tribe. The incident was politically exploited. However nearly two decades later it still rankles with the Ao women who as they said to the writer –are waiting for NMA to make them an apology.

NMA's anti drug and anti alcohol campaigns were able to mobilize huge mass awareness in urban and rural areas. NMA has set up with the aid of Kripa Foundation and other charities a Drug Rehabilitation Centre and AIDS Care Hospice.⁴⁹ In 2000 Neidonuo Angami was awarded the Padma Shree by the President of India.

By contrast, NMA's more political campaigns to promoting peace and reconciliation have been more controversial. NMA's 'Shed No More Blood' campaign was launched in response to the growing crisis of inter factional killings. The Naga Mothers felt they had to take the responsibility to prevent Nagas from killing Nagas brothers. NMA at its 5th General Assembly meeting in 1994 gave a call to the mothers to fulfill their role, to heal and make society whole and healthy beginning with a Day of Mourning in the memory of all those killed due to the political turmoil. On that day the 'Shed No More Blood Campaign' was launched and NMA Peace Team constituted. It appealed to Naga National Workers (the 'UGs'), state politicians, tribal leaders and people in general to create awareness for the need to 'Shed No More Blood'. It was through the tribal affiliations of Mothers that the NMA Peace Team was able to gain access to the various factions and 'pacify' them, talk through their grievances and begin the process of reconciliation.

Being Mothers, NMA did not have to hold itself back from bluntly criticising the excesses of the national workers. At its 6th General Assembly Meeting in May 1995, NMA openly castigated the ‘simply intolerable way’ in which society was being run ‘whether by the overground government or the underground government’.⁵⁰ “Mothers”, said Neidnuo Angami “have the right to speak out and tell them (the leaders) what we want to say, whether they listen or not.” After the ceasefire was declared in 1997, NMA with NWUM went to speak to the I-M leaders and then to Khaplang, to appeal to them to meet and talk over their differences. Despite repeated efforts that meeting has not yet taken place. The factional killings continue, though they are much less. Nearly ten years after the Mothers launched the ‘Shed No More Blood’ campaign there is still need to renew the campaign. Consequently, in May 2003, NMA at its 7th General Assembly in Tsemenyu Town, again addressed all Naga National Workers (Underground) and called for National Reconciliation reiterating its 1994 slogan to ‘Shed No More Blood’.

As Mothers- the NMA, while empathizing with the hurt and anger of the Naga Underground cadres, has been vocal about the excesses committed by the Naga Underground. With the national movement splintering, the struggle has got degraded and many cadres, Neidonuo Angami admits, join because ‘they have nothing else to do’ and indulge in criminal activities. In one instance of rape by two NSCN (I-M) cadres near the Jotsoma bypass in the capital Kohima district, NMA facilitated a meeting between the women of the victim’s tribe, Chakesang and the NSCN (I-M) women leaders. Action was taken against the cadres.⁵¹

After the 1997 ceasefire, NMA as part of a broad front of Naga social organisations has been working to sustain the ceasefire and peace process. In 1998 NMA urged women to boycott the assembly elections the motto being ‘Solution, Not Election’. The election process and the Congress party dominated ‘representative’ politics of Nagaland state were regarded as anti peace and anti rights. However for the 2003 assembly elections the Naga social organisations backed the newly emergent pro-peace National Peoples Front. NMA appealed to the youth to vote responsibly and to women to vote for a government that will “work with the women and not just for the women.”⁵²

For NMA, the shift in emphasis from social reform and welfare to peace making has not been problem free and even its brochure on

'Shed No More Blood' acknowledges that the organisation has had to undergo "critical public attention as well as misconception about our basic aims and objectives." ⁵³Some well placed urban professional women in Kohima and Mokokchung town communicated an uneasiness and even open opposition to NMA being too political. They were more comfortable with NMA's social and welfare activism.

NMA's major contribution has been in keeping open the channels of communication between warring factions and across inter community, in defusing tension and paving the way for reconciliation. The often heard refrain in Nagaland "where are the women, we need them" is a recognition of the value of the work of NMA whether it is in the NSCN (I-M): Civil Society Consultations in Bangkok, the Programme for Reconciliation or in lobbying the Government of India to sustain the ceasefire or territorially extend it to all the Naga areas.

NMA has encouraged local mobilization beginning from the nucleus of the family itself. However, it has been difficult to sustain mass mobilization. It has obliged NMA to adopt a functioning style that overly focuses on the initiative and personality of the NMA President especially when it happens to be a dominating figure like Neidonuo Angami. Khesilie Chisi the new President is aware that people have been known to critically say, "at every crisis it is always the same old faces". However as she explained, "the need is to respond immediately and the NMA has a small organisational core".

NMA's language of mobilization revolves around motherhood and it may have held back NMA from enunciating a gender rights agenda. A resolution of 7th NMA Assembly stresses the need for social reform among Naga women. NMA does not agitate for women's representation in Naga Ho Ho falling back upon a gender division of labour - "we have our role to play as mothers and they theirs", Neidonuo Angami explained. It is socially far more acceptable than NWUM.

Naga Women's Union of Manipur (NWUM)

NWUM was formed in 1994 as a fall out of the awareness raising campaign of the Beijing Women's Conference. It was felt that though each of the 15 Naga tribes in Manipur had their own woman's

organisation, there was need for a common forum that would instil among the Naga women of Manipur an awareness of the unity of the women of all the Naga tribes. Association is voluntary but all the tribal women's organisations are members. Currently, its headquarters are in Senapati district. Unlike NMA, NWUM functions more like a NGO. While there is the annual financial contribution of the Tribal Councils, NWUM also is project funded by Henri Martyn Institute (Hyderabad) and Church organisations. It brings out an annual journal called *Raisunriang*.⁵⁴

NWUM has been more clearly focused on the issue of asserting women's rights reflecting the concerns of the professional women who are its core office bearers. In its first General Assembly in 1994, it reaffirmed its founding principles- to affirm the rights and dignity of Naga women, promote traditional values and improve the living standard of Naga society. The Resolutions passed by the General Assembly were more assertive- safeguarding rights on marriage and divorce, equal right to property and inheritance and above all women's right to be included in the village administration.⁵⁵

From 1995, NWUM has been focusing on the peace issue. At its second General Assembly meeting, the Chief Guest was Neidonuo Angami. Since then, NMA and NWUM have been working closely together in their peace building activities. Manipur at the time was wracked by bloody clashes between Naga and Kukis. NWUM tried to open a channel of communication to Kuki women to help and protect their communities, to effect the release of hostages and to stop the violence. The experiments had mixed results. NWUM has not stopped looking for opportunities to build a relationship of trust by responding to situations of humanitarian need of the Kuki refugees. Indeed the shift in head quarters of NWUM from Imphal (state capital) to Senapati district reflected the concern that the NWUM secretariat should be at the epicenter of the tension. Thousands of Naga refugees had fled to Senapati following Metei violence as a result of the announcement of the territorial extension of the ceasefire to Manipur. (Subsequently, it was withdrawn).

NWUM has been in the forefront of the campaign to have the ceasefire extended to all Naga areas and in building an awareness of the unity of the Naga peoples through public rallies, seminars and workshops. In its conflict transformation workshops it has been inculcating

mediation skills to Naga leaders. It has made use of opportunities that bring together women from the three communities (Nagas, Kukis and Meteis) like the Henri Martyn Institute organised 'Study Tour' or SAFHR's 'Women Making Peace' workshop to build cross community understanding and relationships.

In Manipur there is still a shooting war with several conflict lines alive. NWUM has been working with NPMHR in fact finding investigations of ceasefire violations. In the run up to the 1999 Indian Parliament elections, NWUM records that it intervened 8 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 'national workers', the public and the armed groups and between different communities.⁵⁶

Women are the first to rush out when families and communities are in danger. NWUM, has been particularly vociferous against the instrumental use of the women as human shields. Men depend on us as the "last resort, when they feel helpless" but when it comes to decision making, "they ignore us". In Pallel, T Shangnu complained the "men and women mock us saying - here come the powerful women." In a society that traditionally was locked in endemic war cycles (involving head hunting) male value was marked by the physical prowess to fight. The protracted experience of living under the virtual rule of the Indian security forces, has emasculated Naga men's self perception of their role as protectors. There is a crisis of 'masculinity' that is reinforced by the opening up of new roles of agency for women. It also predicated a backlash.

NWUM's interventions over the last decade, have gained it recognition in Naga society as a significant resource in peace building. Consequently in the meetings of the apex body of the Nagas of Manipur, the United Naga Council (UNC), the NWUM President is always invited. NWUM wants the UNC Constitution changed to include women as full members and that means including women's right to represent the tribe in the Village Tribal Council, the basic unit of authority in Naga society. The refrain - "Where are the women" - refers not only to the NMA but also to the NWUM. The women, however, have been critical of being a token presence. In 2003, when the UNC put together a seven member team of Nagas of Manipur to represent

before the Indian Prime Minister the cause of the integration of all Naga homelands, the team was not considered complete without a woman. Valley Rose Hyungo, a Naga journalist went with the UNC to Delhi. “I wore our traditional dress thus establishing our Naga identity”, she said with a heavy dose of cynicism.

The operational styles of NMA and NWUM provide a study in contrast – Naga Mothers mobilizing around motherhood and the Naga Women’s Union of Manipur representing a more secular modern associational style. The NWUM has a Constitution and a more structured style of functioning with regular assemblies, reports, publications, etc. It strongly advocates equal democratic participation of women. The difference in the profile of the two organisations reflects the difference in the socio-political conditions of Nagaland and Manipur that prompt the adoption of different operational strategies. Drawing upon Raka Ray’s study of women’s movements in India, the difference may lie in the nature of two very different political fields. The political field in Nagaland is more homogenous and vertical as opposed to a much more fragmented and horizontally dispersed political field of authority in Manipur.⁵⁷ For NMA motherhood politics has enabled them to enjoy greater protection and social acceptability; NWUM, politics of gender and empowerment have made it vulnerable to social criticism.

Challenges Before the Peace Movement

In July 2004, the Ceasefire was extended for another year but the unsettled issue of its territorial extension threatens to derail the process. The return of a Congress led government at the centre in New Delhi has given new vigour to the ‘spoilers’ and already there is an increase in violence. The new government in its Common Minimum Programme by reaffirming the territorial integrity of the existing states in the NE has further queered the pitch. Former Congress Ministers of states with Naga populations have got together to forge a common front against any undermining of the territory of existing states. A basic demand of the Naga national movement is the desire of the Naga peoples to be politically reintegrated. Moreover, with no progress on the political front of the talks there is real danger the ceasefire could collapse.

It is evident that without some mutual accommodation with non Naga neighbours, the Nagas will not be able have peace. The Naga peace

process hangs on the capacity of the Naga social organisations to build a dialogue of understanding and trust with their neighbours and pave the way for political discussions without anger and violence. The women's organisations have demonstrated a particular capacity to do this work.

Naga Women Militants

On the Nagalim Republic Day, 21 March 2003, the State television channel showed the passing out parade of some 700 new recruits of the NSCN (I-M). About a fifth were young women and from the cameo interviews, it was evident that most of them were college graduates and all seemed completely dedicated to the Naga cause. It has been a long journey from the historical time when it was taboo for women to touch weapons to women making up about 15 % of the Underground army. As we picked up from the voices of the Jotsoma village women on the first phase of the movement (1950s-60s), many girls had joined the Naga national movement and taken up arms.

Initially, the NNC was reluctant to give the young women arms or training. Mrs Mou (alias)⁵⁸ was a young girl when she joined her father and brother in the struggle and became a member of the Women's Federation of the NNC. It was only after some women members, who had taken refuge in a church, were raped by the army that the NNC leadership agreed to give them arms and training. Mrs Mou was among the first recruits and took part in combat operations where she met her husband a General in the Naga underground army. Much of her work involved training new recruits, and providing early warning if an army raid was imminent. She was also expected to raise money for families of recruits without drawing the attention of the army.

Mrs Kitoli the former head of the women's wing of the NSCN (K) and the widow of its General Secretray Dally Mungro, belongs to a later generation. She joined the NSCN in 1984. She had just finished her school leaving certificate and was 16 years. At the time, in a group of 3000 there were only six or seven women. There was common training with male cadres, the same rules and the same work. Subsequently as more women joined there seems to have been gender streamlining. She described women cadres running schools in underdeveloped eastern Nagaland and opening up weaving centres for women. The women

were armed to ward off attacks from Burmese soldiers. She got married in 1988 and had her children on the run in the jungles. In 1999 her husband was shot dead. Since then she has tried to distance herself from the struggle. After she left, most of the women got themselves discharged. As for going back into the struggle, only if the factions unite, she said. "I told both the groups (NSCN I-M and K) that I hate you both. Why I should I be part of this wasteful factional violence." Mrs Kitoli has remarried since, outside her tribe.

Mrs Mou and Mrs Kitoli held leadership positions in the women's wing of the NNC and NSCN (K). Did it translate into positions of authority? "At official meetings, I represented the women", Kitoli said. In January 2002 when the NSCN (I-M) leadership convened a civil society consultation in Bangkok, no NSCN (I-M) women were present although representative of the NMA and NWUM were there. It was at their insistence that five months later at the May consultation six senior NSCN (I-M) women were present. The NSCN (I-M) government, GPRN has women Kilosners (Ministers) and there are women who hold positions of Lt Colonel and Major in the underground army. However, at the Tangkhul tribal assembly in Ukhrul in April 2003, the NSCN (I-M) women indicated their frustration at their lack of authority and power. The possibility of an emancipatory politics for women in militarised hierarchical movements, remains a highly controversial and contested issue.

