Building Peace Changing Lives

Role and Participation of Women in Peace and Security in Myanmar, Philippines and Thailand



Nonviolent Peaceforce

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Foreword

I am pleased to present this baseline study capturing the role and participation of women in peace and security in Myanmar, Philippines, and Thailand to our partners and stakeholders. This study is one of the trailblazing outputs of NP's Women Peace and Security (WPS) flagship program in the ASEAN region called *Women-IMPACT or Women Creating Impact on Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation*. The program mainly aims to enhance the capacity and participation of women-led CSOs and institutions in peace and security initiatives. Thanks to the Mission of Canada to ASEAN, through its Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI), the program has achieved a breakthrough as NP commences to broaden its reach and impact in the regional setting.

Clearly, the realization of the program is a significant milestone for the organization. Undeniably, though, WPS mainstreaming remains a huge undertaking in the region, especially amidst the COVID-19 situation, requiring sustained commitment and innovative cooperation of various actors. Upon the conceptualization of the program, NP strategically collaborated with the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (AIPR) to contribute to the strengthening of the latter's mandate as women and gender-promoting institution on peace, conflict management, and conflict resolution in line with the ASEAN's political- security community pillar and the Member States Joint Statement on WPS in the ASEAN.

This baseline study was conducted to demonstrate women's role and participation in peace and security, draw out a regional perspective and database through comparative examples of women's participation in local peacebuilding initiatives, and identify possible courses of action in mainstreaming WPS in the region. Despite its limitation to three countries, study findings provide substantial information on the patterns and trends in peace and security situation, roles and participation of women, enabling and constraining factors, structural and sociocultural gains, and best practices in peacebuilding. A riveting evidence of the study is the ability of women to advance WPS notwithstanding their un/underrepresentation and limited space in the formal peace process. Women peacebuilders underwent an ordeal to defy personal, sociocultural, and structural barriers and dealt with diverse stakeholders and contexts to push forward women's agenda in the peace process. A best practice the study notes across the three countries is the involvement of men in advancing women's agenda in the peace process and related initiatives.

This study presents lessons learned and conclusions to highlight the significant gains of women peacebuilding and emphasize the need for concrete actions to implement and institutionalize WPS agenda in the three countries in particular and in ASEAN in general. It has put forward recommendations on WPS mainstreaming to the following: 1. ASEAN intergovernmental body in institutionalizing best practices across its member states; 2. CSOs in building, strengthening, and sustaining gains in their areas of operation; and 3. donor agencies for more support in research, knowledge management, resource sharing, and implementation at the country and community levels.

I hope this study would be of valuable use to our partners and stakeholders as we work together in advancing WPS in the region. This initiative is just the start of the mission. Let us strive to the best of our capacity to translate the recommendations into real actions on the ground.

Delsy Ronnie, PhD
Head of Mission for Philippines and
Regional Representative for Asia
Nonviolent Peaceforce
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Acronyms

AIPR	ASEAN Institute of Peace and Reconciliation
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AWPR	ASEAN Women for Peace Registry
BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organization
GIWPS	Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security
KII	Key Informant Interview
NAP	National Action Plan
NGO	Nongovernment Organization
NP	Nonviolent Peaceforce
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UNSCR	Union Nations Security Council Resolution
WPS	Women, Peace, and Security

Myanmar Case

AA	Arakan Army
ABSDF	All Burma Students' Democratic Front
AFPFL	Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League party
AGIPP	Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process
ALP	Arakan Liberation Party
BGF	Boarder Guard forces
BWU	Burmese Women's Union
CNF	Chin National Front
CSFoP	Civil Society Forum on Peace (CSFoP)
21CPC	21st Century Panglong Conference
DKBA	Democratic Karen Benevolent Army
EAO	Ethnic Armed Organization
GEN	Gender Equality Network
JICM	Joint Implementation Coordination Meeting
JMC	Joint Monitoring Committee
KIA	Kachin Independence Army
KNPP	Karenni National Progressive Party
KNU	Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army
KWPN	Kachin Women Peace Network
LDU	Lahu Democratic Union
MWO	Mon Women's Organization
NCA	Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement
NCCT	Nationwide Ceasefire Coordinating Team
NDAA-ESS	National Democratic Alliance Army
NLD	National League for Democracy

NMP	New Mon Party
NRPC	National Reconciliation and Peace Centre
NSCN-K	National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang
NSPAW	National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women
PNLO	Pa-O National Liberation Organization
PoVAW	Prevention and Protection of Violence Against Women
SD	Senior Delegation
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SF	Shalom (Nyein) Foundation
SSA/RCSS	Shan State Army/Restoration Council of Shan State
SSA/SSPP	Shan State Army/Shan State Progress Party (SSA/SSPP)
SWAN	Shan Women's Action Network
TNLA	Ta'ang National Liberation Army
UPC	Union Peace Conference
UPDJC	Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee
UPWC	Union Peacemaking Working Committee
UWSA	Wa State Army/Party
WCDI	Women Can Do It
WIN-Peace	Women in Peace
WIP	Women's Initiative Platform
WLB	Women's League of Burma
WLC	Women's League of Chinland
WN	Wunpawng Ninghtoi
WON	Women's Organizations Network

Philippines Case

ARMM	Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
BARMM	Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BIFF	Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters
BTA	Bangsamoro Transition Authority
CAB	Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro
CARHRIHL	Comprehensive Agreement on the Respect of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law
CBA-CPLA	Cordillera Bodong Administration – Cordillera People's Liberation Army
CPE	Center for Peace Education
CPP	Communist Party of the Philippines
GPH	Government of the Philippines
GZOPI	Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
LPEs	Localized Peace Engagements

MCW	Mindanao Commission on Women
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
NAP	National Action plan
NDF	National Democratic Front
NDFP	National Democratic Front of the Philippines
NPA	New People's Army
NSC-WPS	National Steering Committee on Women, Peace and Security
OPAPP	Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process
RPMM	Rebolusyonaryong Partido ng Managagawa ng Mindanao
RPMP-RPA-ABB	Rebolusyonaryong Partidong Manggagawa ng Pilipinas/ Revolutionary Proletarian Army/ Alex Boncayao Brigade-
WAGI	Women and Gender Institute
WEAct	Women Engaged in Action on UN Security Council Resolution

Thailand Case

BNPP	Barisan Nasional Pember-Basan Pattani
BRN	Barisan Revolusi Nasional
CPGE	Committee to Promote Gender Equality
GEA	Gender Equality Act
MARA Patani	Majlis Syura Patani
NCWP	Network of Civic Women for Peace
PAOW	Peace Agenda of Women
PULO	Patani United Liberation Organization
WDS	Women Development Strategy
WPN	Women's Peace Network

List of Terms

Areas of Engagement: spaces women are accorded in relation to peace and security.
Best Practices: initiatives seen to have been effective and efficient in producing expected results and impacts.
Constraining Factors: things that hinder women's participation in peace and security.
Enabling Factors: things that facilitate women's participation in peace and security.
Impacts: effects of engagement of women in peace and security.
Initiatives: activities undertaken in relation to peace and security.
Lessons: learnings in initiatives undertaken.
Outcomes: results arising from initiatives.
Participation: involvement or engagement
Role: task or function.
Socioeconomic Profile: demography, status, education, occupation, professional background, and others.

Executive Summary

In 2000, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 marking the beginning of the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda with its four pillars, namely, participation and representation, prevention, protection, and relief and recovery, in the Security Council. In 2008-2013, the Security Council adopted six other related resolutions strengthening the articles in 1325 (Resolutions 1889 and 2122) and highlighting conflict related sexual violence (Resolutions 1820, 1888, 1960, and 2106).

In November 2017, during the 31st ASEAN Summit in Manila, the Heads of State/ Government of the ASEAN Member States issued a joint statement on WPS in the ASEAN. The joint statement commits, among others, to promote a culture of peace and prevention, gender equality, gender perspective in all conflict prevention initiatives and strategies, full participation of women in peace processes, inclusion of WPS agenda in policies and programs against sexual and gender based violence before, during and after armed conflict, and to task relevant ASEAN bodies to work together to promote WPS agenda in the ASEAN region (ASEAN Joint Statement on WPS, 2017).

It has been more than 20 years since the passage of UNSCR 1325 and more than three years since the 2017 ASEAN joint statement on WPS agenda. The Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) Philippines, a nonpartisan international organization engaged in preventing violence, increasing safety and security of civilians, and strengthening local peace infrastructures across its program locations in conflict affected areas in eastern and western Mindanao, has extended its work in the SEA region with WPS as its flagship program. Under the auspices of Canada Fund, the program, *Women Creating Impact on Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation* (Women-IMPACT), mainly aims to enhance the capacity and participation of women-led CSOs and institutions in peacebuilding and non-violent conflict transformation. It covers three ASEAN countries, namely, Myanmar, Philippines, and Thailand.