There has been some interaction between the Naga women's organisations and the women in the Naga national movement. For example, the women in the underground when they wished to come over ground, have turned to NWUM members to negotiate with the local paramilitary/police authorities their 'surrender'. The NMA has appealed to the NSCN (I-M) women leaders to punish cadre for crimes of rape. Also, as demonstrated during the Bangkok consultations, the Naga women's social organisation by drawing attention to the need for women's voices on both sides has helped to indirectly empower the I-M women. The NSCN (I-M) leadership has been quick to respond to the NMA and NWUM. The issue of DDR and the reintegration of the women in the Naga army has not yet come up. It poses challenges of culturally legitimating the 'non conventional' role of the women as well as safeguarding spaces for empowerment.

How are Women Contributing?

In mapping Naga women's contribution to peace building, it should be reiterated that peace building is understood as a process that needs to be built at the pre-conflict, conflict and post conflict stages. In the Naga situation, the 1997 cease fire has not meant an end to the violence, therefore women's role in protecting their communities against violence of state and non state armed actors is concurrent with their initiatives to foster reconciliation and democratization of the peace process. Also, while our focus is on women's contribution, it needs to be re-emphasised that it is embedded in an overall mobilization by Naga social organisations in support of peace.

Is the underlying logic then fundamentally different from the patriarchal view of women intervening 'as the last resort'. Valley Rose of NWUM argues that while the Naga men push the women forward to intervene in a conflict crisis "as the last resort", she adds, it is not only because of "the men's confidence in our ability to pacify" but because "we are trusted to give a clear version" of the incident. Ironically, Naga tradition did not trust women to carry important messages and barred them from participating in the public sphere of the Naga tribe. Arguably, women's historic exclusion from politics (interpreted as partisan politics of political parties) makes the Naga women (and other women) trusted across the conflict divides. From the head hunting days to now, the Naga women have used that exclusion as a resource for protecting their communities in situations of violence, of mediating between factional groups of the Naga underground and in negotiating inter community violence.

This section will explore what strategies they have used. It will interrogate whether the women have been able to transcend their tribal

and ethnic-communitarian or national identities to forge coalitions for protecting their communities. Naga women have used the language of motherhood and the tradition of 'pukrelia' as strategies of empowerment and mobilization in peace making.

The social framing of women's peace activism as an extension of women's traditional role tends to reinforce woman's primary identity as care giver and nurturer. And the cultural legitimation of women's new public roles by reference to a traditional ('pukrelia') context has problematic implications for challenging traditional constraints and articulating an emancipatory politics.

"Our role, as always", emphasise the Jotsoma village women, "is to unify the groups and to help them talk out their differences. To do what the men cannot do." What is this praxis of doing or what values do women bring that are different? "When Naga and Metei men talked, we tended to reinforce our rigid confrontational positions. But the women, were more patient, more diplomatic and inclined to compromise", observed Paul Leo former President United Naga Council (Manipur).

As we shall elaborate below, in the Naga areas in every public activity, in every public meeting, the men now ask, 'where are the women, we need the women'. However, the question we have to ask is how different is it from the traditional ceremonial role of Naga women in public functions? For example, at Niuland in Dimapur district in April 2003 at the Naga Students Federation biennial conference, the NMA President Neidonuo Angami was the chief guest at the valedictory function. At the close of the conference in the evening the NMA and NWUM women were persuaded by the organisers to stay back the night as a preventive deterrent against possible attack by the security forces on students affiliated with UGs as happened at the 2001 conference in Assam. Was it a testimony to the iconic awe that Neidonuo Angami has acquired through her peace and social work or was it a mere reflection of the ceremonial respect accorded to women elders?

In this section we will examine how women's organisations, in particular the Naga Mothers been able to win the trust of the menfolk, to mediate between the factions and be trusted to be interlocutors? Are they indeed trusted by all sides? Have the Naga women been able to

translate their local peace building activism, into authority in the more formal structures of political advocacy? What is the nature of the shift in social consciousness; is it fractured by the rural urban divide? How have NMA and NWUM which are urban based organisations, been able to mobilize and sustain mass support for peace and reconciliation campaigns; how have they been able to claim legitimacy for their mandate to speak for Naga women and be accepted as stakeholders and make plural the peace process? Do the leaders of the Naga national movement, especially Th Muivah, Isak Swu and Khaplant recognise the value of women's peace building work? Are they prepared to listen to them? Are they prepared to support the need for plural peace process, including especially women's representatives?

What difference have women's perspectives made to the peace table? Too often the peace table is structured between two armed protagonists and the process of negotiating new power sharing arrangements leaves by the wayside the democracy, justice and rights deficit. What has been the contribution of the women to peace politics? The Naga women have been in the forefront of promoting an inclusive politics, validating the contribution of all 'national workers'/UGs and emphasising the need for a peace that is in the interest of all Nagas as well as their neighbours. Have they been able to expand the peace agenda to include this perspective? An index to the overall democratization of the peace table (which is a metaphor for a process of re-imagining society and political relations post conflict) is the integration of the women's rights agenda. Have they been able to inscribe women's issues on the agenda?

These above concerns will be interwoven in our analysis of Naga women's contribution to peace building. It is broadly structured around four overlapping thematic clusters i) negotiating with state and non state armed actors to protect their communities; ii) mobilizing for peace and reconciliation iii) sustaining the ceasefire and bridging inter-community divides iv) mobilizing mass support and democratizing the peace process.

Protecting Communities: Negotiating with State and non State Actors

"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 women

The Naga story is full of narratives of hundreds of women at the clarion call of traditional drums, rushing forward in villages and in townships to set up a human barrier between the men and the soldiers. The women unthinking of their own safety would ceaselessly agitate and physically prevent local 'boys' from being taken away into custody to face certain torture and execution. Women would enter into negotiations with the local Commanding Officer and stand surety for arrested men and secure their release. They agitated for the removal of army posts in the towns and army camps in the villages which were sure targets to draw the fire of the UGs as well as spread generalised terror and make girls feel particularly vulnerable. At the local level the Colonel or Brigadier of the army or paramilitary unit recognised and respected the authority of the women. In 1995 when Neidonuo Angami submitted a memo to the Governor of Nagaland and GOC Eastern Command, Lt General K L Seth to refer to NMA any incident involving army violence against women and children - it was based on a recognition of that authority.⁵⁹In Manipur, the NWUM assisted Underground women who wanted to 'surrender' and negotiated their safety with the security authorities.

In remote villages when the Indian security forces (army and paramilitary) were involved in sexual violence against women as in Ukhrul district (1974) the local village women would connect with the district tribal women's organisation, i.e. Tangkhul Shano Long, and launch a campaign of mass mobilization (in this case a hunger strike) to get justice. They appealed to the Courts for justice against torture, enforced disappearances and sexual violence. Women were active in fact finding investigations into excess use of force. Indeed, men would try to hold back the women from agitating for justice, fearful of the army's retaliatory wrath. And it was not that the women, escaped unhurt. They too were beaten, shot and killed, but there was no question of them holding back. As Mrs T Shangnu of the NWUM, Pallel bazaar said, "we think it could be our son". While women spontaneously rushed out, the men would prefer to telephone the elected representatives. When the crisis was defused, "we were told, the village headman should take the credit. In any case, we women don't care to take the credit", said Ng Chanbini, ex Speaker of Moyon Tribal Authority.

There is some resentment among the more articulate Naga women in Manipur that while the men pushed them up front to be human shields, they were ignored when it came to recognizing their contribution or when it came to decision making. In their own narratives, women communicated a sense of self confidence about their responsibility, courage and even pride in their commitment and ingenuity in rescuing their sons from army custody or establishing accountability for a custody death. Veronica Zingkhai, ex President of the Tangkhul Shano Long, 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.

***'National Workers' or Underground*⁶⁰**

Village women also appealed to the Underground (UGs), walking to their camps, pleading with the leaders not to ambush army camps in their midst thus making the villagers vulnerable to retaliatory fire. The women devised a strategy of what NMA describes as 'kitchen politics'.⁶¹ In the kitchen, the heart of the Naga home, in an atmosphere of care and nurture, the women would invite the UGs of their tribe and talk frankly, that their such actions they would loose the support of the Naga peoples. Post ceasefire Kitchen politics was stretched to facilitate a dialogue between top leaders. NMA took great pride in serving food at these gatherings. Food was an important cultural signifier of comfort, reassurance and security. Moreover, it located their political intervention as an extension of a mother's nurturing role and responsibility and de-politicised it.

In the towns, the elders would always take the women with them to talk to the UGs to pacify them first lest they came to blows. In Mokokchung, women of authority like Dr Yangerla Ao did not hesitate to chastise them (like a mother!) when violence and terror paralysed the town closing down schools and businesses. "Who are you fighting for not the 50 - 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," she asked.⁶²

It was the women who dared to expose human rights violations by UGs and got the Underground government/leadership to take action. The women worked not only through the tribal network but also enlisted the support of the women of the Underground movement, especially when sexual abuse was involved. Above all, it was women who would secure the release of hostages held by the UG factions.

The mosaic below pieces together some routine examples of women's interventions to protect their communities from the violence of state and non state actors. It shows the myriad initiatives spearheaded by local women's organisations and spontaneous collectives. Given the tribal nature of Naga society, habits of action are collective.

Ukhrul town, Manipur: On July 17, 1997 an Assam Rifles convoy was ambushed by NSCN (I-M) cadres and 3 soldiers were injured. The AR went on a retaliatory rampage, storming into houses, beating up women and men with rifle butts and batons. The soldiers barged into a school and beat up the male teachers in front of the students. The men found in the town were rounded up and taken away to the AR camp. The shops downed their shutters and people fled into the jungle. 21 people were admitted to hospital, largely with head injuries. In the midst of an overwhelming sense of terror, the women's organisation, Tanghkul Shanoa Long (TSL) took the initiative to reassure the people and restore calm and normalcy. The women came out and appealed to the Commandant of the Assam Rifles to release 40 men. The TLS women along with representatives of the civil administration patrolled the streets, reassured the shopkeepers and got them to reopen the and called out (loud speaker) to the stranded people in the forest to return home.⁶³

Mokokchung town, Nagaland: On March 30, 1997 a minor girl of the Sumi tribe was raped by a soldier of the 15th Maratha Light Infantry camped in Mokokchung. Women of the Sumi tribal community rushed in protest to the camp demanding that the man be handed over to them and an elderly woman grabbed the Captain at the gate, refusing to let go till they got justice. Finally, he reassured them that the man would be handed over to them. Instead, that night the Colonel of the MLI went to the house of the Chairman of the Sumi community and warned him to stop the women agitating. The Sumi women appealed for support to the *Watsu Mongdang* (Ao tribal women's organisation) which had been in the forefront of demanding justice against rape by the security forces since 1994.⁶⁴ Watsu Mongdang wrote of to the President of India and the GOC Eastern Command demanding justice. Under pressure, the local commanding officer Brig Ranbir Singh of 311 Mountain Division called in the four women leaders, including Dr Yangerla Ao of Watsu Mongdang. Confronted with the facts of the case, he was shamed into agreeing to conduct an investigation.⁶⁵ Clearly the recognised social authority of Dr Yangerla also made a difference.

Senapati, Manipur: On June 8, 1998, the Naga peoples declared a blockade of the National Highway in Senapati to protest against an ethnic partition of Senapati district. Till 6:00 pm the blockade was peaceful but then took an ugly turn as troops of the Manipur Rifles were deployed to escort the convoy of vehicles stranded at the bridge head to the town. An elderly resident happened to pass by the troops on his return from shopping in the town. He was stopped and thrashed by the soldiers and fell unconscious. Blockade volunteers got agitated and began moving towards the troops who began to fire in the air. Another elderly resident who had rushed to help his fallen friend, was hit by a bullet and died. By now the protestors were pelting stones and burning tyres and a violent confrontation was feared especially if the petroleum tankers were set ablaze. Mrs Salle, of the Senapati District Women Association recalled how the elders urged, “you women go down and protect the men, they’re beating them up.” Mrs Athia Mary Moroo, President of the SDWA, led the women through the protesting crowd towards the bridge where the vehicles were massed, towards the troops. They were firing in the air and kicking the women with their boots as they determinedly moved. One woman, Mrs S. Trune, as she bent over the dead body of Y. Saini was shot in the hand. The women refused to stop, they were determined to form a fire break between the people and the soldiers. Mrs Moroo got entrapped in a threatening confrontation with some soldiers but managed to escape. Eventually the crisis was defused when the CO withdrew the Manipur Rifles.⁶⁶

For the women the day’s events were not over. At the police station two local boys returning from working in the fields had been picked up as ‘blockade’ volunteers and were being taken away to the camp. Mrs Moroo intervened and stood surety for them with the Commandant and they were released. However, the next day when the Deputy Chief Minister of Manipur arrived to investigate the blockade killings, the women were not called. As Mrs Moroo tried to enter the room where the meeting was taking place, she was told they had already selected the spokespersons. She insisted, “if it is about the previous night’s incidents, we are the real witnesses. We were at the forefront then, but now you do not want us to be present for the meeting to give the correct information.” Of the 18-20 men present not a single soul said a word of appreciation for the women’s contribution, she remarked.⁶⁷

Niuland village, Dimapur, Nagaland. During the Naga Students Federation biennial conference in Niuland in April 2003 (The author was there) the NMA President, Neidonuo Angami was the chief guest at the valedictory function. At the close of the conference in the late evening, the NMA and NWUM women were persuaded by the organisers to stay back that night. It was felt that their presence would restrain the security forces from taking any threatening action against the students.⁶⁸ At the last conference in 2001 in Lodiram village, Assam, the home of the Zeliangrong Naga tribe, on the closing evening, the army raided one of the houses where three local leaders of the I-M were staying. The I-M has a strong presence in the area. The three had been involved in making arrangements for the conference. They were taken away and shot dead in the government school yard. The next day the army forced the village people to say they were killed in an encounter.⁶⁹ (The ceasefire does not extend beyond Nagaland).

Jotsoma village bypass, Kohima district, Nagaland (1999) Case of rape involving an NSCN (I-M) cadre. The woman belonged to the Chakesang tribe. NMA convened a meeting of the leaders of the Chakesang Women's Association and NSCN (I-M) women leaders. The NSCN women condemned the incident and issued a press statement saying that they would pressure the I-M government –GPRN to get the culprit punished. A Commission of inquiry was set up and action taken.⁷⁰

Stopping Factional Violence

'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 women village elder

The history of the Naga insurgency is criss-crossed with bloody betrayals and divisions fomented by tribalism and exploited by the Indian state and the co-opted ruling elite of Nagaland state. The Naga national movement is split into four factions – NNC Federal (Adino), NNC Federal (Pangar), NSCN (Isak-Muivah) and NSCN (Khaplant). The NNC has very limited military operational capability and the Underground is dominated by the armed factions of the NSCN especially (I-M).

Women's most significant contribution to the peace building process has been in mediating factional strife and opening up channels of

communication with all groups. “All of them are our children, we care for them equally, though we do not support their differences,” a Jotsoma village women elder said. There is a dramatic even romantic quality to the recitation of incidents of NMA’s mediation of factional violence as reflected in the urban legend that has grown up around the Phek incident of 1998. The President of NMA along with the Naga Ho Ho President rushed to Phek district headquarters that was in the grip of a cycle of fratricidal violence. Neidonuo Angami is said to have jumped out of the car in the midst of a tense situation imploring “before you kill your brother, listen to your mother”⁷¹

The peace building activism of NMA as well as the other organisations - Sumi Totemi (Women) Ho, Angami Women’s Association and the Lotha Elo (Women) Organisation- is expressed in the cultural language of Naga tradition and custom. “We are Mothers and we work as Mothers. Our advantage (with the UGs) is that we approach them as Mothers and therefore we are trusted by all sides,” NMA President Neidonuo Angami emphasised. However, there are critical voices like Mrs Kitoli, the widow of Dally Mungro, the NSCN (K) General Secretary and former head of the group’s women’s wing. “The NMA was seen as partisan and the NSCN (I-M) was opposed to reconciliation with the Khplang group”, she said. NMA and NWUM leaders admit that it was only after their meeting with Khplang in 1999 that they got access to the Khplang faction UGs.

In most cases appeals and interventions were made through the tribal affiliation of the groups. For example in Kohima, when factional fights between the NSCN (I-M) and the K groups left bodies in the by lanes of the bazaar, it was the women of the Sumi Totemi Ho, who went with the Sema Ho elders to appeal to the Kaphlang cadres (who were Sema) to stop the bloodshed. “Mothers went with the Sema Naga Ho to appeal to the Sema UGs because given the prevailing tension men can not talk to men without more violence. We women being there kept the atmosphere calm”, said Mrs Jakkalu, *Mahila* (Women) Congress President, Kohima.

Jotsoma village, Nagaland: On Sept 30th 1999, a 12 hour long shooting war between the NSCN (K) and the NSCN (I-M) cadres had terrorized the villagers, no one dared step out or care for the injured. Jotsoma women took the initiative and appealed to the NMA and the Angami Women’s Association. The women went to the local 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 Jotsoma 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?”⁷²

Such interventions are socially understood and legitimised as women’s work and therefore taken for granted and rendered invisible.

Women Mobilizing for Peace and Reconciliation

Neidonuo Angami repeatedly emphasises the advantage that Mothers 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 leitmotif of NMA’s campaigns for peace building and reconciliation. While the ‘shed no more blood’ campaign and the associated ‘peace team’ – is its most significant intervention, NMA has also been party to a host of Public Rallies and Prayer Days supported by the churches and Naga social organisations.⁷³ In addition it is a constituent of the Programme of Reconciliation (2001) launched by the Naga HoHo. The Deputy Speaker of the Naga Ho Ho, Akang Ao observed that “earlier there were no women’s organisations involved in peace building. But there was a felt need for the women. When NMA came forward we involved them”, he said.

Naga Mothers Campaign - ‘shed no more blood’

As inter factional violence grew out of control leaving bodies lying unclaimed in the bazaars and people too terrorized to come forward, NMA that till then had been engaged in social reform and welfare activities, felt it had to do something. The inspiration for the strategy of intervention was derived from the Naga tradition of giving every unclaimed body a dignified funeral in the shawl of the tribe. It was an extension of NMA’s original mandate inspired by the motto of ‘human integrity’ which held that every life was sacred. At NMA’s fifth General Body Meeting in Zunheboto in 1994, the Mothers decided to set aside a

Day of Mourning in memory of all killed due to the political conflict, Nagas and non Nagas. It was dedicated to fostering a spirit of healing and reconciliation.

'Mourning Day' in Kohima on August, 4, 1994, saw a turnout of 3000 Mothers from different tribes. Naga Mothers announced the constitution of a non partisan *Peace Team* that would mobilize around the theme of '*Shed No More Blood*'.⁷⁴The Peace Team's rationale was - "Can we Mothers remain silent and merely wait to see who is the next victim". To heal society, Mothers had to begin locally, from the home. "The conflict is everywhere, therefore the action must be everywhere", Neidonuo Angami said, emphasising a holistic vision of the roots of conflict and its social transformation.

The NMA peace team approached mothers through the representatives of the various tribal organisations based in Kohima urging them to appeal to the factional groups that true nationalism lay in love and forgiveness. NMA was able to reach out to most of the tribes, but an important exception was the Ao tribal women's group. The drug trafficking incident referred to earlier, had poisoned relations. Also, there was the limitation of some tribes having weak women's representation in Kohima with poor horizontal integration back to the district and villages as in the case of Tuensang district.

In May 1995 the Peace Team wrote an appeal to all 'national workers' / UGs and fanned out to the district headquarters to try and meet the leaders of different groups. NMA sought to work closely with the church based organisations dominated by women congregationists, to mobilize around the theme of 'shed no more blood'. Interventions were organised around "Prayer Day", "Day of Atonement" and the values asserted were 'healing and forgiveness'. On 22 Nov 1995 NMA organised a Public Peace Rally in Kohima on 'Human Integrity and Consequences of Killings" and called for 10 from each tribe to be represented. The Peace Team also met the Governor, the Chief Minister and the Commandant of the Assam Rifles. They pressed for the withdrawal of the Disturbed Areas Act and took up issues such as the security guards disregarding officially validated photo identity cards of the people. In particular NMA members emphasised their disappointment at the lack of action on accusations of rape by the security forces.⁷⁵

However, it was after the July 1997 ceasefire agreement when public space opened up for the social organisations to function more openly, that NMA took on the responsibility of trying to facilitate a face to face dialogue among the factional leaders. It was absolutely urgent if the ceasefire was not to collapse. The ceasefire was only with one group—the NSCN (I-M). The NSCN (K) was not a party to the ceasefire. Within days of the announcement of the ceasefire the NSCN (K) had stepped up attacks on the security forces. Also, the ceasefire did not mean a halt to the fratricidal violence and NSCN (I-M) was unrestrained in attacking the NSCN (K) cadres.⁷⁶

In March 1998, NMA in Kohima convened a joint meeting of Mothers from the various tribes. Many through tribal affiliations had access to different factions of the NSCN (I-M), (K) and NNC UGs. However, if there was to be any substantive breakthrough it could only be at the level of the leaders of the factions talking out their differences.

Journeys for Peace and Reconciliation

In January 1999, two women each from NMA and two from NWUM went to Bangkok and met the NSCN (I-M) leaders Isak Swu and Th. Muivah as part of the first of the NSCN (I-M)'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 UGs have contributed to the struggle and all have made sacrifices", Neidonuo Angami told me. A few weeks later, on March 15, 1999 the four women team of NMA and NWUM began an arduous journey on foot across extremely rough and dangerous terrain to cross the border into Myanmar to SS Khaplang's central headquarters.

They were the first Naga social organisation⁷⁷ to visit the 'K' central head quarters, to be honoured with a 21 gun salute and to be the guest of honor at their Republic Day event. (In 1998 an NPMHR-NSF delegation had trekked to Myanmar and met Khaplang at a field camp.) The women stayed two days. Gina Shangkham of NWUM recalled that Khaplang was keen to vent his grievances against the wrongs done to the NSCN (K). However, he would not stand in the way of the peace process, although he would not be a party to the ceasefire. The women offered to stand surety anywhere and anytime to facilitate a meeting of the NSCN (I-M) and the NSCN (K) leaders. On their return

to Nagaland, on March 26, 1999, they debriefed 16 of the top leaders of the NSCN (I-M) at the latter's headquarters in Niuland (Dimapur district Nagaland). Naga women, who traditionally were excluded from carrying important messages were now being trusted to be interlocutors between the two factions.

The proposed meeting between the NSCN (I-M) leaders and the General Secretary of Khaplang group, Dally Mungro, received a setback. It was not incidental that soon after Dally Mungro's meeting with Chief Minister S C Jamir, a recognised spoiler of the peace process, the meeting fell through. His widow Kitoli blames it on the NSCN (I-M) leadership. In August 1999, Dally Mungro was killed in Jotsoma village by NSCN (I-M) cadres. NMA sent off his body draped in a Naga shawl with all due ritual and respect and called upon his widow.

It was not till three years later that NMA and NWUM women would again meet Khaplang. It followed the January 2002 consultations in Bangkok between NSCN (I-M) leaders and about 45 representatives of Naga HoHo, the mass social organisations, the churches and select individuals. "Para by para we interpreted the context of the Bangkok declaration", Gina Shangkhram said.⁷⁸ The brief meeting with Khaplang was an opportunity to inform an increasingly isolated Khaplang about what was happening in his name and to ask why he had ordered the killing of Naga human rights activist Shelly Maring or why the Meitei UGs using his camp had disrupted the construction of a much needed Highway to the border.⁷⁹ It was also an occasion to share with him the many changes that had happened in Naga society while they were fighting in the jungles.

The second meeting with Khaplang was particularly encouraging because he alluded to the good times when the Naga national movement was 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 NSCN (I-M) and NSCN (K) leaders face to face have yet to be realised, NMA was more successful in facilitating a meeting between the NNC Federal and NSCN (I-M) leaders on May 21, 1999 in Niuland. NMA's distinctive way of pursuing reconciliation

politics may be gleaned from this example. Indeed it was an extension of the 'kitchen politics' honed in the midst of violence. Having won the trust of both a meeting was arranged at Niuland with logistical support of NPMHR and NSF. There was to be no discussion on politics that had bitterly divided them, instead a recovery of the memory of their shared history of struggle and sacrifice. And as an appreciation of the 'success' of the meeting happening in the first place, the women honoured them by enacting their role as nurturers, preparing a sumptuous feast and serving them. It is a different way of doing politics.

Visiting Tuensang district: An experiment in reconciliation

In an effort to understand the NMA's strategy of reconciliation which Neidonuo described as a 'very special process of forgiveness', I accompanied the President and the Vice President of NMA to *Tuensang* in April 2003. It is one of the most underdeveloped districts of Nagal and state. As it straddles the Myanmar border, both the NSCN (I-M) and NSCN (K) groups have their camps in the area and the risk of violent fratricidal clashes is very high. Since 2001, a peace zone prevails in Tuensang town as a result of the efforts of the tribal based social organisations especially the Chang (tribe) peoples organisation. No sooner had Neidonuo Angami come and as per tribal etiquette called on the President of the Chang Peoples Organisation, that he asserted, "*now that you've come it will make all the difference*". The timing was significant, he said, because the apex body of the Mon (tribe) Peoples organisation was to have its meeting a few days later. Their visit would give a boost to the reconciliation process, he said.

Two separate groups, a mix of over ground and underground representatives of the NSCN (I-M) and the NSCN (K) came separately to talk, to share their grievances and resentments and to listen to the mothers. The exchanges were candid and demonstrated a willingness to trust the mothers.

The NMA women apprised the six political and military representatives of the 'Khaplang' group about the campaign to 'shed no more blood'. They said they knew about it and endorsed it. They were aware of the Mothers going to Khaplang's camp and meeting him, although none of those present had been there at that time. It was an emotional and impassioned meeting. The NSCN (K) group, was bitter and resentful at the disunity in the struggle. "When we are all working for the same

cause, why are we fighting each other”, they asked. “How can you achieve independence without unity? Why is there no unity?” There was an outpouring of anger and cataloguing of grievances against the NSCN (I-M) group. They appealed to the NMA to take back to the ‘leaders’ a message – they wanted unity. It was the leaders and state politicians they blamed for the disunity that had poisoned the situation. The Mothers took the responsibility for cleaning up the messy situation. As Neidonuo observed, “we ask less, they ask of us more”. It was a responsibility that became even heavier after the meeting with the NSCN (I-M) group.