Part of the activities under the NP's WPS program is the conduct of a baseline study of women's participation in peace and security in the said three countries. The study is meant to provide evidence of women's role and participation in Myanmar, Philippines, and Thailand; come up with a regional perspective and database through comparative examples of women's participation in local peacebuilding initiatives; and identify possible courses of action towards mainstreaming WPS in the region. Study results could inform and guide NP, its partners, and other concerned stakeholders in crafting and implementing acceptable, appropriate and applicable strategies in WPS mainstreaming in the three countries in particular and the ASEAN region in general.

Given thus, this baseline study attempted to answer and examine the following: 1. What is the peace and security situation, with focus on the location of women in such situation, in Myanmar, Philippines, and Thailand?; 2. What is the socioeconomic

profile of women engaged in peace and security in the three countries?; 3. What are the areas of engagement and initiatives of women in local peacebuilding?; 4. What are the enabling and constraining factors in women's peacebuilding engagement and initiatives?; 5. What are the outcomes and impacts of such engagement and initiatives?; 6. What are the best practices? and 7. What are the lessons learned and way forward to mainstream WPS across the three countries in particular and ASEAN region in general?

The study limited itself to discussing the role and participation of women in peace and security across the three countries, including women's areas of engagement, initiatives, enabling and constraining factors, best practices, and gains in peacebuilding. It looked into the countries' peace and security situation, to include a brief history of armed conflict, conflicting parties involved, effects on women and children, government interventions to resolve the armed conflict/s, and role of civil society in peacebuilding. It delved mainly into participation and representation, one of the four pillars of WPS agenda, even as it touched on the other three pillars, namely, prevention, protection, and relief and recovery, as it cited women peacebuilders who promote the prevention and protection of women against violence and abuse and who assist in the provision of humanitarian aid in conflict affected areas.

The study followed a framework that posits the nature of the role and participation of women in peace and security of any country or region is largely determined by the individual, communal, cultural, and structural contexts of the women concerned. The dynamism and interplay between and among these various contexts within and without the women influence such role and participation. Opportunities, including space and platform, resources, and enabling environment accorded women in these dynamic contexts allow and empower the latter to render their share in attaining peace and security in their respective localities as individuals and as part of a community. Their role and participation, including their areas of engagement and initiatives, determine the outcomes and impacts of their contributions to peace and security which, in turn, redound to their various contexts.

In exploring the role and participation of women in peace and security in Myanmar, Philippines, and Thailand, the study gathered perspectives mainly from desk and literature review. Where feasible, it employed virtual key informant interviews (KIIs) to enrich the data gathered from desk review. Used as instruments were case study and KII guides.

Published materials on the net, including ASEAN-IPR's publications, on WPS and other related issues in the three countries served as data sources in the desk review. Letter of invites, with guide questions and consent form, were sent to 4-7 potential KII participants per country via email. A total of five women peacebuilders, one in Thailand and four in the Philippines, accepted the invite and served as KII participants. No one from Myanmar replied to the invite. The participant from Thailand sent her responses via email while virtual individual interviews with participants from the Philippines were conducted via Zoom, a popular cloud platform.

The study mainly used descriptive data analysis, as data gathered was largely qualitative. It ran for a total of three months, from November 1, 2020 to January 31, 2021.

Main Findings
Peace and Security Situation

Ongoing armed conflicts highlight the unending struggle of marginalized groups.

Across the three countries, the ongoing armed conflicts between the government and rebel forces highlight the longstanding and often protracted struggle of marginalized groups towards self-determination, self-rule, autonomy, secession, equitable distribution of wealth, and even the overthrow of the legitimate democratic government. Such struggle spans decades for various ethnic minority groups in Myanmar, Moros, and ideologically (Marxist/Maoist) indoctrinated rural poor in the Philippines, even as the struggle of the Moros can be traced back to centuries under the Spanish rule. The struggle of the Malay Pattani in southern Thailand is relatively recent, less than two decades, even as their marginalization started more than a century ago with the signing of a treaty between British and Siamese leaders turning over the then Sultanate of Pattani to Siam sovereignty and forcibly assimilating the Malay Pattani into the Thai culture.

Armed groups, such as the EAOs (Myanmar), the MILF/MNLF and NPA (Philippines), and MARA Pattani and BRN (Thailand) supposedly represent and wage war on behalf of these marginalized groups. Ironically, there have been reports about these same armed groups perpetrating violence and preying on the very people they are supposed to protect and fight for (Myanmar).

Political and economic control over territory complicated by sociocultural factors serves as main driver of conflicts.

Political and economic control over territory, including its people and rich natural resources, located mainly in border-states or –region (Myanmar, Thailand, and Philippines), countryside, rural or depressed areas (Philippines), can be considered the root cause or main driver of armed conflicts, even as ethnic-religious hegemony, exclusion or violent extremism further fuel and exacerbate such conflicts. Complicated by various sociocultural gender norms, expectations, and stereotypes (across the three countries), inter communal or clan disputes (Myanmar and Philippines), or one-sided violence (Myanmar), the conflicts remain unabated and continue to cause destruction on the individual and communal life and property of the civilian populations.

Devastating effects of armed conflicts on women and children are similar across countries.

Devastating effects of armed conflicts across the three countries include indiscriminate shootings and bombings on civilian population, killings, physical abuse, mass displacement, forced relocation, family separation and loss or disappearance of family members, loss of livelihood, sexual and gender based violence, forced labor, human trafficking, poor living conditions in refugee camps, lack of access to basic needs and services, diseases, and mental health problems. Women and children bear the brunt of such effects, even as the men become victims of violence as well. Countless documented and undocumented human rights violations directed against hundreds and thousands of women and children have been committed with impunity by armed actors, including militias or vigilante groups, on both sides.

Government peacebuilding initiatives vis a vis UNSCR 1325 are inadequate.

Concerned governments have initiated measures to resolve the conflicts, such as declaring bilateral ceasefires (Myanmar and Philippines) and peace talks (across three

countries) with concerned armed or insurgent groups. Unfortunately, violations of ceasefire agreements by government and rebel troops and stalling of peace negotiations owing to disputes among stakeholders regarding peace process frameworks as well as provisions and principles of peace negotiations contributed to the worsening instead of resolving and mitigating the effects of the conflict.

Concerned stakeholders have expressed openness to settle differences and move the peace process forward, even as governments and rebel forces have remained unrelenting and continued to posture hard-line positions on certain issues, such as terms and conditions on the peace process (Myanmar and Philippines), government labelling of rebel forces as terrorists (Arakan Army in Myanmar and NPA in the Philippines), and rejection of BRN call for impartial mediators and international observers in the peace process (Thailand).

Government initiatives vis a vis UNSCR 1325 can be considered as relatively inadequate. Of the three countries, only the Philippines has an NAP on WPS interfaced with the Magna Carta of Women, PDPlan 2011-2016, and Women's EDGE plan. It is now in the process of working on the implementation plan for the NAP.

Myanmar has no NAP on WPS but has the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (NSPAW) that provides for women's participation in decision making on various social issues at all levels, even as it has gaps, including lack of an implementation plan. Also, delegates to the formal peace process issued a commitment allocating 30 percent quota for women's participation at all levels. Women's groups used the NSPAW as leverage to advocate for women's participation in the peace process. The allocation of the 30 percent quota was an outcome of such advocacy.

Thailand has no NAP on WPS but is party to the CEDAW and has the National Measures and Guidelines (NMG) on WPS. Women used the CEDAW to promote women's human rights and call for a stop to violence against women in conflict areas. The NMG, however, has yet to be properly implemented and used as leverage by women to advocate for their inclusion in the formal peace process.

Local CSOs play varied roles vital in peacebuilding.

Across the three countries, CSOs, including women's CSOs, have played varied roles vital in peacebuilding, despite limited space accorded them in the formal peace process. CSOs' limited participation includes as observers and technical advisers to concerned stakeholders, for instance, as representatives of EAOs in the Myanmar peace process. Outside the formal peace process, CSOs varied roles are as advocates, alliance builders, educators or capacity builders, communicators, community facilitators and mediators (across the three countries), unofficial monitors of ceasefire or peace agreements (Myanmar), and providers of support services and humanitarian aid (Philippines and Thailand).

Particular to Myanmar women's CSOs is their role as researcher and documenter. They document human rights violations, such as rape and torture, committed by armed actors, and disseminate and project such documentation nationally and internationally. They continue to monitor, document, and publish the progress of the

30 percent quota for women's participation in formal peace dialogues.

Women Peacebuilders and their Roles and Participation in Peacebuilding

Women peacebuilders come from diverse backgrounds.

Women peacebuilders at the national and local levels come from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, including education and social class (across the three countries). In the formal peace process, however, women who are highly educated, well-connected in society, and founders and leaders of women's organizations and alliances are able to participate, even as some were former student activists, rebel soldiers, and victims of armed conflicts themselves (Myanmar and Philippines). In the Philippines, mainly women academics and professionals are at the forefront of high profile peace negotiations.

Women remain underrepresented or unrepresented in formal peace negotiations.