Again with the NSCN (I-M) group, the exchange was open and candid. With the I-M that had emerged as the dominant group, NMA emphasised humility and the need to recognise the contribution and sacrifices made by all the national workers. NMA President cited the example of an earlier exchange with some elderly NNC (F) national workers who had complained to NMA about the arrogant and dismissive attitude of the NSCN (I-M) national workers. NMA had conveyed this to the leadership and subsequently there was a change in their attitude. There was appreciation for the NMA’s peace work. They looked to the NMA to do more, to continue the work of reconciliation. As Neidonuo on the return journey remarked, “our sense of responsibility keeps growing”. The exchanges were clearly political but it was cast as an extension of the mothers traditional care giving and nurturing role. Commenting on the dynamics of the exchanges, Neidonuo said, “without having to ask them (the children) we understand”.

Local Women Mobilizing

Neidnuo Angami, is aware of the importance of taking the broad mass of Naga women with the NMA, that is, to have a mandate that is truly representative. That is why Neidonuo Angami uses such opportunities as the NMA or NWUM General Assembly meetings to enact a skit on the Bangkok Consultations. Neidonuo plays Muivah complete with yellow tie. It is an effort to make the women aware of what is happening and why the NMA-NWUM women travel so often to Bangkok. In our focus group discussion with the Angami women in Jotsoma village, they were open about their misgivings. (The women in our focus group were farmers.) “Why are they (I-M leaders) staying in Bangkok?” “Why should our people

go all the way to Bangkok?” The Bangkok Consultation skit and other such devices are means to counter criticism of the NMA President and Vice President whiling away time and money in luxury hotels in Bangkok.

The convening of the 7th NMA General Assembly in May 2003 was meant to reinvigorate women’s mass support for the peace process cutting across the tribal lines as well as bridge the rural - urban divide.

Ceremonies of Reconciliation: Peace Amongst Ourselves

NMA along with the other social organisations- NWUM, NPMHR and the NSF worked with the Naga HoHo and the churches in developing a Programme for Naga Reconciliation. The structure, language and values were drawn from the deeply held Christian faith of the Nagas. In Kohima, public mobilization was structured around ‘Days of Commemoration’ - On June 8, 2000 A Rally on Peace and Justice, December 20, 2001 Day of Reconciliation, August 2002 Naga National Prayer Day, etc. The Declaration adopted at the Naga National Reconciliation Day announced the reconciliation agenda. “The Naga Hoho, the churches and the social organisations feel the urgent need to initiate a process to acknowledge the wrongs and the pains of the past that must be put right for the sake of the future”.⁸⁰ It was the first step in a process of collective healing and forgiveness. Also, the NMA, the Naga HoHo and the other social organisations did not hesitate to assert that the leaders should take heed of the people’s sentiments. “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 Ho Hos besides the churches and other mass based organisations”.⁸¹ The issue of popular mandate is a recurring theme in Naga society and reflects the deeply entrenched democratic tradition of the society. (The importance of 1951 plebiscite is a symbolic recognition of the need to reaffirm that mandate.)

The Naga model of reconciliation emphasises the ‘truth’ of acknowledgement, forgiveness and healing, but the demand for justice seems to have fallen between the interstices. For Khesilie Chisi, the current President of NMA the priority is to “forgive and forget” in the interest of a shared future. Evidently, it is not enough. The I-M group

while endorsing the reconciliation process at the Bangkok peoples Consultations in 2002, has yet to issue a call for a ceasefire with the factions.⁸² Moreover, the NSCN leadership's response to the Church initiated invitation for a High Level Naga Summit in 1990s emphasised the need for 'repentance' before forgiveness.⁸³

So far the Reconciliation Programme of the Naga social organisations has had mixed results. On December 2002, a year after the reconciliation campaign was launched by the conservative Naga HoHo, the younger, relatively more radical and secular organisations like NSF and NPMHR decided to pursue the same goal but via independent paths. There is some uneasiness about the growing influence of the Church over the HoHo. The Baptist church carries the baggage of its collaborationist role with Nagaland state⁸⁴. NMA and NWUM work very closely with the NSF and NPMHR.

The NMA has refused to be discouraged by the continuing factional violence. "Whether they (armed groups) listen or not, it is our responsibility to tell them what is right," Neidonuo Angami said. According to Kitoli's assessment, "The Mothers and the HoHo have been trying but they NSCN (I-M) are not ready to listen". Mrs. Kitoli, the widow of Dally Mungro, is not an objective commentator, nonetheless her comments merit some consideration. Interviewed in 2003, four years after her husband the General Secretary of NSCN (K) group was killed by the NSCN (I-M) group, she claimed that there has been no substantial reduction in the killings. Neidonuo Angami insists that the killings have gone down and what is most significant is that people do not hesitate any more to claim the bodies," she said. In an unguarded moment she admitted, "everyone takes us seriously, except the NSCN (I-M). They appreciate our seriousness and commitment but they don't take us seriously", she sighed. On another occasion, asked about the response to NMA's appeals for reconciliation, she said, "They are all very receptive. (Laughs) They try to. But it is taking time. Still we will not give up. A time will come when irrespective of their differences, nature will prove blood is thicker than water". NMA is not going to give up even if the ceasefire collapses. Meanwhile, NMA is continuing with the "Shed No More Blood" campaign. The commitment was reaffirmed in its 7th General Assembly meeting in May 2003.

NMA claims for all Naga Mothers the recognition that their contribution is no less than that of the 'national workers' (UGs), indeed that they (women) were national workers. However, it has been difficult to sustain women's mass mobilization over a protracted peace process that has got mired in ceasefire violations, continuing factional violence and even after eight years has still to begin grappling with the political issues. As we saw in the narratives, there has been spontaneous local mobilization but it has been sporadic. It has not been possible to reproduce the kind of mass mobilization that NMA's anti drug and alcohol abuse programmes evoked.

Sustaining Ceasefire and Peace Process

The Ceasefire renewed in July 2004 for the eighth year, has been a precarious one, strained by the exigencies of asymmetric restrictions on the two parties in relation to ground rules; continuation of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act; a partial ceasefire covering only one group; inter factional violence; deliberate confusion over the territorial limits of the ceasefire and violent opposition from sections of the neighbouring states. Moreover, the peace process has yet to integrate the ceasefire into a process of discussing political arrangements for realising a democratic peace.

Our concern here is not the good faith or bad faith of the Indian government or the NSCN (I-M) group but the significance of the mass popular mobilization in support of the peace process that has sustained the ceasefire. Our case study argues that the ceasefire has held because of the work of Naga social organisations that has made it difficult for the armed protagonists to walk away from the table. "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," Nedionuo Angami asserted. It is the peace activism of the Naga social organisation and the UG leadership and GOI's acceptance and support of their claim to be partners or stakeholders in a plural peace process that distinguishes the Naga model.

Broadly speaking the major challenges to sustaining the ceasefire and peace process have been – violations of the ground rules, the political issue of unity, factional violence, opposition to the ceasefire by neighbouring states and events like the 'incidental' arrest of Th

Muivah, the General Secretary of the NSCN (I-M) in Bangkok. Interventions have been made largely as a collective of Naga social organisations. However what is significant is that no intervention, from the local to the highest level, is felt adequate or complete without the women also being present as a part of representative decision making of the Naga peoples. For example, it has now become a matter of routine practice that delegations representing the Naga peoples of Manipur, i.e. led by the United Naga Council the apex body of the Naga tribes of Manipur, will include the NWUM. Paul Leo former President of the UNC justifies it as ‘women are 50 % of the population and should have a voice’. Our narrative demonstrates that women’s voices need to be heard because they are different.

Within three months after the ceasefire was declared, on Oct 24, 1997, the Chief Minister S.C. Jamir called a meeting⁸⁵ of the civil society organisations and the churches to get a mandate from them, not to extend the ceasefire agreement. He displayed statistics showing a spurt in factional killings as against the pre-ceasefire period. However, the NMA, NPMHR and the NSF categorically rejected this move, vowing instead to support the ceasefire with all their resources. The Churches abstained, saying they were confused. The Mothers were clear- we have a responsibility to our children who have never experienced peace to make the ceasefire work.

The ceasefire has meant no cessation of the psychological war and it is on this new front that Naga peoples hold the key. Naga political and social organisations have had to resist the psychological warfare of both sides. For example in March 2001, Tamenglong district (Manipur) was saturated with an unsigned circular titled ‘Just Think’.⁸⁶ Alleged to have been circulated by the Commanding Officer, Major R S Rathor of the 4/4 Gurkha Rifles, its 20 points accuses the UGs of extortion for self seeking gains, denounces insurgency as business, threatens to shoot at sight the UGs. No.16 says, “75 UGs surrendered since January. Mothers are requested for more surrenders”. The appeal to Motherhood is from both sides. The Underground, too has its cacophony of strident accusations and counter accusations of grievances and betrayals.

Naga Mothers acting in concert with NWUM have directly addressed appeals to the Indian Prime Minister and to the Chairman NSCN (I-M)

to “act upon the ceasefire with sincerity and transparency”. In August 2000, on the fourth renewal or extension of the ceasefire, Naga Mothers and Sisters publicly upbraided the two parties as “nothing good” has come out of the ceasefire in the last three years.⁸⁷ There were killings and counter killings amongst the Nagas, between the Nagas and the Indian forces. Frisking and raids by the Indian forces were continuing. There were instances of abuse in the name of collecting ‘taxes’ / extortion and criminal activities by some UG cadres. Worse, there was the factional violence. The women urged them to create a more conducive atmosphere for the peace process.

The statement of the Presidents of NMA and NWUM carried the weight of the concerns of the Naga women in the villages and urban areas. This was evident in the voices of the Jotsoma village women in response to what the ceasefire has meant for them. “Fear is now less of the Indian army”. “We can now work in our fields”. “But the ceasefire has not meant a solution to end the bloodletting”. “We had hoped for peace. But there are still differences among the people and bloodshed”. It is accompanied by their uneasiness about a deal being done behind their back, “We want to know what they are (NSCN and GOI) talking about”.

Ceasefire violations: The peace process has got bogged down in accusations and counter accusations of the violations of the ceasefire ground rules. It is beyond the scope of the study to delve into the scope of violations and their impact. What is relevant, is the procrastination over the inclusion of civil society representatives in the ceasefire monitoring mechanism. In principle both GOI and NSCN (I-M) have from the outset affirmed the value of involving civil society representatives in monitoring mechanism. The Naga social organisations, on their part had within a month of the ceasefire, convened in August a meeting of the ‘social and voluntary’ organisations including the Naga HoHo, representatives of the District Tribal Councils of Nagaland and Manipur, the Baptist Church institutions, NPMHR, NMA and NSF. A 22 member *Action Committee* was set up to monitor the peace process.⁸⁸

GOI and the NSCN (I-M) had agreed that the Ceasefire Monitoring Committee would include ‘Four Associate Members Representing the NGOs’. In consultation with the NSCN (I-M) the head of the Monitoring

Cell, General (ret'd) R V Kulkarni nominated four representatives – two each from Naga HoHo and the Baptist churches.⁸⁹ Neinglo Krome convenor of the *Action Committee* rejected the invitation to the meeting. “It should be the Action Committee that would nominate and not the GOI or the NSCN (I-M)”, he said.⁹⁰

Continuing friction over ceasefire violations prompted the Naga social organisations in January 2000 to send a memo to the Prime Minister urging him to review the ground rules and set up a third party Peace Observation Body. More than a year and a half later, at the Amsterdam round of talks between the NSCN (I-M) and the GOI’s special emissary on Oct 8, 2001 both parties agreed to expand the ceasefire monitoring group with credible NGO representatives of civil society organisations.⁹¹ To date no initiative has been taken in this regard. In the January 2002 consultations in Bangkok, the MMA, NWUM and other social organisations tried to impress upon the NSCN (I-M) leadership the need for greater transparency and accountability in the ceasefire monitoring mechanism and the need to include independent observers.

Despite the deliberate sluggishness to include independent civil society representatives in the Govt of India and ‘Govt of the Peoples Republic of Nagalim’ talks, it is noteworthy that the Ground Rules were revised on January 13, 2001 to incorporate two clauses – that the Indian army and paramilitary forces as also the NSCN (I-M) would ‘act in a manner as not to cause harassment/damage or loss of property or injury to the civilian population’.⁹² The 1997 framework of Ground Rules made no mention about protecting civilians from excesses by the state security forces or the NSCN (I-M). Does it reflect the influence of the plural civilian stakeholders in re-visioning an agreement beyond a framework that pits two armed protagonists discussing rival claims to power.

In any case the lack of a formal status, has not held back the Naga social organisations from initiating and participating in fact finding missions into ceasefire violations. NWUM and NMA have been active in the campaigns for the withdrawal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act and the ban on both factions of the NSCN. The Naga social organisation have together appealed to both parties to restrict their armed forces to their respective designated areas.

Local Women Mobilizing

The high profile campaigns and activities of the NMA, NWUM, Watsu Mongdang and Tangkhul Shano Long overshadow the myriad local level interventions by women at the village level. However, several of the incidents narrated above, reveal women spontaneously reacting to protect their communities; village women linking vertically and horizontally through the tribal network to the District level to mobilize on a mass scale –hunger strikes, rallies, public ‘sit ins *dharnas*’ or approaching the Courts.

But these are sporadic interventions and NMA has found it difficult to sustain any mass mobilization on the peace issue and this cuts across the rural –urban divide. Indeed of rural women, Neidonuo observed, “you will find those living in the villages are much more sensible and sensitive to what is happening than those living in the cities. They may not come out easily and openly. But on this issue (repression and the need for peace) they are much clearer. They know what is happening and they also know what might happen (if the ceasefire collapses).” The Jotsoma village women were not only aware of the ‘Shed No More Blood’ campaign but wholly supported it. Moreover, their day to day concern of having to negotiate the threatening implications of an army camp in their village made them involved in the peace process.

In contrast, a conversation with an urban group of professional women in Kohima, largely from the Ao tribe (28-45yrs), revealed their sense of distance from any experience of direct violence and their uneasiness and even rejection of the NMA’s peace politics. These Kohima based professional women were not aware of the ‘shed no more blood’ campaign of the NMA, though they were familiar with its social welfare activities - anti drug trafficking and anti alcoholism initiatives. They felt that NMA should concentrate on humanitarian and welfare activities and not get politically involved. The Ao women have a problematic relationship with NMA as a result of the bitterness over the incident involving an Ao woman drug trafficker. It is a reminder of the difficulties of transcending the tribal divides.

These women expressed sympathy for the struggle for Naga aspirations but were not involved in any visible demonstration of support for the peace process. One of the women a school Principal, a Mon tribal married to a Tangkhul Naga, was the only one who seemed aware and

involved. At the peak of factional clashes, she was part of the church initiated campaign to wrap the unclaimed bodies of Tanghkul men in the traditional tribal shawl, as per the customary ritual. She had also traveled to Senapati to bring relief to Tanghkuls displaced by the anti Naga violence in Manipur. A couple of the women had joined a Public Rally for peace in 2001. It had been organised by the District Commissioner and the Church. Was NMA involved? They didn't know. The younger unmarried women found it difficult to relate to NMA's style of mobilizing around motherhood.

Thangi Mannen (from Mizoram state married to an Ao), the state's senior most woman civil servant, was equally vague about NMA's peace work. She was not aware of the NMA's peace building contribution though she knew about their drug de-addiction and anti alcohol campaigns. She was skeptical about influence of NMA. "Where is NMA in the rural areas or in the urban areas?" It highlighted the disjunction between the traditionally rooted structures of authority and power and the parallel structure of state bureaucracy. The latter was located on a terrain which could not see let alone appreciate the many interventions of NMA and other women's organisation for peace.

Muivah's arrest

In January 2000 Th Muivah was arrested in Bangkok on charges of using a fake passport. He was on his way to Amsterdam to take part in another round of peace talks. The political circumstances necessitated that Th Muivah would not travel on an Indian passport. There was grave danger of the peace process collapsing especially as the Indian government refused to intervene. Appeals by three former Indian Prime Ministers who had been part of the Indo- Naga peace process, failed to break the deadlock. At that time representatives of the NMA and the NWUM and other civil society groups set up camp in Bangkok and tirelessly lobbied with the Thai government for his release and with the Indian government to intervene. He was incarcerated for eight months.

One of the most crucial and controversial issues remains the Naga demand for the unification of the Naga inhabited areas. The violent opposition from sections of the neighbouring state to the demand for the territorial extension of the ceasefire to all the Naga areas (without prejudice to the territorial claims of Nagalim) shows how volatile the issue is. Not only did the Common Minimum Programme

of the United Progressive Alliance government in New Delhi signal a new toughening in the GOI's stand but there was a revival of the demand to expand the peace table to include the NSCN (K) and NNC Adino group, thus challenging the I-Ms claim to speak for the Naga peoples. Congress leaders in the North East states have become active in endorsing the position of no compromise on the territorial integrity of the states. Alongside the Khaplang UGs have been involved in a spurt of violence.⁹³

The team of Naga social organisations was in Delhi to convey their support for the ceasefire and peace process and to lobby for the annual extension of the Ceasefire. They also appealed for withdrawal of the reference in the CMP to maintaining the territorial integrity of NE states.

Ceasefire without territorial limits

The NMA, NWUM and other Naga social organisations have been at the frontline in support of a ceasefire without territorial limits⁹⁴ – taking out mass rallies, participating in blockades and ‘sit ins’ and by providing succour to Nagas forcibly displaced by the majority Meitei community from their homes in Manipur.⁹⁵ They have also been in the forefront seeking to douse the flames of cross-community violence and building a dialogue to foster an understanding with non Naga neighbours that peace is not only for the Nagas but for their neighbours as well.

As the epicentre of the inter community tension is Manipur, it is the Manipur based groups that have been most active - United Naga Council, the apex body of the Naga tribes of Manipur, NWUM and the All Naga Students Organisation Manipur (ANSOM). They have been working with the Naga HoHo, NMA, NPMHR and NSF to support the territorial extension of the ceasefire to all Naga areas. NMA and NWUM have all along been working in tandem. Naga HoHo in its summit meetings invites representatives from Manipur Naga tribes. On its part, the NSCN (I-M), in its Bangkok consultations invited Naga representatives from the states of Nagaland, Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.

In Manipur four of the eight districts are dominated by the Nagas and another by the Kuki- Chin-Zomi group of tribes. The tribal districts account for 90% of the land area and 35 % of the population. The valley

people, the Hindu Meteis politically dominate the state and the Nagas are a minority. The Tangkhuls (Muivah's tribe) are the largest Naga tribe with a population estimated to be 1.07 million (1991 census).

Manipur state is fractured by more than 17 armed Meitei groups locked in self determination and identity struggles with the Indian state. Some of these groups use the NSCN (K) camps on the Burma border. The Khaplang group does not espouse the integration of all Naga peoples and denounces the Tangkhuls as foreigners. The firepower of the Meitei groups is a major deterrent in working out a political arrangement that would erode the territorial integrity of Manipur state and provoke a militarised front of angry Meitei armed groups. The field is further complicated by another conflict axis between the Nagas and Kukis. Lured by the prospect of a homeland the landless Kukis have been armed by Indian intelligence agencies against the Nagas.

The Naga Meitei relationship unequal at best has sharply deteriorated since the ceasefire. The June 2001 announcement by the government of India of the territorial extension of the ceasefire to all Naga inhabited areas, provoked violence and arson that forced New Delhi to withdraw. More than 50,000 Nagas were displaced. It is the women who are well placed to take the initiative to open a non confrontational communication channel.

Defusing Inter Community Tension: Naga-Kuki & Naga- Meitei

Women's role here too has been to protect their communities and in Pallel district Manipur, as we shall discuss below there have been sporadic efforts at forming coalitions - Naga-Kuki and Meitei- to rescue hostages, provide succour to IDPs or promote inter-community social integration through sports. The existence of an NGO like The All Tribal Women's Organisation (ATWO) has helped to encourage habits of cooperation and trust. NWUM has taken the lead in organising workshops and seminars that have promoted Inter Group Dialogue and Mediation Skills. During the run up to the Manipur Assembly elections in 2000, NWUM women intervened on several occasions to defuse tension and violence between different communities. However efforts to construct an understanding and

dialogue beyond an immediate crisis response as for example between the NMA/NWUM and the Meira Paibis (Meteis) has proved difficult.

Pallel, Manipur: ATWO has been in the forefront of building communication, trust and cooperation between the Naga and Kukis as well as the non tribal Meira Paibis. ATWO's mandate covers both Naga and Kuki women- its Secretary is a Naga, K Amita Tuishimi and its President, a Kuki, M. Hechin Haokip. Given the high levels of tension and suspicion between the communities, the Kuki President M. Hechin Haokip tried an experiment in social integration by supporting inter community volley ball matches. Amita Tuishimi, in particular, has been very active in reaching out to all communities. In 1993, when two Kuki boys were arrested, she intervened and got them released. Again, when four Kukis were shot dead and two injured, she went to see the injured in hospital in Imphal. At the peak of Naga -Kuki war, Amita Tushimi, and T Shangnu of NWUM went to Kuki villages and appealed to the women and the elders to try and stop the killings. They facilitated meetings between the Nagas and the Kukis. During the mass displacement of Kukis following the attack on their villages, ATWO extended humanitarian relief and assistance. The humanitarian and peace work of women like Amita Tuishimi and Senarai, a member of the *Panchayat* (local self government), have made them a vital resource for any peace interventions in Pallel, Chandel and Tengnuopal border districts areas of Manipur.

I was in Pallel bazaar in May 2003 when the Meira Paibis' were staging a *dharna* (public 'sit in') in protest against the abduction of three Meteis by a little known Muslim Meitei militant group, PULF. It was a matter of course that Amita should participate in the 'sit in'. Interestingly, the Director General of Police sought the help of Senarai known as a 'peace maker' in contacting the kidnappers. When in a peculiar twist of law enforcement/intelligence agencies working at cross purposes, the paramilitary force, the Manipur Rifles got Senarai arrested, ATWO joined the Meira Paibis in lobbying the Deputy Chief Minister and the Court for her release.

Tengnuopal district, Moreh border Manipur, In May 2003, I accompanied a team from NWUM and ATWO to express solidarity with Kukis who

had fled their violence affected villages and taken refuge in the Kuki village of Tengnuopal. Two months of violence this time involving Metei and Kuki UGs, had resulted in nearly 1400 Kukis being displaced from their villages. More than 100 had sought refuge in Tengnuopal. The NWUM wanted to reach out to the Kukis in a time of need to build a relationship of trust. The 'humanitarian team' was a motley group – Nagas and Kukis - the President of NWUM, Gina Shangkham and Rev.D Bongshot of the Naga Women's Church Union, Amita Tuishimi and M. Hechin Haokip. The Kuki chief's meeting hall imperceptibly filled up with representatives of the Kuki Student Organisations along with the Kuki refugees. But there was no tension. The Kuki (male) interlocutors were open, frank and welcoming. They spoke out against media attempts to ethnicise and essentialize the conflict as had happened with the earlier cycle of Naga –Kuki violence.

Senapati, Manipur In April 27, 2001 Paul Leo, the President of the United Naga Council, Manipur was abducted by the Kukis. NWUM President Gina Shangkham went to talk to the Kuki women, to seek assurance that he would not be tortured. The men were nowhere to be seen, only the Kuki women came out. They said that they would help to get him released. "We talk in daytime but there is firing at night", cynically observed Mrs Salle, a leader of the Senapati District Women Association. She had been a self styled 'Nagalim Guard' – village level militias that had emerged to keep guard at night for Kuki raids.

The Naga peace process in Manipur has produced contested histories bitterly dividing the Naga, Kuki and Metei communities. The NMA and NWUM with the greatest stake in sustaining the ceasefire and peace process have looked for opportunities to reach out to the Kuki and Metei women to build an understanding of the value of peace for all. In June 2001 when the Manipur capital Imphal was wracked with violence precipitated by the announcement of a ceasefire extended to all Naga inhabited areas, NMA and NWUM women tried to use the occasion of a South Asian workshop in Kathmandu to build a dialogue with Kuki and Metei women participants.

Neidonuo Angami made an impassioned plea. "We welcome the recent ceasefire without territorial limits to all Naga inhabited areas. But to our surprise our sister states (Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh) have started to oppose it. We feel sorry for the unnecessary loss of lives

in Imphal and the properties destroyed. We feel sorry there are differences in perspectives on the ceasefire. To us the cease fire means cessation of armed confrontation, the creation of space for people to people dialogue, free movement of peoples, a time and space for consultation to find a permanent solution to the conflict. But to others it is threatening. In what way has it become a threat is not clear. We hope that we can explain what we mean by ceasefire. We are confident that they will understand. We appeal to them as Mothers that we should all work for peace because if a child dies, it touches us, it grieves us. Because for a mother anybody's child is our child".⁹⁶

It failed to break through the distrust and bitterness. At the workshop organised by the South Asia Forum for Human rights (SAFHR) during an exercise in gendered mapping, while the Naga women spatially represented the necessity of peaceful co-existence predicated on the existence of mixed Naga-Kuki villages and shared histories, the Metei women making common cause with Kuki sisters asserted hegemonic and exclusive histories.

Traditionally, the Naga and the Metei women have been the peace makers of their two societies. And in situations of distress, as we saw above, NWUM, All Tribal Women's Organisation (ATWO) and the various local Naga, Kuki and Metei women's organisation have worked together to secure the release of hostages and to restrain action that would precipitate violence. However, the Naga women complain that it is largely one sided. "We go when they call us, but they don't come when we call them", said Rev D Bongshot of the Naga Women's Church Union. Valley Rose of NWUM described the Meira Paibis as fronts for the Metei militant groups. Similarly, the Meira Paibis regard Naga women's organisations as adjuncts to the Naga UGs and appeal to the to get Naga UGs to withdraw a blockade or release hostages.

Moreover, the Meira Paibis have no apex organisation. A local group like the Kakching Meira Paibis can vitiate the atmosphere by their move to obstruct Naga peoples' access to buy rations and prevent public trucks from unloading food meant for displaced Nagas in Senapati.⁹⁷ For Mrs Salle, of the Senapati District Women's Association, in the aftermath of the bitterness that spewed froth in 2001-2002, there can be no return to the earlier co-existence. "How can we go back to living

together after the Meira Paibis were quoted in the media abusing us as Naked Nagas and Naga women as no better than prostitutes?”

What is significant is the continuing efforts by NMA and NWUM to keep open a channel of communication and the possibility of building relationships of trust. In March 2003, NMA President Neidonuo Angami made overtures to the Iramdam Manipur Mothers Association (IMMA) in Imphal, Manipur. Gina Shangkhram of NWUM facilitated the ‘good will’ gesture.⁹⁸ The first meeting ran into rough weather with the head Mother, Khuman Leima describing Muivah as Manipur’s prodigal son who had lost his way. She felt that if she could meet Muivah, she could persuade him to see reason and come back. The NMA’s objective was not to be derailed by momentary irritation. And the meeting closed on a positive note of affirming what is in the interest of all their children- peace built on mutual understanding and accommodation.