Women have remained underrepresented or unrepresented in formal peace negotiations across the three countries. In Myanmar, over the four rounds of the UPC/21 CPC, percentage of women delegates ranged from 13 percent to 22 percent, still far from reaching the 30 percent quota. In the Philippines, in peace negotiations between the government and MILF, 22 percent of negotiators were women and 27 percent of total signatories were women. But these women were mainly on the government side and none on the MILF side. In Thailand, over the three rounds of formal peace talks, only armed actors and no women were allowed to participate.

Women advance WPS amidst limited space in formal peace process.

Women across the three countries have been accorded limited space in formal peace negotiations. Nevertheless, ingenious and resourceful as they are, they have been able to optimize such limited space to advance the interests and needs of women affected by the armed conflicts. Outside the formal peace process, they have broadened the available space and found other avenues for their engagements.

In formal peace negotiations at the national or union level, women have served as negotiators, facilitators or mediators, technical advisers, observers, witness signatories but are not allowed to take part in decision making. In the Philippines, one woman became the first woman signatory and chief negotiator to a top level peace agreement between the government and the Moro rebels.

To address such lack of decision making power, particularly in Myanmar, women have utilized their cordial relationships with male delegates to adopt policy recommendations on gender inclusion in peace process frameworks. They have conducted back channel discussions with concerned stakeholders simultaneous with the ongoing dialogue and communicated to other women on the ground the progress of peace negotiations and stances of stakeholders on issues for a more informed advocacy.

At the local or community level, particularly in Thailand, women with training from professional facilitators have promoted dialogues in their respective communities. Seen as trust builders, they have served as facilitators of community dialogues between Buddhists and Muslims, or government

officials and villagers. In the Philippines, seen as mothers of the nation, women have assisted in conflict resolution in small scale disputes and in mitigation of clan-based conflicts.

Women conduct varied and vibrant peacebuilding initiatives in the informal peace process. Outside the formal peace process, women have engaged in advocacy, capacity building, alliance building, research and documentation, information and communication, monitoring of ceasefire or peace agreement compliance, early warning system, and provision of humanitarian aid. Some women have joined the military and have been sent as part of the UN international peacekeeping mission. Knowingly or unknowingly, they have used their socio-culturally constructed roles, such as homemakers, caregivers, servers at gatherings, and others, to their advantage.

In Myanmar, women's CSOs have convened peace forums to discuss among themselves gender related issues in armed conflicts, formulate policy recommendations, and submit such recommendations to political dialogues. They have conducted tea break advocacy wherein they convinced concerned stakeholders or dialogue delegates to adopt gender inclusive policy recommendations while serving tea during breaks. They have identified champions or progressives in government and parliament to support and push forward conflict affected women's interest and needs in the peace process.

At the grassroots or community level, women in Myanmar have carried out indigenous early warning practices to mitigate the effects of the conflict on the community and unofficially monitored compliance of armed actors to the NCA.

In Thailand, women have monitored and patrolled their communities to maintain peace. They have gathered intelligence for security purposes, served as connectors between officials and the villagers, and assisted in providing humanitarian aid to victims of the conflict. Some have joined the Thai army and have been sent as part of the UN international peacekeeping mission.

In the Philippines, women have identified and enhanced early strategic alliances with men to push forward women's agenda in the peace process as well as assisted in the rehabilitation and development of conflict affected communities, even as they engaged in providing assistance to displaced people.

Enabling and Constraining Factors in Peacebuilding

Women's personal agency, international and national frameworks, and support from outside the conflict areas and international community enable peacebuilding.

Women's individual qualities as trust builders, able servers and workers, ability to establish cordial relationships or strategic alliances with the men, and their conviction to take control of their life in relation to peace and security have facilitated their peacebuilding activities. Women in Myanmar have rallied male friends and delegates to support and adopt their policy recommendations while serving tea during breaks. In the Philippines, women have tapped their established alliances with men to advocate for women's agenda in the peace process. In Thailand, with their ability to build trust, collaborate, and engage with diverse stakeholders, women have been able to make the government and the resistance movement responsive to their proposals.

Women have used international frameworks, such as the UNSCR 1325, CEDAW

(Myanmar and Philippines), and national plans, such as the NAP on WPS (Philippines), and the NSPAW and 30 percent quota (Myanmar), as leverage to advocate for women's participation or gender inclusion in the peace process. In Thailand, wary of causing social friction, women have utilized the CEDAW to advocate not for women's participation in politics and peace process but for women's human rights, including an end to violence against women.

Support from concerned sectors outside the conflict areas and the international community has served as impetus for women to continue and sustain their advocacies for conflict affected women's interests and needs and project their plight at the national and international levels (across the three countries).

Discriminatory gender norms, patriarchal power structures, and biased personal perceptions and attitudes constrain peacebuilding.

Sociocultural constraints include the perceptions that security is about war and war is the domain of men. Therefore, the issue of peace and security is the men's concern and beyond the women's realm. Also, peace negotiations require certain knowledge and expertise. Therefore, poorly educated and with nothing to contribute technically, women, who are mainly at the grassroots and in conflict affected areas, are kept from participating in such negotiations. Only women who are highly educated, professionally trained and well connected in society have the leverage to take part but have been kept from decision making nevertheless.

Discriminatory gender norms, expectations, and stereotypes relegate and confine women to the home and keep them from taking part in the public sphere. Women are supposedly docile, obedient and acquiescent to the husband and responsible for taking care of the household, including children, parents, and in laws. Men serve as head and breadwinner of the family or clan and leader of the community. As head, breadwinner, and leader, men have the sole power and authority to make decisions for the family, clan, and the community.

Societal structures, influenced by deep-seated sociocultural discriminatory gender norms, expectations, and stereotypes merely condone or reinforce male domination in the private and public spheres, specifically in politics. Such patriarchal power structures accord limited space for active women's participation. In Myanmar, for instance, certain government posts are suitable only for men as stipulated in the constitution. In the Philippines, relatively strict division of labor exists in the private and public spheres, including peace negotiations. There is a high level of insecurity and personal threat for women participating in official peace negotiations. In Thailand, the narrow scope of the peace process framework only allows the participation of warring parties, with their assumed power to stop violence, in the negotiations, thus contributing to women's exclusion.

Biased personal perceptions and attitudes have constrained other women from engaging in peacebuilding. Influenced by discriminatory gender norms and expectations, fearing community reprisals and censure, and lacking in proper education and training, grassroots women have refrained from getting involved and participate in peacebuilding activities.

Dynamics within and among women's CSOs or movements constrain peacebuilding across the three countries as well. Differences in approach and strategies, including ideological and theoretical frameworks, and

competition for funds among women's CSOs hamper work in WPS.

Significant Structural and Sociocultural Gains in Peacebuilding

Women inclusion and empowerment, and raising of gender related issues in peace process as structural gains

Notable structural gains across the three countries are inclusion of women in peace negotiations, albeit with limited role; empowerment of women, specifically at the grassroots level or conflict affected areas, to actively participate in peacebuilding outside the formal peace process; and raising and discussion of critical issues, including roots of conflict and women's human rights, needs and interests, in formal peace negotiations.

In Myanmar and Philippines, an important structural gain is the inclusion of gender friendly provisions in the peace process frameworks and agreements. Specific to the Philippines are the government's issuance of EO 865 mandating the creation of the NSC WPS and the adoption of the first WPS regional action plan in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

Changed mindsets, attitudes, and behaviors as sociocultural gains

Socioculturally, an important gain in Myanmar is the changed mindset of grassroots women on the peace process and their ability to participate in the political sphere. In Thailand, a significant gain is the changed perceptions and attitudes on the women's movement of concerned stakeholders in government and resistance movement that enabled them to become more responsive to the women's proposals. Another significant in Thailand is the changed attitude and behavior of women from being submissive and fearful to being assertive defenders of their family members and able facilitators of dialogues between military and villagers. In the Philippines, MILF leaders, with increased awareness of the importance of women in the peace process, became open to appointing women to leadership positions in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

Best Practices in Peacebuilding

In advocacy, best practices are:

In Myanmar

Rallying male delegates to support women's agenda in the peace process while serving tea during breaks;
Identifying champions in government and parliament;
Building and utilizing cordial relationships with male delegates to adopt their policy recommendations; and
Projecting the plight of women and children in conflict affected areas based on well researched evidence to the international community.

In the Philippines

Utilizing early strategic alliances with men;
Civilianizing peace track and involvement of women's CSOs;
Popularizing and normalizing positive aspects of culture/religion in support of women's participation in public decision-making; and
Practising courage, competence, and creativity by women leaders.

In Thailand

Watching language used: refraining from using terms that seemingly offend the sensibilities of the men, such as feminism and gender equality; using terms such as social justice and women's human rights instead of women's participation and

gender equality;
Keeping men informed about goals and objectives of women's movement; and
Utilizing all available communication channels to build peace among concerned stakeholders or conflicting parties.

In capacity building, the best practice across the three countries is focusing on building the capacities of grassroots women (and men) who are in most need of education and training in relation to peacebuilding.

In alliance building, the best practices specifically in Myanmar are knowledge management and resource sharing. In early warning system, the best practice, also specifically in Myanmar, is employing indigenous practices in alerting villagers on looming armed encounter to mitigate its effects.