However, a few weeks later, Khuman Leima issued a press statement asserting the inviolable territorial integrity of Manipur state and urging Meteis in Delhi to register their names and organise a public protest against the disintegration of Manipur. “How can you trust them”, asked Valley Rose of the NWUM.

Despite these misgivings, the NMA and NWUM recognise that it is only the women who can build a dialogue across the divide. Politically, it would be much more difficult for the men to come and speak together. “If the men call, they don’t come”, explained Gina. The men are held back by the public (political positions) they have taken. NWUM has been particularly successful in encouraging cross community participation in its workshops on developing mediation skills and inter group dialogues. NGOs like Reach-m, the Henri Martyn Institute, North East Network, SAFHR, WISCOMP have supported some of these initiatives. For example, the Henri Martyn Institute (Hyderabad) facilitated an 8 women study tour of tribal India. It brought together women from the different communities of Manipur.⁹⁹ Although donor funding has dwindled, the popularity of these workshops has made NWUM determined to continue.

NWUM, also has reached out to the Kukis. In April 1995 in the midst of the inter tribal violence between the Kukis and the Nagas, NWUM

opened a channel of communication to the Kuki women's organisations in Senapati district, Manipur. For two months talk went back and forth and a meeting was arranged in the home of a Kuki woman in a Kuki village. However on the morning of the meeting the Kuki women were intimidated by Kuki elders from attending. In the end, very few came. Afterwards, the convenor of the meeting Aneng Choglai Kuki was threatened and withdrew from active politics.

Although it has been a slow process and with setbacks, there are some positive developments. On the eve of International Women's Day 2003, the Secretary of the Kuki Women's Organisation, Senapati district, wrote to NWUM to invite them to participate in the activities organised for the Day.

The opposition of the non Naga neighbours to the Naga peace process is today, a huge challenge to the survival of the peace process as is the issue of unity within. At the January 2002 Bangkok consultations between the NSCN (I-M) and Naga civil society groups, it was clearly voiced - "the need for Nagas to be accommodative in our thinking towards our neighbours, to not ignore their legitimate interests and apprehensions". There was an appreciation that civil society groups had to take the lead in paving the way for an understanding that accommodated the fears and interests of all parties. It cannot be left to the protagonists at the peace table. In June 2001 when the two parties at the peace table announced the extension without territorial limits of the ceasefire agreement, it precipitated an outbreak of violence. The Naga social organisations are realising that they have to take the initiative and develop people to people dialogue and pave the way for discussions that will be sensitive to the each other's interests and arrive at some mutual accommodation. On 11 June 2003 NPMHR hosted 'A Neighbourly Conversation' between Nagas and Meteis. Naga Mothers were very much there.¹⁰⁰

Already, NMA and NWUM have begun the process of reaching out to the peoples of neighbouring states to build an understanding that peace is not only for the Naga peoples but for all. In June 2001 NMA appealed to the neighbouring states as well as Burma to 'understand and appreciate the circumstantial difficulties and plight of the Nagas'. It urged the people to extend cooperation towards finding a solution to

the Indo-Naga problem, which is “positively in the interest of the people of the region as a whole”.¹⁰¹

An NMA and NWUM team undertook several journeys to the neighbouring states of Manipur, Assam, Mizoram and Meghalaya to meet the Governor, elected representatives, social organisations, human rights groups and women’s associations to apprise them of the peace process and allay misgivings.¹⁰² 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.” It is a bathetic comment but nonetheless uncovers what is their strength- “they can speak to all”. In an environment of division, closures and intolerance – that neutral space of access is a beginning and NMA and NWUM have built upon it.

In addition, the women have participated in the NPMHR initiated people to people dialogues reaching out to sections of civil society in India, as for example in the *Journey of Conscience* to New Delhi in 2000.¹⁰³

Mobilising Mass Support & Democratising Peace Process

In this section we will discuss the initiatives of the women’s groups as embedded in the interventions of Naga social organisations to foreground peace as the priority and shift off-centre the debate on Unity first and peace afterwards. The National Programme of Reconciliation reached out to bridge the divides to heal society. They mobilized a broad based support for the ceasefire and peace process. It was the civil society ‘Peace Movement’ that asserted itself as a mediator between the Naga public and the NSCN (I-M) and build higher acceptability for the NSCN (I-M) to speak for Naga aspirations. This section will examine whether the women’s organisations within the Peace Movement were able to establish themselves as stakeholders and make the peace process plural. Did women’s participation democratise the peace agenda?

As we have noted at the time that the ceasefire agreement was announced, popular support was divided and large sections of the Naga peoples were indifferent, alienated and even hostile. The lack of unity made the ceasefire look unsustainable. As long as the war with India was on the issue of Naga identity, the divisions among the Nagas

were submerged. But with the 'peace' have come difficult questions about whether there is a homogenous Naga identity that cuts across multiple tribes speaking different languages.¹⁰⁴ Tribalism has further fractured the 'Naga' identity especially when reinforced by factional divisions.

NWUM, NMA along with NPMHR and the student federations- NSF and ANSOM have tried to instill an awareness of the integrity of Naga history and culture through their apex annual assemblies, workshops, seminars, public rallies and national prayer days. In particular NMA and NWUM emphasise the primary responsibility of mothers to instill this awareness in the home in the acculturation of the children. Every woman's organisation- Watsu Mongdang, Lotho Eloë Ho, Tangkhul Shano Long –is mandated to revive Naga customary tradition and culture. The Naga social organisations have initiated a public debate on the 'unity' issue arguing that the peace process cannot be put on hold till unity is achieved.

The leaders of the underground Naga national movement fighting these fifty years in the jungles appear to have accepted that they were isolated and a little out of touch from the people in whose name they were fighting. The Naga situation over ground has undergone huge changes in these five decades. It was the Naga civil society groups who were well placed to mediate that gulf. They took upon themselves the responsibility of impressing upon the underground leadership that while the people valued the aspirations for which the Naga armed groups were struggling, they wanted peace. The NSCN (I-M) leaders, despite initial suspicions about some of these people, especially the churches,¹⁰⁵ having compromised and betrayed the cause, eventually came to appreciate the value of the social organisations to communicate "what was politically possible". As K Padmanabhaiah the Prime Minister's special emissary in the peace talks said – civil society's role has been to impress upon the leaders "they can't ask for the moon".

The NSCN (I-M) leaders recognised they needed the Naga social organisations. They were necessary to mobilize popular support for the peace process and to build a wider acceptability for themselves as spokespersons for Naga aspirations. Also, they did not want to be seen like their predecessors making back door compromises. They needed

the intervention of civil society groups and yet were worried about relating to social organisations over which they had no control.¹⁰⁶ It was a process that began with the two parties – social activists and church leaders meeting in small groups with the NSCN (I-M) leadership to take a measure of each other to begin building trust. The NSCN (I-M) leadership recognised that the women’s groups were significant and involved them in the consultations.

For several weeks in 1999, Isak and Muivah were in Niuland (Dimapur) district, the headquarters of their deemed Parliament, meeting hundreds of ordinary Naga peoples. Since then there have been several rounds of exchanges but a structured consultative process has yet to emerge. Even the integration of independent observers in the ceasefire monitoring mechanism is still pending. There was some expectation of a breakthrough in 2002 when NSCN (I-M) took the initiative to convene two conclaves in Bangkok in a conscious effort to strengthen the peace process through peoples participation.

Bangkok Consultations

In January 2002, the NSCN (I-M) invited 44 persons from the various Naga peoples organisations, the churches and the tribes of Andhra Pradesh, Manipur, Assam and Nagaland. Three women from the NMA and NWUM participated. There were no women from the NSCN (I-M) side eliciting criticism. NSCN Chairperson Isak 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 of a sellout as happened before, he emphasised, “No agreement would be entered into without the fullest understanding of the Naga peoples.”¹⁰⁷

The interaction was an opportunity to understand what was happening in the talks with the Indian emissaries, to remove suspicions and to guard against wild speculation. The statement of the civil society delegation affirmed support for the ceasefire and talks between the GOI and NSCN (I-M) under the leadership of Isak and Muivah, recognising it 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 neighbours. The Consultation established their mutual need and interdependence.

It was to the Naga HoHo, the churches, the NMA, NWUM and the other Naga social organisations that the NSCN (I-M) group looked to, to mediate unity and reconciliation. It was a mutually empowering process

The May 2002 the consultation process was widened to encompass 110 representatives from 30 Naga organisations coming together to focus on the theme of “Strengthening the Peace Strategy”.¹⁰⁸ It reiterated the commitment made by NSCN (I-M) 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” Isak Swu affirmed. Whereas in the January meeting there were no NSCN (I-M) women, this time there were six senior IM women. On the social organisations side there were five women, two from NWUM and Tanghkul Shano Long and three from Dimapur, Naga Women’s Ho. Gina Shangkham of NWUM specifically lauded the leadership’s gender sensitivity. “The space given to the Naga women in the consultative meeting is highly appreciated and is a good beginning to boost up their confidence.”¹⁰⁹

NMA did not attend. As Nedidonuo explained, “we thought it would help to get other organisations to have the exposure to encourage wider mobilization”. It is likely that the NMA President may have wanted to deflect the diffused criticism about – “what are the women doing always going to Bangkok and staying in five star hotels” by encouraging the Dimapur Naga Women’s Ho to go.

Following the Bangkok meeting, the process of consultations have been adhoc. At issue is not only trust but competing centres of power. The Naga HoHo has steadily emerged as a major power centre rivaling the Naga state government. The Naga HoHo does not want to be seen to be compromising its independence by identifying too closely with the NSCN (I-M) group. It wants to maintain distance as well as identity as a power centre representing the Naga Tribal organisations. The relationship of the NSCN (I-M) with human rights organisation MPMHR has been a mixed one –their human rights agenda is problematic for the NSCN (I-M) and they are further uneasy because they have no control over them. NMA and NWUM do not carry that kind of political baggage or power aspirations and trust is easier to come by. The NSCN (I-M) leadership has said that they have come to value the role of the women, especially NMA and

NWUM. It was reflected in the presence of the NSCN (I-M) women in the second consultation.

The weakness resulting from the absence of a co-ordinating structure was particularly evident during the first visit of Isak Swu and Th Muivah to Delhi in January 2003. The Naga social organisations, including NMA and NWUM top representatives were all present in Delhi. There was a tumultuous welcome by masses of Naga students to “demonstrate our acceptance of the reality of the NSCN (I-M) enabling the Naga peoples to realise some of their aspirations”, explained Achumbemo Kikon the NSF President. “The Elders are more skeptical but the students are more positive as evident in the way the debate on the Unity theme was articulated at the NSF conference - that “we can’t wait for unity, the political process must go on” he said. “The NSCN (I-M) leadership appreciated the fullness of our welcome” he added. But there was no process by which in the tribally fractured and generationally divided Naga society the students could assert themselves meaningfully into the peace process.

Delhi should have been an opportunity for the NSCN (I-M) leaders to reach out to Indian political leaders across political party lines and to civil society groups in India. Instead they were essentially captive in a safe house of the Indian intelligence agencies. Delhi got restricted to being a public relations exercise to signal the leadership’s tacit support to the pro peace platform of the Naga Peoples Front in the forthcoming 2003 assembly and defeat the ‘peace spoiler’ Congress leadership in power in Nagaland. A meaningful coordination structure could have turned that ‘lost opportunity’ into a breakthrough in building relationships with national level political leaders across parties (beyond the ruling BJP) and with Indian civil society groups.

The capacity of the Naga social organisations to negotiate a structured role as stakeholders in a plural peace process has been weakened by the reluctance of the GOI and its bureaucratic- military institutions to understand and appreciate the significance of Naga social organisations in Naga society. Although in relation to the Naga HoHo, the GOI seems inclined to recognise and reinforce its authority. Ironically, it has come full circle - the 50’s-60’s pacification policy of the GOI had attacked the tribal elders and institutions. Today when there is an impasse over the ceasefire territorial extension issue – the GOI appeals to the Naga HoHo.

The institutions of the state, especially in a situation of a nationalist conflict, are not structured to recognise or respect the 'civilian' victim's voice and post conflict, seem to be unable to value civil society and particularly women as necessary for peace building.

Lt General (ret'd) R V Kulkarni on taking over as the Chairperson of the Ceasefire Cell, said he got no feedback from his Naga advisors to indicate that the women were a resource for peace building. Earlier, he had been posted as Commanding Officer in Mokokchung district but recalled no experience of women mediating with local commanding officers to defuse tension and violence this is despite the several incidents we've quoted above of local level women's negotiations of power with the security forces. "When I came back (Nagaland) they all said have you spoken to the church and the Naga Ho Ho. But nobody asked me to speak to the NSF, NMA or NPMHR" the General said. He discounted their relevance, "They are all guided by someone else". Neidonuo on hearing the general's comment said, "It's another example of the General's lack of real understanding of the way things are done here. Earlier, he had hand picked four people to represent the Naga social organisations in the ceasefire monitoring mechanism. Of course we rejected it," Neidonuo said.

Equally, Col Benz K Jacob Assam Rifles Commandant, Kohima, was surprised at the idea of the NMA or other women's groups being considered a significant resource for peace building. During the 2003 Nagaland state assembly elections, when tension was rising between rival political groups in Kohima, he had convened a meeting of social organisations and individuals with influence, to discuss ways of defusing tension. He had never thought of calling NMA. "No one listens to the women, I've been told by my Naga women friends," he said.