Lessons Learned and Way Forward to Mainstream WPS

Ownership of the peace process

Ownership of the peace process by women stakeholders at all levels is crucial towards building sustainable peace. Ownership requires recognition, acknowledgment, and lived experience of the individual and communal benefits of the peace process by the women, specifically those directly affected by the conflict.

Acceptable, appropriate and applicable strategies and initiatives

Certain contexts require certain acceptable, appropriate and applicable peacebuilding strategies and initiatives. It is crucial to determine and employ acceptable, appropriate and applicable strategies and initiatives in dealing with diverse stakeholders and responding to diverse contexts to support and advance women's participation in peace and security. A set of strategies and initiatives may be acceptable, appropriate and applicable to certain stakeholders and contexts but may not be so to another.

Enhancement and institutionalization of best practices

Enhancing best practices, especially indigenous, of women peacebuilders ensures that a substantial part of the engagement is done. Institutionalizing such enhanced best practices completes the engagement and ensures the sustainability of the gains resulting from such engagement.

Personal and collective agencies of women in peacebuilding

Underlying all the best practices of women in peacebuilding are the personal and collective agencies of the women, including their self-confidence, conviction that they can influence the peace process, trust and credibility they have built with other stakeholders, and their courage, inner strength, competence, resiliency, ingenuity, resourcefulness, and common vision of a gender inclusive peace process, to effectively respond individually and communally to particular situation or challenge and direct the course of their life. Enhancing personal and collective agencies of women (and men), especially at the grassroots, in relation to WPS through various capacity building and other related activities is imperative.

Countering of gender norms, expectations, and stereotypes

Countering discriminatory gender norms, expectations, and stereotypes impeding women's participation in peace and security is a tall but doable order as evidenced by cases of intrepid Myanmar women defying and countering such norms, expectations and stereotypes, risking personal safety and security. Influencing the personal agency of women restrained by such norms and expectations as well as inspiring and encouraging

these women individually and communally to do the same require ongoing awareness raising, education, and capacity building activities with resource persons as much as possible from among renowned and experienced grassroots women peacebuilders the former can identify with.

Sociocultural transformation requires an honest and serious assessment and recognition by concerned ethnic and religious groups of their customs and practices engendering marginalization of women in the private and public spheres. Women and men peacebuilders in such ethnic and religious groups have the crucial role and responsibility to facilitate such assessment and recognition and enjoin fellow members to evolve or enhance customs and practices that promote equality among women and men.

Contextualization of gender concepts and frameworks

Each country has specific sociocultural, economic, and political contexts. Similar concepts and frameworks, such as on gender equality and feminism, may have different meanings and understandings across countries owing to varying contexts. Such differing meanings and understandings are further complicated in cases where such concepts and frameworks are foreign to a particular country and no equivalent terms in the native language exist. Therefore, contextualization of gender and feminist related concepts and frameworks vis a vis peacebuilding is imperative in promoting and mainstreaming WPS in particular countries.

Transformation of patriarchal structures excluding or limiting women in peacebuilding

Transforming formal peace process structures and frameworks excluding or limiting women's participation across countries requires needed policies and legislations. Structural changes necessary to move forward WPS mainstreaming across the three countries require the willingness, sincerity, and political will of incumbent governments to institute and sustain such changes.

Building on, strengthening, and sustaining of significant gains

Building on, strengthening, and sustaining significant gains in WPS need to be supported by policies and legislations creating structures and frameworks for the said purpose. Even as they await the passage and proper implementation of needed policies and legislations, stakeholders need to intensify efforts to strengthen and sustain the gains achieved especially at the grassroots level.

Conclusions

In the 2019-2020 WPS Index, the Philippines ranked relatively higher than Thailand and Myanmar, with Myanmar lagging far behind. Of the total 167 countries ranked, the Philippines placed 90th with a WPS index of .709; Thailand placed 92nd, with .707 WPS index, and Myanmar placed 150th, with .587 WPS index.

Given thus, the three countries seem a long way to even get to the top 50. Results of this ASEAN WPS baseline study apparently reinforce the three countries' rankings.

Given the study findings, it can be said that compliance to the UNSCR 1325 and fulfilment of commitment to the 2017 joint statement of the ASEAN in promoting WPS in the region have been found wanting across the three countries. Decisive measures and actions have to be instituted and implemented in terms of the four pillars of the WPS agenda, specifically women's participation and representation.

WPS is not merely about women's participa-

tion in the peace process. It is all about the well-being and empowerment of women ordained by nature to carry the burden of bringing forth life to the world. The state of the well-being of women determines the state of the well-being of others in the family, community, and larger society as well.

WPS covers a whole gamut of issues cutting across the physical, sociocultural, economic, and political life of all across ages, sexual orientations, and gender identities, classes, races, creeds, and ethnicities. It is not a matter for women peacebuilders alone. Each one has a stake and has the duty and responsibility to get involved.

At the ninth and final session of the December 2018 AIPR and UN workshop on ASEAN perspectives in conflict management and conflict resolution in the region, H.E. Marty Natalegawa, member of the UN Secretary-General's high-level advisory board on mediation and former Indonesian foreign affairs minister, emphasized two essential characteristics in managing potential conflict or resolving ongoing conflict in the region: trust and synergy at the national, regional, and global levels. Similarly, this study wishes to reiterate and underscore the same two essential characteristics to move forward the mainstreaming of WPS within and across countries in the ASEAN.

NP Philippines has recently started a learning exchange initiative on WPS aimed to increase understanding on activities, challenges, and opportunities of emerging women leaders and increase communication and collaboration among these women leaders in Myanmar, Mindanao in the Philippines, and Southern Thailand. Activities under this initiative include exchange visits, capacity building workshops, and public lecture on WPS. Modalities of such initiative need to be adjusted given the global pandemic and volatile political situation in Myanmar. Such initiative can be considered an initial and crucial step in engendering the "trust and synergy" among women leaders and peacebuilders essential to move the mainstreaming of WPS forward.

Recommendations

To the ASEAN

Institutionalization of best practices

Institutionalization of best practices of women peacebuilders is crucial in moving the mainstreaming of the WPS forward. A common best practice of women across the three countries is properly and cordially collaborating with the men to advance women's interests and needs in the peace process. The ASEAN could perhaps institute a policy enjoining concerned member states to institutionalize such best practice or find space or body within its structure for the institutionalization of such practice. Such space or body may be composed of an equal number of women and men tasked to develop and implement programs solely on the WPS agenda in coordination with ACWC or other relevant ASEAN bodies, or serve as a funding window that processes proposals on WPS from the different ASEAN member states.

Bridging of gap in access to information and communication and promotion of collaboration among women peacebuilders

Access to communication and information is essential in women's participation in peace and security. Women peacebuilders in tracks 1 and 2 seemingly have had more access to relevant communication and information on the peace process than women peacebuilders in track 3. Therefore, it would be best to institute policies or measures to bridge such gap in order to allow women in track 3 to gain equal access to such communication and information. Relatedly, it would be best to institute

policies or measures to promote collaboration among women peacebuilders, especially in track 3, across countries.

To the CSOs

Building on, strengthening, and sustaining of gains

Most best practices and significant gains in peacebuilding have been undertaken and achieved outside the formal peace process. It would be well for CSOs to build on, strengthen and sustain such gains by stepping up their efforts and invest more of their resources, both human and material, to address the needs, especially in capacity building, in relation to WPS, in conflicted areas. A strong base is likely to positively influence the dynamics of the peace process all the way to the top.

To the Donor Agencies

Provision of more support for research, knowledge management, resource sharing and implementation activities

Research and documentation and knowledge management, resource sharing, and implementation are crucial towards a better understanding of and more effective response to the situation and needs of victims, specifically women and girls, of armed conflicts. Therefore, there is a need to push for the conduct of more of such activities across the three countries. It would be well for donor agencies to provide more funding support in this area.



Chapter 1
Introduction



Background and Rationale

In 2000, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 marking the beginning of the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda in the Security Council. Considered a landmark resolution and a crowning achievement of the global women's movement, UNSCR 1325 recognizes the importance of a gender perspective in peace and security, the inextricable link between peace and gender equality and women's leadership (SIDA, 2015, p.1; Coomaraswamy, 2015, p.5). It "urges Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict and "calls on all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict ((Coomaraswamy, 2018, p. 38 & p. 66)."

In 2008-2013, the Security Council adopted six other related resolutions strengthening the articles in 1325 (Resolutions 1889 and 2122) and highlighting conflict related sexual violence (Resolutions 1820, 1888, 1960, and 2106). The UNSCR 1325 with its related resolutions serves as an essential tool in advancing the WPS agenda with the following four pillars: participation and representation, prevention, protection, and relief and recovery (SIDA, 2015, pp. 1-2).

In 2015, to mark the resolution's 15th anniversary, Coomaraswamy (2015), per SC resolution 2122, led the conduct of a comprehensive study entitled *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing Peace*, on developments in the 15 years of implementation of UNSCR 1325. Coomaraswamy with her team held consultations with a diverse group of stakeholders in all regions worldwide. More than 60 Member States, international and regional organizations submitted reports, 47 CSOs, academics and research institutes provided inputs via a public website, and 317 CSOs in 71 countries served as survey participants. The global study examines the successes, obstacles and challenges, and trends and priorities for action (Coomaraswamy, 2015, p.13).

Some successes the study findings reveal are: 1. adoption of a comprehensive normative framework on sexual violence in conflict; 2. understanding by international community and national governments of the importance of national and communal healing as part of holistic justice and accountability; 3. adoption of General Recommendation 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; 4. increase in the percentage of peace agreements referencing women from 11 percent in 1990-2000 to 27 percent since the adoption of UNSCR 1325; 5. 67 percent of six agreements resulting from peace talks or national dialogue processes UN supported in 2014 contained references relevant to WPS; 6. increase in the number of senior women leaders within the UN; and 7. quadrupling of bilateral aid on gender equality to fragile States.

Some challenges and obstacles in UNSCR implementation include: 1. very few actual prosecutions, particularly at the national level on sexual violence; 2. real threat posed by the rise of violent extremism globally to the lives of women, including women peacebuilders; 3. only 54 countries with WPS national action plans; 4. of the 31 major peace processes studied in 1992-2011, only nine percent of negotiators were women; 5. only 3 percent of the military in UN missions were women with majority employed as support

staff; and 6. abysmally low funding for WPS programs and processes across all areas of the agenda (pp. 13-15).

Some important principles pointed out are: 1. prevention of conflict must be the priority, not the use of force; 2. Resolution 1325 is a human rights mandate; 3. women's participation is key to sustainable peace; 4. perpetrators must be held accountable and justice must be transformative; 5. localization of approaches and inclusive and participatory processes are crucial to the success of national and international peace efforts; 6. supporting women peacebuilders and respecting their autonomy is important way to counter extremism; 7. the persistent failure to adequately finance WPS agenda must be addressed; and 8. all key actors must play their role. The study concludes with the following call to action: Understand great changes in the world in the context of women's needs and concerns in specific conflict situations (p.15-16).

In November 2017, during the 31st ASEAN Summit in Manila, the Heads of State/ Government of the ASEAN Member States issued a joint statement on WPS in the ASEAN. The joint statement commits to the following: promote a culture of peace and prevention; continue addressing the root causes of armed conflicts; promote gender equality and reduce social inequalities between men and women; encourage the integration of gender perspective in all conflict prevention initiatives and strategies, and ensure full participation of women in peace processes; encourage the inclusion of WPS agenda in policies and programs for the protection of women and girls from sexual and gender based violence before, during and after armed conflict; build the capacity of women as peacebuilders; engage men and boys with the broader WPS agenda; leverage the role of regional inter-governmental organizations and development partners in advancing WPS agenda; and task relevant ASEAN bodies to work together to promote WPS agenda in the ASEAN region (ASEAN Joint Statement on WPS, 2017).

It has been more than 20 years since the adoption of UNSCR 1325 and more than three years since the ASEAN joint statement on WPS agenda. In early 2020, the ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW) and the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) conducted a comprehensive regional study on the current state of implementation of the WPS agenda in the ASEAN with support from the ASEAN-USAID Partnership for Regional Optimization within the Political-Security and Socio-Cultural Communities (PROSPECT) project in collaboration with UN Women and the ASEAN Secretariat. Study results were expected to be finalized by November 2020 and launched before the end of the same year (US Mission to ASEAN, October 2020).

The Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) Philippines, a nonpartisan international organization engaged in preventing violence, increasing safety and security of civilians, and strengthening local peace infrastructures across its program locations in conflicted areas in eastern and western Mindanao, has extended its work in the SEA region with WPS as its flagship program. Under the auspices of Canada Fund, the program, *Women Creating Impact on Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation* (Women-IMPACT), mainly aims to enhance the capacity and participation of women's CSOs and institutions in peacebuilding and non-violent conflict transformation. It covers three ASEAN countries, namely, Myanmar, Philippines, and Thailand.

Part of the activities under the NP's WPS program is the conduct of a baseline study on women's participation in peace and security in the said three countries. The baseline study is meant to: 1. provide evidence of women's role and participation in peace and security specifically in three ASEAN countries, namely, Myanmar, Philippines, and Thailand; 2. come up with a regional perspective and database through comparative examples of women's participation in local peacebuilding initiatives, conflict prevention, mediation and peace negotiations; and 3. identify possible courses of action for ASEAN-IPR (ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation) in mainstreaming WPS in the region. Study results are expected to inform and guide NP, its partners, and other concerned stakeholders in the crafting and implementation of acceptable, appropriate and applicable strategies towards WPS mainstreaming in the three countries in particular and the ASEAN region in general.

Questions and Objectives

This study attempted to answer and examine the following:

- What is the peace and security situation, with focus on the location of women in such situation, in Myanmar, Philippines, and Thailand?
- What is the socioeconomic profile of women engaged in peace and security in these countries?
- What are the areas of engagement and initiatives of women in local peacebuilding, conflict resolution, mediation and negotiations;
- What are the enabling and constraining factors faced by women in implementing peacebuilding initiatives?
- What are the outcomes and impacts of such engagements and initiatives?
- What are the best practices in such engagements and initiatives?
- What are the lessons learned and way forward in mainstreaming women, peace and security across the three countries in particular and ASEAN region in general?

Scope and Limitation

The study limited itself in discussing the role and participation of women in peace and security across the three countries, including women's areas of engagement, initiatives, enabling and constraining factors, best practices, and gains in peacebuilding. It looked into the countries' peace and security situation, to include a brief history of armed conflict, conflicting parties involved, effects on women and children, government interventions to resolve the armed conflict/s, and role of civil society in peacebuilding. It delved mainly into participation and representation, one of the four pillars of WPS agenda, even as it touched on the other three pillars, prevention, protection, and relief and recovery as it cited women peacebuilders who promote the prevention and protection of women against violence and abuse as well as assist in the provision of humanitarian aid in conflict affected areas.

Framework

The nature of the role and participation of women in peace and security of any country or region is largely determined by the individual, communal, cultural, and structural contexts of the women concerned. Individual context refers to the personal characteristics or qualities of the women, including perceptions, beliefs, values, norms, attitudes, and practices or behavior in relation to women, peace and security. The communal context refers to the perceptions, attitudes, and practices in relation to women, peace

and security of the community the women are part of or identify with. Such community may be village, ethnic or religious group, civil society organization, or professional organization. Cultural context covers the beliefs, norms, values, expectations, customs, traditions, and practices, in a sense the total way of life, shared with other members of the community they are part of or identify with. The structural context refers to the political, sociocultural, and economic structures of the society at the local and national levels in relation women, peace and security the women are in.

The dynamism and interplay between and among these various contexts within and without the women influence such role and participation. Opportunities, including space and platform, resources, and enabling environment accorded women in these dynamic contexts allow and empower the latter to render their share in attaining peace and security in their respective localities as individuals and as part of a community. Their role and participation, including their areas of engagement and initiatives, determine the outcomes and impacts of their contributions towards peace and security which, in turn, redound to their various contexts.

Methodology

In exploring the role and participation of women in peace and security in Myanmar, Philippines, and Thailand, this study gathered perspectives mainly from desk and literature review. Where feasible, it employed virtual key informant interviews (KIIs) to enrich the data gathered from desk review. Used as instruments are case study guide and KII guide.

Published materials on the net, including ASEAN-IPR's publications, on WPS and other related issues in the three countries served as data sources in the desk review. In consultation with NP, the study initially set a total of 4-7 KII participants per country case. Invites, with KII guide questions and consent form, were sent via email. Only a total of five women peacebuilders, one in Thailand and four in the Philippines, accepted the invite and served as KII participants. No one from Myanmar replied to the invite. The participant from Thailand sent her responses via email while virtual individual interviews with participants from the Philippines were conducted via Zoom, a popular cloud-based peer to peer software platform.

Given the data gathered was mainly qualitative, this study used descriptive data analysis. The study ran for a total of three months, from November 1, 2020 to January 31, 2021. Data gathering was done in November-mid December 2020. Write up of individual cases and overall report was done in mid-December to end of January.

This report discusses the individual cases of Myanmar, Philippines, and Thailand. to include the peace and security situation in the country, roles and participation of women in peacebuilding, enabling and constraining factors, outcomes and impacts of peacebuilding initiatives, best practices, lessons learned and way forward in WPS mainstreaming. It examines patterns and trends across the three countries, presents conclusions, and offers recommendations.

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Chapter 2
Case 1
Republic of the Union of Myanmar



Peace and Security Situation

Brief Profile of Myanmar

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar, formerly Burma, is Southeast Asia's northernmost country. It shares borders with China to the north and northeast, Laos to the east, Thailand to the southeast, Bangladesh to the west, and India to the northwest. It covers a total land area of 676,578 sq km with a total population of 54,569,764 (Worldometer, 2020). The country's capital was moved from Yangon, formerly Rangoon, to Pyinmana then to Nay Pyi Taw (Naypyidaw) in 2005. Nay Pyi Taw became the capital in 2006 (Steinberg, 2019).