Democratising the Peace Agenda

Substantive political negotiations have yet to begin at the peace table. And it is too early to indicate whether civil society groups will be able to influence and democratise the peace agenda. The Naga social organisations have been deliberately reticent on the sensitive issues of future political arrangements about which little is publicly discussed beyond broad issues of unification, sovereignty (eliding into maximum autonomy), a separate flag, the right to raise armed forces and permission to run information centres abroad.¹¹⁰

NMA for one, has deliberately held back from engaging with the political agenda. Perhaps, it is because discussion on political issues of Naga sovereignty is likely to be further divisive and undermine what NMA sees as its primary role at this stage- building unity and reconciliation. Neidonuo Angami explains, “as a civil society member and as a representative of NMA I must tell you that the decision on political issues has to be theirs. Our job is to take advantage of this ceasefire period to create a peaceful atmosphere so that some permanent solution may follow on what they decide. What solution they hammer out is their affair”. Also, as we observed above, NMA’s intervention is articulated in a language of motherhood and care giving. “The solution, should come from our leaders. Not from an ordinary mother like me. My role is not to decide. Even if I give a decision, they may not accept it”.

What is evident is that the Naga women have been in the forefront of promoting an inclusive politics, validating the contribution of all ‘national workers’/underground and emphasising the need for a peace that is in the interest of all Nagas as well as their neighbours. In addition they have been insisting on accountability and transparency from the leaders and national workers who have been fighting in the name of the people. Also the Naga women have introduced a holistic perspective that links the local to the national, that is, by a strategy that emphasises the importance of initiating peace and social reform from the home at the local level. It is a perspective that sees a continuum in the social dys-functionalism of the home and family and the malaise of a violence torn society and social institutions (including the churches) and an unfinished political conflict.

While NMA has subsumed a gender rights agenda in a an overall mobilization for social reform NWUM has been much more determined to inscribe gender rights on the post conflict democratic agenda. Already at its first General Assembly in 1994, NWUM passed resolutions demanding rights for women in the areas of Marriage, Divorce, Property Inheritance and most crucially representation in Village Tribal Authority. ¹¹¹

It can be argued that women’s participation in the peace process has made the NSCN (I-M) leadership more gender aware as evinced in the

participation of NSCN (I-M) women leaders in the third Bangkok Consultation in 2002. Indeed the women in the national movement – political and military wings have on occasion joined hands with women in Naga society at the Tangkhul Tribal Assembly in Ukhrul in April 2004, to press the case for women's participation in Naga society's structures of decision making.

Also, the Naga social organisations have introduced into the discourse issues of ecological and developmental concerns. Many of the organisations have been involved in campaigning on these issues. NMA has a campaign on reforestation. NWUM has been involved in campaigning against high dams that will destroy the environment and peoples livelihood. On the whole, through the interaction of the NSCN and the social organisations, there has been a shift that places civilian security concerns on the agenda as in the case of the expansion of Ceasefire Ground Rules in 2001 to protect civilians from abuse of authority by the armed parties. The omission reflected a political juridical framework that viewed the agreement as between two organised armed forces with conflicting claims to territory rather than about Naga peoples aspirations. The change demonstrated a recognition of the needs of a broader peace table although its is difficult to establish a causal link.

In lieu of a Conclusion

Our narrative above has tried to reveal the rationale for the iconic status of the Naga women- as the Women of Peace in South Asia. It has tried to explore through the myriad interventions of Naga women in peace building the substance behind the rhetoric of the cluster of quotations in the introduction- *“where are the women, we need them”*; *“only you women can do it”*; *“now that you’ve come, it will make all the difference”*; *“you women can pacify”*. The study has sought to examine whether there has been a consequential shift in social consciousness, that is, a validation by the Naga public of women’s role as making a difference, especially in reaching out to warring factions and bitterly divided communities to foster reconciliation and healing. Here we will take a measure of the social acceptance of women’s new roles derived from a recognition of the value of women making a difference.

Perceptions

“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”, Neidonuo Angami and scores of Naga women have voiced the same sentiment. “It is to do what the men cannot do” a women in Jotsoma village said. That difference in ways of negotiating - in the capacity to pacify appears to be socially accepted. It has produced the social expectation that women can mediate the violence of the warring factions, defuse inter community tension, open channels of communication and build a dialogue of understanding and trust. In Christian Nagaland ‘social repair’ and ‘mutual accommodation’ is coded in the language of forgiveness and healing.

Paul Leo, former president of UNC singled out the particular quality of compromise that the women brought to a conflict torn situation. “When

Metei and Naga men talk, they reinforce their rigid positions, women are more diplomatic and willing to compromise. They can be relied upon to pacify.” Its flip side is the vocal resentment of the NWUM women that the men depend on them as the ‘last resort, when they’re helpless’ but when it comes to decision making, ‘they ignore us’. At issue is not only society’s capacity to relate to the new meanings and significance of women’s agency but also the crisis of masculinity in a society that had traditionally valued war making (and defending) prowess.

Today, in Nagaland, no civil society delegation to the GOI or to the Underground, is considered complete with out the representation of the women’s groups. Is it any different from the important ceremonial role that Naga women have traditionally played in public functions? Jo Jo Aier, an eminent lawyer in Kohima believes there is a noticeable difference. “In every public activity, in every public meeting, the men now ask - where are the women, we need the women”. She argues that NMA has been able to win the trust of the men to work at reconciliation and to be trusted to be interlocutors. Valley Rose, a founder of NWUM felt that women were encouraged to go into a conflict torn situation not only because of the men’s confidence in our ability to pacify but because “we give a clear version (non partisan) to both sides”. She was commenting on women’s interventions between Nagas and Kukis. The social distance this has involved can be appreciated by recalling that traditionally Naga women were not trusted to carry messages or allowed to pass by the village elders meeting hall. The women, it was feared, might have divided loyalties because of their kith and kin networks. Also, the women would garble information of public importance. Today they are ‘trusted’ interlocutors among divided leaders and their participation in peace initiatives and meetings is considered necessary both for reasons of democratic participation as well as because they bring a different way of doing politics and different perceptions.

The social change can be objectively demonstrated in the trust that NMA and NWUM now enjoy in opening a communication channel between the top leadership of the NSCN (I-M) and (K) groups; in their active participation in Naga civil society advocacy campaigns for the territorial extension of the ceasefire; their inclusion in

representations made to the Indian Prime Minister, including on the release of the General Secretary of the NSCN (I-M) group, Th Muivah, from a Bangkok jail. Above all, there is the social and political recognition of NMA and the NWUM's claim to be stakeholders in the peace process. It is demonstrated by their inclusion in the Bangkok consultations between Naga civil society and the I-M leaders. Indeed a reflection of the seriousness with which the I-M leaders view the NMA-NWUM women's participation was evident when at the third Consultation the NSCN (I-M) for the first time called in six senior I-M women to participate.

Among the social organisations, NMA and NWUM enjoy enormous respect as visible during the Naga Students Federation biennial assembly in Niuland 2003. Nedinuo Angami was the Chief Guest at the Valedictory Function. Indeed Neinglo Krome of NPMHR who chaired the event, remarked appreciatively on 'powerful Naga women' as not only was the Chief Guest a woman, but the DSP Dimapur who had come to check on security was also a women.

There is a shift in social consciousness but has it translated into a more assertive role for women in the Naga social organisations? For example, in the male dominated Naga Students Federation women remain locked in the 'tea lady' syndrome. Their presence in every federating unit is considered necessary but they have no independent voice. However, the workings of the Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR) reflects a clear shift in greater gender sensitivity. At its General Assembly meeting in 2000, the 11 point NPMHR Declaration emphasises Gender. It commends the 'positive participation' of women members in the overall workings of npmhr and their contribution to the struggle.¹¹²

Can we argue that the Naga women leaders have been able to translate the authority they enjoy in the informal sphere of peace politics into authority in the formal sphere of Naga public life? NWUM women as we have seen in the study, have been particularly resentful on being used as 'human shields' and ignored when it comes to decision making. In Senapati district, there is the headquarters of the NWUM and an active women's organisation like the Senapati District Women's Association. However, the head of the Naga Peoples Organisation (NPO) Senapati District, Dilli

Solomon does not call their representatives to the NPO meetings. “They’re too busy”, he said to me.

Paul Leo the former President of the United Naga Council, the apex body of the Manipur Naga tribes, is in favour of women being represented in the UNC and the NWUM President Gina Shangkhram is a regular invitee to the UNC meeting. Paul is in his fifties but the majority of the Elders in the UNC are 60 and 70 years of age, and are opposed to enabling women to becoming full fledged members of the UNC. The Constitution of the UNC is being reviewed and NWUM is pressing for the inclusion of women. “This is a council of tribes, women are not a tribe, so how can they be represented” argued Dilli Solomon. Simple, responds Gina Shangkhram, allow women to be elected to represent the tribe. After all women are in the tribe.

Nonetheless, the ferment in Naga society is discernible as evident in the Ukhrul (Manipur) conclave of the Tangkhul tribe in April 2003. At the assembly were present a number of I-M Tangkhul leaders and cadres, women and men. There was a mutually empowering exchange between the Tangkhul women in the movement and the civilian women that resulted in the assembly passing a resolution calling for women’s representation in the Village Tribal Councils.

In Nagaland, the Naga HoHo is much more closed to the idea of including women, though the younger generation represented by the Publicity Secretary, Keviletuo Kiewhuo (50s), are more willing. However, the majority are traditionalists like the Deputy Speaker Akanag Ao. “There was no question of incorporating women in the HoHo. We call them when there is an issue of relevance to them. When it is HoHo business, there is no need to involve them,” he said. There appears to be social acceptance of this exclusion as evident during the interaction with a large inter generational group of Angami women at Jotsoma village (an hour’s drive from Kohima). The group rejected the idea that there was any need for women to be directly involved in representative politics.

The institutions of the Indian state (and Nagaland state) have been much less sensitive to women’s contribution to peace building. Both General R V Kulkarni, the head of the ceasefire monitoring mechanism and Col Benz K Jacob, the head of the paramilitary Assam Rifles in

Kohima, had never thought of involving the women in defusing tension or mediating violence. This was despite the hard evidence of women in the village and district headquarters mediating the survival concerns of the community with the local commanding officer.

The ambiguity reflected in the attitudes and resistance of Naga society and institutions shows that the space for women in public life is still a socially contested terrain. For many, women's peace activism is acceptable only within the de-politicised and socially circumscribed traditional framework of women's work or motherhood politics. The harsher reaction to NWUM's interventions shows that they are seen as more threatening. The different operational styles of NMA and NWUM reflect these social tensions.

The women claim 'they are trusted by both sides' however the empirical evidence indicates the need to problematize any simple assumption about the logic of 'some mother's son'. NMA's interventions have not always been able to transcend tribalism in working to establish 'peace amongst the Nagas'. The relationship with the Ao tribal women remains a difficult one. Initiatives to reach across the Metei and Kuki divides have not made any meaningful breakthrough. Though there are impressive local success stories as that of the ATWO initiative that has a significant record of building relationships across inter tribal (Naga -Kuki) and the hill-plains inter ethnic divisions (Naga -Metei). Despite these caveats, the empirical cases demonstrate that it is women who have shown a greater capacity and commitment to take on the work of building an inclusive and consensual politics.

The Tuensang interaction with the cadres of both the NSCN (I-M) and Khaplang groups revealed the acceptability of the mothers' to 'both sides' but the level of trust (and the sense of desperation and loss of the cadres) has meant a huge transfer of responsibility on the mothers, to intervene. The reinvigoration of the campaign to 'Stop All Bloodshed', is a product of that expanded sense of responsibility. It is echoed in their oft repeated statement - "we can not give up".

The desperation for peace has meant that issues of justice are elided over raising disturbing questions about the sustainability and democratic basis of the peace. The Naga model of reconciliation adopted by the Naga social organisations emphasizes forgiveness and forgetting

not justice. This may account for the weakness of the model to heal the breach between the warring factions.

The most signal aspect of the Naga peace model is the recognition by the leadership of the Naga rebellion of the value of civil society mobilization for peace and the need to work together to strengthen it. It has been a process of mutual empowerment. (In a parallel peace process in South Asia, the LTTE has been hostile to the involvement of civil society in the Sri Lanka peace dynamics). The women's groups are recognised as integral stakeholders in building mass support for peace and particularly in building reconciliation. At its consultative Table', the NSCN (I-M) leaders have provided the Naga women a seat because "we need them". And the women by their peace building work have gained social acceptance to claim that seat as a stakeholder in a plural peace process.