A multi-ethnic country, Myanmar has approximately 135 ethnic and 108 ethnolinguistic groups (World Population Review, 2020). The Burmans, mostly concentrated in the seven divisions, including Irrawaddy river valley and coastal strips, comprise more than half of the population. Minority ethnic groups, such as Kachin, Karen, Shan, Rakhine, Mon, Kayan, Wa, and others, mostly residing in the seven resource-rich border states, comprise one third of the population (Warren et al, 2018; World Population Review, 2019). Armed conflicts are mainly concentrated in the resource-rich border-states inhabited by ethnic minority groups, including Kachin, Rakhine, Shan, and Kayin.



The Armed Conflict

Nature of Conflict

Three types of conflicts exist in present day Myanmar, namely, inter communal conflict; one-sided violence, including state violence; and non-international armed or subnational conflict (Jolliffe, 2015:9; Burke, A., N. Williams, P. Barron, K. Joliffe, and T. Carr, 2017).

Inter-communal conflict is mainly between religiously and ethnically defined groups and perpetrated by militia groups. Violence can be organized and large-scale involving destruction of property and mass displacement or localized and small scale sometimes driven by rumors or misinformation. The infighting between and among ethnic armed groups over shifting alliances, rivalries, and control of land and resources as well as the armed clashes between Buddhists and Muslims in Buddhist dominated states, such as Rakhine, can be considered classic examples of inter-communal conflicts.

One-sided violence in Myanmar involves attacks on unarmed civilian populations by armed groups, such as the Tatmadaw and Border Guard forces (BGF), pro-government militia, and ethnic armed organizations (EAOs). Such violence can be in the form of armed actors' failure to sanction abuses against civilians, including sexual assaults and murder, heavy crackdown on civilians staging peaceful protest actions, and forcible displacement of entire civilian populations. The mass displacement and killings, bordering on genocide, of thousands of Rohingyas along the border with Bangladesh and mass displacement of thousands of Kachins in Kachin State are glaring examples of

such one-sided violence. The military's crackdown on peaceful protesters during the 1988 student uprising and the 2007 Saffron Revolution led by Buddhist monks against the repressive, oppressive and inept military regime are also examples of such one-sided violence. Unarmed civilians have no means to defend or protect themselves from such violence.

Non-international or subnational conflict is exemplified by the ongoing armed conflict, considered as one of the world's longest-running civil wars spanning over 70 years, between the Tatmadaw and EAOs. The Myanmar government has attempted to find peaceful solutions to such conflict with EAOs in recent years. The succeeding discussions in this section focus on a brief history of the conflict, its root causes or drivers, and effects on civilians, specifically women and children, the peace process, role of CSOs in the peace process, and issues and challenges in the peace process. States affected by major non-international conflicts are: Rakhine, Shan, Kachin, and Kayin.



Source: commons.wikimedia.org

Brief History of Conflict

The ever volatile peace and security situation in Myanmar is a complex dynamics of interlocking political, sociocultural, and economic factors adversely impacting its people, especially the women and children, for decades. Myanmar has been ravaged by armed clashes for years as various ethnic groups and governance actors with overlapping claims to land and resources have continued to wage war with one another. The long standing armed conflict between the government's military forces, the Tatmadaw, and EAOs can be traced back to the non-implementation of the February 1947 *Panglong* Agreement between General Aung San, a military hero from the fight for independence, and ethnic national leaders from the frontier areas of Shan, Kachin, and Chin. (Awng, Gum San, Mi Aye Khine, and Nyan Tun Aung, 2019, p.2).

The *Panglong* Agreement articulates the recognition of the then Interim Burmese government by the leaders from the frontier areas as well as the latter's resolve to cooperate with the said government towards independence and a unitary government: "believing that freedom will be more speedily achieved by the Shans, the Kachins and the Chins by their immediate co-operation with the Interim Burmese Government (Panglong Agreement, February 1947)." It outlines the framework for the administration of the federated states, according rights and privileges "fundamental in democratic countries" to the citizens of the frontier areas (Panglong Agreement, February 1947). It guarantees the self- determination and rights, including the right to secede after a ten-year period, of ethnic minorities. Such agreement collapsed following the assassination of General Aung San in July 1947, shortly before the country gained independence from Britain in 1948 (Sakhong, 2017; Awng, Gum San, Mi Aye Khine, and Nyan Tun Aung, 2019, p.2).

Civil war broke out between the central government in Yangon, led by U Nu of the

Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League party (AFPFL), and ethnic armed groups with the failure of the former to honor and implement the provisions of the Panglong Agreement. Such war intensified after the 1962 military coup and has remained unabated up to the present times. Infighting and disputes along ethno-national lines and on ideologies between and among these numerous EAOs have merely exacerbated the situation (EMReF, 2019, p. 17; Warren, Roslyn, Anna Applebaum, Holly Fuhman, and Briana Mawby, 2018, p.15; Global Security, 2020; AIPR, 2015, pp. 85-87; Burke et al, 2017).

Root Causes of Conflict

Root causes or drivers of conflict in Myanmar can be categorized into three, namely, political, sociocultural, and economic. Political factors include centralization or exclusionary patterns of governance; lack of consensus on federalism; lack of freedom, democracy and democratic accountability; lack of rule of law; and lack of governance capacity. Sociocultural factors include inter-group intolerance, fear, and mistrust; ethnic or religious exclusion; and lack of an inclusive national identity. Economic factors include regional inequality, resource ownership or control, and conflict economy creating incentives for armed actors to perpetuate conflict.

Political

The ongoing conflict, which began following the collapse of the 1947 Panglong Agreement, has continued to be incited by infighting and dispute between parties advocating for autonomy and self-determination and those favoring centralized multi-ethnic state with Yangon as seat of the government. Relatedly, lack of consensus on federalism and the highly centralized form of government have continued to fuel tensions. Despite significant reforms in recent years, the NLD government of Aung San Suu Kyi, given fresh mandate in the November 2020 elections, has continued to appoint, co-appoint, or approve most senior positions in the state or regional governments (EMReF, 2019; UNICEF,2014). Also, the status of the 2008 Constitutional amendments to incorporate the demands of ethnic minority groups remains uncertain despite two separate amendment processes in 2013 and in 2019. Such processes failed to produce significant results (EMReF, 2019; Fülscher, 2020).

Ethnic minority groups have limited access to political positions and continued to be sidelined in civil service positions in the central government. The Bamar ethnic elites in Yangon and Nay Pyi Taw continue to dominate Myanmar's governance (Emah, 2020; EMReF, 2019). Meanwhile, EAOs and their affiliated political parties pursue their economic and political interests rather than actually representing the desires and needs of their respective local communities (EMReF, 2019).

Rampant corruption, lack of the rule of law, and conflict within and between political parties manifest Myanmar's lack of capacity for governance (UNICEF, 2014). Perpetrating crimes with impunity against the civilian population, such as murder, rape, disappearances, and the like, by the Tatmadaw, EAOs and militia groups, has merely strengthened the people's perception that only armed organizations could ensure their security and protection. Their identities have already become so interlinked with armed groups representing them (EMRef, 2019). Corollarily, routine violations of ceasefire agreements by parties involved, such as the Tatmadaw and EAOs, demonstrate the lack of respect of these parties for the rule of law (EMReF, 2019; UNICEF, 2014). Political repression, lack of freedom, and lack of democratic accountability further ignite the resolve of ethnic minorities to continue fighting against the military.

Sociocultural

Attempts towards building a "Myanmar" national identity, as stipulated in government policies of Burmanization or Myanmarization, have promoted the Bamar majority as superior and institutionalized systematic discrimination against and domination of ethnic minorities, including their culture and language (EMReF, 2019; Ohmar, 2019). Anti-Muslim and anti-Rohingya sentiments have become apparent in some areas, such as in Rakhine State, where persecution, killings, and mass displacement of the Rohingyas, considered as non-citizens and illegal migrants, allegedly perpetrated by the Tatmadaw and radicalized Buddhist movements (Ma Ba Tha and 969), have earned international condemnation. Such condemnation compelled Myanmar State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyii to appear and defend the country before the UN International Court of Justice in December 2019 (van Beek, 2019). Religious tensions between predominantly Christian Kachins with the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and Buddhist Bamars with militia and Tatmadaw have fueled conflict in Kachin state.

Decades of armed conflicts, aggravated by broken agreements and promises, have cultivated fear, mistrust, and intolerance between and among the people across social and ethnic groups (EMReF, 2019). Such attitudes and sentiments have further increased tensions leading to the proliferation of armed groups, thus making peace seemingly impossible to achieve. Also, media's handling of information on conflict, often inaccurate, inflammatory and biased, has provoked rather than quelled violence.