Endnotes

1. For elaboration see Valley Rose 'Pukrelia', *Raisunriang*, 5th issue 2001, p 19 and Shimreichon Luithui 'Women for Peace in Nagalim' *NPMHR 25 Years* p 120-124
2. Naga social organisations or Naga voluntary organisations approximate to the catch all phrase 'civil society. In the neo liberal discourse, the *creation* of a civil society or its revival is seen as a precondition for the growth of substantive democratic institutions. Basically the appeal to civil society is the appeal to people to mobilise resources for collective action and challenge and reform the state. Liberal democratic theory places the individual with rights as the centre, entering into voluntary associations and whose selves and commitments can be changed at will. The layer of this type of voluntary associational activity in Naga society is thin. Beyond these lie the repertoire of social organisations primarily structured around community identities. In these societies primordial identities remain the building blocks of social organisations. Though from a neo liberal point of view it is valid to ask whether the Naga Ho Ho, NMA, Watsu Mongdang, NWUM, NPMHR, NSF and the church organisations can be termed civil society organisations. Can ascriptive organisations be part of a civil society contextualised as a site for generating a democratic politics? See Sudipto Kaviraj and Sunil Khilnani *Civil Society* Cambridge University Press 2001
3. Text of Declaration, Kohima Dec 20, 2001 in Rev Nuh and Wetshokhrolo Lasuh edited *The Naga Chornicle* Regency Publications New Delhi 2002 pp 610- 618
4. Text 'Naga Consultation Meeting: Strengthening the Peace Strategy' Jan 7-12, Bangkok, Naga International Support Centre, Amsterdam, 2002.
5. Text 'The Naga Consultative Meeting' May 6-10, 2002 website www.nscnonline.org
6. 'Peace Table' is used as a metaphor that encompasses the whole process of re-imagining a post conflict social and political arrangements.
7. Text of the United Progressive Alliance Common Minimum Programme May 28, 2004. *The Hindu* website www.thehindu.com
8. I am indebted to Raka Ray for the co-relating the nature of political fields with the the nature of women's organisations in *Fields of Protest*, Kali for Women, New Delhi 2000.
- 10 Edited Transcript of Focus Group Discussion, May 2, 2003. Facilitator Neichu Dz Angami : Participants : 15 Jostoma Village, Nagaland.
- 11 Brochure 'Shed No More Blood' Naga Mothers Association, Kohima Nagaland, undated.
- 12 Ram Narayan Kumar with Laxmi Murthy *Four Years of the Ceasefire Agreement* Civil Society Initiative on Naga peace Process, New Delhi 2002
- 13 See R.Vashun *Nagas Right to Self Determination*. Mittal pub New Delhi 2000; R Vashun *Indo-Naga Conflict*, India Social Institute New Delhi 2001. For a compendium of Key Questions on the Naga issues see Kumar and Murthy

- 14 According to Vashum the Naga tribes found in the Naga hill areas are in Nagaland – 13 tribes, Manipur 15 tribes spread over 4 districts, Arunachal 3 tribes spread over 2 districts, Assam – 2 tribes spread over 5 districts and in Myanmar – 15 tribes spread over Sagaing Division and Kachin state.
- 15 The Kukis were originally known as Thadou and lived along with the Nagas in Sagaing division of the Naga hills and also in Kale Kabaw valley across Moreh town returned to Burma in 1830. These Thadou people (Bengali name Kuki) were set up by the British as frontier guards across Kabaw valley and further down to the Naga -Manipur borders
- 16 Aram Pamei 'Rani Gaidinliu', *Raisunriang* 2001 p31
- 17 See Compilation of Documents of Naga National Council in Nuh and Lasuh. p77-98
- 18 Luithui, Lingam and Haksar, Nandita *Nagaland File*, Lancer Publishers, Delhi 1987
- 19 Jotsoma Focus Group Edited Transcript
- 20 U A Shimray 'Women's Work in Naga Society' *Economic & Political Weekly* April 2004 p1706.
- 21 Kumar & Laxmi p 84 ; Isak Swu, SS Khapleng and Th Muivah 'Statement of NSCN' Jan 3 1984 Text in Nuh and Lasuh p365
- 22 Documents on the Churches Peace Mission, Nuh and Lasuh
- 23 Nirmal Nibedon *Nagaland Night of the Guerrillas* New Delhi Lancer. Reprint 2000
- 24 Nuh p90
- 25 'Law and Order Scenario in Manipur. Mizoram Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh' Minutes of Meeting of six Congress leaders New Delhi May 19,2003 . Internal Circulation only
- 26 Dr Visier Sanyu a Naga scholar quoted in Kumar p25
- 27 It is a consensual form of democracy with hierarchies and exclusions. It is dominated by the village elders. Women are excluded from participation in public life.
- 28 See B N Mullick *My Years with Nehru* Delhi Caxton Press 1974; Subir Bhowmick a BBC journalist claims 1:1 adult Naga male in *Insurgent Crossfire* New Delhi, Lancer Pub 1996
- 29 U A Shimray 'Women's Work in Naga Society' *Economic & Political Weekly* April 24,2004 vol 39, no 17, pp1698-1711
- 30 'Human Rights Week in Nagaland 10-15 December 1978: A Report' in *NPMHR 25 Years* 2003 p5.
- 31 Veronica Zingkhai 'Tangkhum Shano Long' in *Raisunriang* March 1996 p33-37
- 32 'Operation Bluebird and the Struggle for Legal Justice' in *NPMHR 25 Years* p27-32
- 33 Khatoli Khala *The Armed Forces (Special powers) Act and its Impact on Women in Nagaland* (Monograph) WISCOMP 5, 2003 pp42-43 and Roshmi Goswami 'Women and Armed Conflict-Ground Realities from North East India ' Paper presented at WISCOMP Symposium 'Human Security in the New Millennium' New Delhi August 2000.
- 34 pp 529 Nuh
- 35 Interview of Neinglo Krome ,Secretary General of NPMHR in Kumar p 132
- 36 Interview New Delhi 2 Jan 2003
- 37 Shimray 'Equality as Tradition :Women's Role in Naga Society Economic & Political Weekly Feb 2, 2002 p375- 377 and Shimray ibid 2004
- 38 Carl von Hammendorf *Naked Nagas* Calcutta 1964
- 39 Dolly Kikon 'Naga Women' in NPMHR May Newsletter 2002; Kitoli Khala *Armed Forces Special Powers Act* WISCOMP 2002; Banerjee Paula, "Between Two Armed Patriarchies" in *Women War and Peace in South Asia* edited by Rita Manchanda, Sage Delhi 2001.
- 40 Valley Rose the editor of the North East's only Tangkhum language newspaper argued that the fear of wild animals may have also reinforced this ritual taboo.
- 41 The exception is Maran Khullen village in Senapati district where Mrs Hinga Karangnamei has been the chief -*Sagungpui* – after her husband's death. In 1996 she became the chief of the 23 clans of the Maram tribe. Gina Shangkhams 'Naga Women today' *Raisunriang* 1995

- 42 Valley Rose *ibid*; Shimray 2000, Kikon
- 43 *Raisunriang* 2001 p 19
- 44 Aram Pamei 'Naga Women and Culture' in *Raisunriang* 1996 p27-32
- 45 For Meira Paibis see references in Manchanda edited *Women War and Peace* p30. Kuki (tribal) women have also intervened as for example in Churachanpur, Manipur. In 1995 internecine violence between two Kuki tribes Thadou and Patei brought thousands of women out on the streets to stop the violence. They worked with the Kuki elders to broker a peace. Manchanda p 31
- 46 Roshmi Goswami 'Women and Armed Conflict Ground Realities N E India'
- 47 Interview Mokokchung April 2001
- 48 Brochure 'Naga Mothers Millennium Challenge' on its AIDS Care Hospice.
- 49 NMA Records, Kohima
- 50 Text of Interview Neidonuo Angami, Kohima :Kumar and Laxmi April 2001
- 51 NMA President 'Mother's Call for Integrity' Appeal Kohima 2003
- 52 Brochure 'Shed No More Blood'
- 53 *Raisunriang* 1995- 2001
- 54 'Naga Women's Union Manipur: Annual Reports *Raisunriang* . Paul Leo 'Naga Women and Human Rights" in *Raisunriang* 1998 p 14-15
- 55 *Raisunriang* 2001
- 56 Raka Ray
- 57 Story of Mrs Mou in Paula Banerjee Women in Assam and Nagaland: Between Two Armed Patriarchies in *Women War and Peace in South Asia*.
- 58 Cited in Anuradha Chennoy *Militarism and Women in South Asia* Kali for Women New Delhi 2001 p 134
- 59 Nomenclature needs to be politically mediated. The Nagas favour the term 'national worker' representing the members of the Naga National Movement – cadres military and political. Also used is the term 'Underground' or UGs to refer to the militarised cadres as well as extending to the Underground Government and the political wing. Used by outsiders are terms like 'rebels', 'militants' and 'terrorists'.
- 60 See Neidonuo's references to 'kitchen politics' in Rita Manchanda, Bandita Sijapati and Rebecaa Gang 'Women Making Peace' SAFHR Kathmandu June 2001.
- 61 Interview, Mokokchung 2001
- 62 Paula Banerjee 'Between two Armed Patriarchies' p 164
- 63 Khala p 42-43
- 64 Excerpts of transcript of Mokokchung women's group meets Brig Rambir Singh 311 Mt Division, April 1, 1997. Watsu Mongdang Records.
- 65 See the account of Athia Mary Moroo 'An Event Never to be Forgotten' in *Raisunriang*, NWUM, 5th issue 2001; Also interview with Mrs Salle, Senapati 4 May 2003
- 66 *ibid*
- 67 Neinglo Krome (NPMHR) personal communication
- 68 Kumar
- 69 Interview of Neidonuo Angami by Kumar and Laxmi, Kohima 21 March 2001
- 70 personal communication Neichu Angami daughter of Neidonuo Angami
- 71 Edited Transcript Jotsoma Village Women
- 72 See Press Note on National Prayer Day, Kohima, Aug 9, 2002 Main speakers included NMA President
- 73 NMA Records
- 74 NMA Records
- 75 See Kumar with Murthy. After the ceasefire K group cadres launched attacks on Indian security forces, in parts of Nagaland , Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Kidnappings and

- extortion also increased; p92; also see Bharat Bhushan interview's with Th Muivah, ".Who is against this process?I think Mr Kaphlang is. And who has been supporting him? Is it not Mr Jamir? So he says that Kaphlang group must be in the peace process. And when he did not succeed, what did he do? He created a situation by getting Kaphlang to kill Indian army men" *The Hindustan Times* 11/7/98.
- 76 In Oct 1998 an NPMHR-NSF delegation had trekked to Myanmar and met Khaplang at a camp. See text of brief Report of NSF and NPMHR meeting with NSCN Leaders in *NPMHR 25 years* p96-98
- 77 Interview with Gina Shangkhram Delhi January 2003 and Senapati May 2003
- 78 ibid
- 79 Text of Declaration in Nuh p610-618
- 80 Nuh p612
- 81 Text of Naga HoHo 'Reconciliation Initiative: Where it Stands today' in Nuh p632
- 82 Text of the 'Summary of the Findings of the workshop on Reconciliation and Unity' Third Consultation Bangkok May 2003 in Nuh p 624
- 83 Interview with Rev V K Nuh , in Kumar p 119
- 84 Interview Neinglo Krome in Kumar p 132
- 85 Cyclostyled text of Circular
- 86 Text of Representation of Naga Mothers and Sisters for effective peace process of Indo-Naga conflict. Letter to Indian Prime Minister and Chairman NSCN. Bangkok, 26 August 2000
- 87 pp 529 Nuh; See also Resolution adopted by the Naga HoHo Summit, Kohima 26-27, 1997 on the decision to constitute a Monitoring Cell. Participating in the summit meeting was Neidonuo Angami 'for Mothers'. Nuh p 528
- 88 Text of letter of invitation Kohima 11 Feb 1998
- 89 pp 478-479 Nuh
- 90 NPMHR Newsletter July 2002
- 91 Text of Revised Ceasefire Ground Rules cited in Kumar p 136-137
- 92 NMA Press Statement 'Mothers Call for Integrity'
- 93 The Assam Tribune Guwahati June 20, 2004 in [http:// www.northeastvigil.com/news](http://www.northeastvigil.com/news)
- 94 Text of Memorandum Submitted to Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Prime Minister of India by the Naga Civil Organisations in Manipur June 22, 2001 in support of the Extension of the Indo-Naga Ceasefire Without Territorial Limits'. Signatories, UNC, NWUMand ANSAM. NWUM Records.
- 95 Gina addressed a humanitarian appeal to Deputy Commissioners of the districts of Senapati Ukhruel Chandel and Tamenglong on 18 Sept 2001. See 'Summary report on the condition of the Internally Displaced Persons from Imphal Valley to Naga Hill areas of Manipur' in *NPMHR 25years* p 75-85
- 96 In Rita Manchanda, Bandita Sijapati and Rebecca Gang 'Women Making Peace' (Monograph) SAFHR Kathmandu, June 2001.
- 97 *Nagaland Post* Aug 7, 2001; Also see role of media in 'Summary report' *NPMHR* p 83
- 98 *Nagaland Post* March 23, 2003
- 99 *Raisunriang* 2001 p 8-9
- 100 Press Statement 12 June 2003 in *NPMHR 25 Years* p 140-141
- 101 NMA Press Release 17, June 2001
- 102 *Nagaland Post* December 17, 2003
- 103 See 'Appeal' *NPMHR 25 Years* p144-145
- 104 See article by the influential ex Director General of Police K P S Gill, Director Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, New Delhi. Argues that notwithstanding the secessionist fiction, Nagas are not a single politically culturally homogenous peoples. *The Pioneer* 30 June 2001. See Kumar p99

- 105 Kumar p 90
 106 For these insights I am indebted to Tapan Bose, a human rights activist who has been closely interacting with the Nagas and the leadership.
 107 Naga Consultative Meetings: 'Strengthening the Peace Strategy' 7-11 January and May 6-10, 2002, Naga International Support Centre, Amsterdam 2002
 108 ibid
 109 ibid
 102 *The Assam Tribune* Guwahati June 20, 2004 in [http:// www.northeastvigil.com/news](http://www.northeastvigil.com/news)
 103 *Raisunrang* 1995
 104 NPMHR Report 1999-2000 'One Step Back Two Steps Forward' *NPMHR 25 Years* p104

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