Economic

Control of the vast natural resources of the land has always been a main driver of armed conflicts in Myanmar since time immemorial. The ongoing conflict between the Tatmadaw and EAOs in Northern Shan, Rakhine, and Kachin is no exception; it has been caused more by economic rather than political interests of parties involved. EAOs, specifically the non-signatories to the NCA, largely depend on the exploitation of natural resources, such as timber, precious metals and stones, gas, oil, as well as production and exportation of narcotics, such as opium and amphetamines, in the territories they control for their financial viability. Control of natural resources in borderland regions has engendered ethno-nationalism and cycles of violence (Emah, 2020:1). Significant interests of the Tatmadaw, including former officers and their families, and the central government have further complicated and exacerbated tensions in the resource-rich territories (EMReF, 2019).

A new breed of ethnic national elites from the leaders of the EAOs has reportedly arisen owing to economic rents such leaders have been able to collect from the central government's exclusive exploitation of the territories' resources for development projects, which, unfortunately, have not genuinely benefited the ethnic minorities who inhabit the lands. Such lack of access to development projects and their benefits has further caused resentment and anger among the economically marginalized ethnic nationalist population.

Effects of Conflicts on Women and Children

Women and children have always borne the brunt of the ravages of the primarily avoidable wars waged by men across countries and across the ages. Myanmar women and children have not been spared from such a plight; they continue to suffer the devastating effects of their country's longstanding civil war. These effects include sexual and gender based violence, indiscriminate shelling of civilian areas, burning of homes, physical

abuse, detention, torture, forced labor, human trafficking, forced relocation, mass displacement, killings, deliberate maiming of children, family separations, poor living conditions in refugee camps, including blocking of humanitarian aid, mental health problems, and loss of livelihood (HRC, 2019; Ohmar, 2019; Lee, 2018; ICRC, 2015; Aye, 2015; SHRF and SWAN, 2002; Irrawaddy, 2020; Tawn, 2015, pp. 85-89).

Rape of women and girls serves as weapon of war perpetrated by armed actors, including the Tatmadaw and EAOs. It is used to intimidate, sow fear, and punish the civilian population. Documented cases of rape and gang rape involve extreme brutality and torture, such as beating, mutilation, and suffocation resulting in death. Exacerbating the plight of women victims of rape is the experience of shame and rejection following the assault. Perpetrators are never arrested and sent to justice.

With their husbands drafted to fight or detained as suspects by armed actors, women are forced to carry the burden of caring and fending for their children, and sometimes with dependent elderly parents. Young women are lured into working across the border, with a promise of good pay and sometimes an opportunity to study, only to end up as victims of human trafficking. Some are able to escape and return to the camps despite fear of getting ostracized and losing family and community support.

Poor living conditions in refugee camps or relocation sites, including inadequate food, lack of water, access to proper sanitation, and essential items, and lack of basic services, result in malnutrition and diseases especially among the children. Mental health problems, such as post-traumatic stress, depression, and anxiety are prevalent. Children oftentimes are deliberately maimed, separated from their families, forcibly recruited to the armed forces, sent to forced labor, such as portering, or orphaned. Cases of sexual and gender based violence against men and boys were also documented.

Government Interventions to Resolve the Conflict

Myanmar central government has initiated interventions towards the resolution of the longstanding armed conflicts and attainment of considerable peace between and among the government, ethnic nationalities, and armed actors, including the military, in the country. These interventions include: 1. signing of ceasefires with 40 ethnic armed groups in 1989-2010; 2. signing of bilateral ceasefire agreements with 15 EAOs in 2011-2013; 3. drafting and signing of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) with EAOs in 2015; and 4. convening the Union Peace Conference (UPC), or the 21st Century Panglong Conference (21 CPC). Specific to women, peace and security issue, government interventions include the provision of 30 percent gender quotas in the peace process at all levels, and adoption of the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (NSPAW) 2013-2022, which was rooted in 1995 Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) (Warren et al, 2018).

Ceasefires, Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, and Peace Dialogues

The quasi-democratic government of President U Thein Sein started initiating measures in mid-2000s through a comprehensive national peace process at the local, state, and parliamentary levels. It formally called for a peace dialogue among representatives of government, major armed groups, and civilians in 2011. It signed various bilateral ceasefire agreements with 15 different EAOs in 2011-2013 (Min Zaw Oo, 2014; Aung,

2020). Prior to this, from 1989 to 2010, the military government reportedly signed ceasefires with a total of 40 armed groups (AIPR, 2018). In 2013, Thein Sein's government attempted to consolidate various bilateral agreements into a single Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) (Aung, 2020; EMReF, 2019; Warren et al, 2018; Min Zaw Oo, 2014). A team composed of 16 EAOs, the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordinating Team (NCCT), was formed to serve as the main EAO negotiating body. The NCCT drafted the text of the NCA.

The NCA serves as a ceasefire agreement as well as a framework for the ongoing formal peace process. It seeks to "secure an enduring peace based on the principles of dignity and justice, through an inclusive political dialogue process involving all relevant stakeholders" (NCA, 2015). Recognizing the principles of democracy and federalism, national equality and right to self-determination based on liberty, equality and justice, the NCA deems crucial the holding of a political dialogue, the Union Peace Conference (UPC), as part of the political roadmap and forming a democratic federal union towards peace (NCA, 2015; Min Zaw Oo, 2014; Minoletti and Sandi, 2018). It has three ceasefire monitoring and political dialogue mechanisms, namely, Joint Implementation Coordination Meeting (JICM); Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC); and Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC). The JICM implements the terms of the NCA. The JMC monitors the agreement at the union, state, and local levels. The UPDJC serves as the secretariat for the UPC and is responsible for important aspects of the process, such as pre-negotiations and consensus building on issues to be brought before the UPC (EMReF, 2019:11; Warren et al, 2018).

Representatives of government, political parties, civilian population, Tatmadaw, and eight EAOs, out of the 18 major EAOs expected, signed the NCA in October 2015. In 2018, two more EAOs signed the NCA. The initial eight EAO signatories to the NCA are: Arakan Liberation Party (ALP); Chin National Front (CNF); Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA); New Mon Party (NMP); Pa-O National Liberation Organization (PNLO); Shan State Army/ Restoration Council of Shan State (SSA/ RCSS); and All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF). The two other EAO signatories that signed in 2018 are: Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army (KNU); and Lahu Democratic Union (LDU). The eight non-signatories are: Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP); Kachin Independence Army (KIA); National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA-ESS); National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang (NSCN-K); Shan State Army/Shan State Proress Party (SSA/SSPP); Wa State Army/Party (UWSA); Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA); and Arakan Army (AA).

The first Union Peace Conference (UPC) was convened in January 2016, shortly before Thein Sein left office and following the drafting of a framework for a political dialogue process. Ten armed groups, considered the most powerful, which did not sign the NCA were not able to participate in the said dialogue (Aung, 2020; Pauli, 2020; Matheson, 2019; EMReF, 2019).

In 2015, following victory in the national elections, the newly installed government of the National League for Democracy (NLD), led by State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi, assumed the task of organizing and leading the peace process. Following Thein Sein's UPC initiative, it convened the 21st Century

Panglong Conference (21CPC), a symbolic reference to the 1947 Panglong, in August 2016. Three more political dialogues followed: in May 2017, in July 2018, and, the latest, in August 2020, shortly before the November general elections (Aung, 2020; EMReF, 2019, Warren et al, 2018). As in the first UPC under Thein Sein, only signatory EAOs were allowed to participate in the dialogue while non-signatory EAOs were invited as observers (Minoletti and Sandi, 2018; EMRef, 2019:17; Joint Peace Fund, 2019).

Since the first round of 21CPC in 2016, modest progress has reportedly been achieved, including the agreed 37 principles for a future Union Peace Accord. Despite thus, the most powerful EAOs have continued to refuse signing the NCA and conflicts between the Tatmadaw and the EAOs in Shan and Rakhine States have intensified. The pulling out from the negotiations of two most important and largest NCA signatory EAOs, the KNU and RCSS, after the July 2018 21CPC owing to disagreements with the Tatmadaw on some proposals, has stalled the peace process for two years (Aung, 2020:3-4; Pauli, 2018;). The government of Suu Kyi attempted to break the two year deadlock by convening the August 2020 21CPC in Nay Pyi Taw and sending invites to seven non-signatory EAOs. All 10 signatory EAOs participated in but the seven non-signatory refused to participate, as their ally, the AA, which the government labelled as a terrorist organization, was excluded (Pauli, 2020).

The August 2020 21CPC has reportedly achieved two things: adoption of a further 20 principles, and continuation of formal peace dialogues with the incoming government. Observers, however, doubt the additional 20 principles the Tatmadaw proposed would serve as breakthroughs to end the continuing hostilities with signatory EAOs and the EAOs' acceptance of such principles would break new ground for future compromise, even as EAOs were encouraged by the prospect of continued peace dialogues under the incoming government (Pauli, 2020).

A few days after winning the November 2020 general elections, the NLD reportedly called on 48 ethnic political parties to join the former in building a democratic federal union towards ending the civil war. Ethnic parties invited include those representing Kachin, Karen, Karenni, Shan, Rakhine, Mon, Kayan, Lahu, Ta'ang (Palaung), Kaman, Khami, Mro, Dainet, Tai Leng, Chin, Danu, Zomi, Kokang, Dawei, Pao, Akha, Zo, Naga, Kayah, Lisu, Wa and Inn. The call was seen as a positive step from the NLD to move the peace process forward. Some parties, however, were skeptical and doubtful such call would be able repair the rift with ethnic groups the NLD's vice chair, Zaw Myint Maung, created when he encouraged voters to elect the NLD party instead of an ethnic party during the campaign period (Nyein, 2020).

National framework and commitment on gender representation

The framework for the political dialogue provides for the reservation of 30 percent to women's participation in the selection process as well as in the working committees of the UPDJC. Achieving, however, the said 30 percent quota for women's participation in peace mechanisms has yet to be realized. Even as it has reportedly been improving, women's representation at the Panglong has averaged 20 percent while in the UPDJC, less than 17 percent (Warren et al, 2018).

The NSPAW allows the government to fulfil its international policy obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms

of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the BPfA. It calls for the improvement of systems, structures, and practices to ensure women's equal participation in decision-making and leadership at all levels of society through various measures, including the application of quotas. It calls for the increased participation of women in the development and implementation of government policy, and for the allocation of sufficient budgetary, human, and material resources by government and non-government organizations for the range of activities and policies described in the plan (Warren et al, 2018).

Role of CSOs in Peacebuilding

Hundreds of CSOs exist in Myanmar (EMReF, 2019; Paung Sie Facility, 2018; ADB, 2015; Lahtaw et al, 2014). Not all, however, are engaged in peacebuilding. Those in the regions are less concerned with the peace process than those in the States, especially those heavily affected by armed conflicts (Paung Sie Facility, 2018).

In its 2019 study, EMReF provides a comprehensive and detailed discussion on the role of CSOs in Myanmar's peace process, including background of conflict from 2011 to 2018, enabling and constraining factors in CSOs' work, and CSOs involvement and relevance in the peace process. The following discussion on the role of CSOs in the peace process is largely culled from the said study, even as it occasionally cites Paung Sie Facility (2018).

There are three areas of peacebuilding CSOs in Myanmar engage in. These are: 1. formal peace negotiations (Track 1); 2. institutions and forums supporting the official negotiations (Track 2); and 3. peacebuilding outside the formal peace process (Track 3). CSO peacebuilders have mainly engaged and contributed in the first and third areas, even as space for their engagement in the first area has been limited.

CSOs in the negotiated peace process have served as observers in the UPC/21 CPC proceedings and in consultative forums, such as national dialogues, the UPDJC convenes and as advisors to EAOs in the UPC/21 CPC. There are three types of national dialogues CSOs can participate in, namely, regional; ethnic-based; and issue-based. Issue based dialogues are civil society peace forums mainly for CSOs (EMReF, 2019; Paung Sie Faciity, 2018:17).

With limited space in formal negotiations, CSOs have found alternative and informal spaces, such as informally presenting their policy recommendations to EAOs and political parties, acting as advisors to these parties in the 21CPC, and contributing policy options as well as meeting with NRPC officials through civil society forums on peace process. With expertise in organizing, facilitation, and documentation at national level political dialogues, CSOs provide technical assistance, such as facilitating and documenting meetings in the peace process (EMReF, 2019:44).

Outside the formal peace process, CSOs have engaged in early warning systems, monitoring of crimes and abuses, ceasefire monitoring, research-based advocacy, in-person meetings, workshops, exchange programs, pro-peace media and dialogue, and problem-solving workshops. They have helped protect civilians by advocating for their safety in moments of crisis, and mediating between civilians and armed actors. Civil society involvement in unofficial monitoring of bilateral ceasefire agreements and the NCA has generated important information about, and accountability mechanisms for, ceasefire violations across all conflict parties, thus support-

ing the reduction of violence at the community level, and stabilizing the negotiated peace process.

Noteworthy is the initiative by NP Myanmar in partnership with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) entitled *Women Contributing to Peace Mapping Project*. Developed by the USAID's Kann Let program, the project aimed to highlight the inclusion of women stakeholders from EAOs, government, civil society, media, and others in the peace process; encourage networking and collaboration among these women; and increase support for women working on critical issues across the country (US Embassy Myanmar, 2019; Nyein, 2019.

With data collected in August 2018 - January 2019, the project identifies a total of 674 women from 383 organizations working on peace across 14 states and regions. It has produced maps of the 383 organizations, areas of expertise of women, and actionable steps towards women's inclusion in peace-related activities. (Such maps can be accessed online: https://ispmyanmarpeacedesk.com).

Women's CSOs in Peacebuilding

Women's CSOs in Myanmar are at the forefront in advancing the interests and needs of women, specifically those heavily affected by the conflict, in the peace process. Foremost among these women's CSOs are the Women's Organizations Network (WON), Gender Equality Network (GEN), Women in Peace (WIN-Peace), Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process (AGIPP), Women Can Do It (WCDI), Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN), Women's League of Burma (WLB), Shalom (Nyein) Foundation (SF), Women's League of Chinland (WLC), Wunpawng Ninghtoi (WN), Kachin Women Peace Network (KWPN), Burmese Women's Union (BWU), Women's Initiative Platform (WIP), and Mon Women's Organization (MWO) (Warren et al, 2018; Ryan, 2019; PSF, 2016). These women's CSOs have directly and indirectly participated in the peace process. They have engaged in political dialogues, advocacy, research, networking, information, communication, and capacity building activities. The section on women peacebuilding initiatives discusses women's CSOs' various peacebuilding initiatives in more detail.

Issues and Challenges In the Peace Process

Myanmar's peace process has been fraught with a number of issues and challenges from the start (Aung, 2020; Emah, 2020; Pauli, 2020; EMReF, 2019; Mathieson, 2019). This section discusses some of these issues and challenges which can be categorized into three main aspects, namely, minority ethnic groups and rural communities; concerning the NCA; and central government's approach and stance. The first aspect includes: marginalization of some ethnic groups and rural communities in the peace process; disconnect between central government and rural or local communities; and lack of ownership of the peace process among local communities. The second aspect includes: convincing all armed actors to sign the NCA; disputes on the process and NCA principles between government and military and signatory and non-signatory EAOs; inability of JMC to resolve disagreements between military and NCA signatory groups; and demand for armed groups to accept restrictions in their areas of operation. The third aspect includes: NLD government's bureaucratic approach; lack of neutrality.

On minority ethnic groups and rural communities

Marginalization of some ethnic groups and rural communities in the peace process

Approximately 51 EAOs exist in Myanmar (Aung, 2020). The central government with the Tatmadaw selected less than half, mainly major armed groups, to participate in the official negotiations. Only 10 of these major armed groups have so far signed the NCA. Such seemingly exclusive selection heightens the grievance and perceptions of further marginalization of other ethnic groups and undermines the legitimacy of the peace negotiations. Points agreed upon in the NCA have been seen as advancing the interests of the Tatmadaw and certain ethnic elites and have not necessarily reflected the lived realities, including concerns and demands, of armed actors and ethnic groups unrepresented in the negotiations as well as the rural communities the conflicts have directly affected.

Disconnect between central government and rural or local communities

Changes in the political, economic, and social systems have been instituted at the central government level. Such changes have not been felt in the rural or local communities, specifically in ethnic and border areas. Socioeconomic development has yet to trickle down to the grassroots level.

Lack of ownership of the peace process among local communities

Years of repressive and oppressive military regime and laws curtailing dissent, such as Unlawful Associations Act, have cultivated fear among the populace. People, particularly in local communities have been wary to participate in peace process activities conducted or facilitated by CSOs for fear of getting apprehended and punished. They have yet to acknowledge and appreciate the value of the peace process in their individual and communal life in order to allow them to own such process and participate willingly and actively towards its success.

Religious mindsets inhibiting people from participating in the peace process

Core values, such as acceptance of suffering and liberation from attachment, keep many practicing Buddhists from engaging in active political resistance. Similarly, belief in the power of forgiveness or punishment in the afterlife keeps many practicing Christians from seeing the value of participating in the present process.

On the NCA

Convincing all ethnic armed groups to sign the NCA

Convincing all ethnic armed groups, especially the strongest ones, has continued to challenge the central government. Most of the strongest EAOs, accounting for roughly 80% of all EAOs in the country and part of the Federal Political Negotiation Consultative Committee led by the powerful UWSP, have continued to refuse to sign the NCA and to wage war with the Tatmadaw. Even as they have been allowed to attend the 21 CPC sessions as observers, these non-signatory EAOs have not been allowed to participate in the talks and decision-making. They have rejected the NCA and called for fresh negotiations. Military actions in Kayin, Rakhine, and Shan States, such as building strategic roads through KNU territory in Kayin State, have further eroded trust and confidence in the NCA (Aung, 2020: 9-11; EMReF, 2019).

Exclusion of militias in the peace process

Related to the exclusion of other ethnic armed groups is the exclusion of militias in the peace process. As discussed, conflict in Myanmar does not merely involve the Tatmadaw and EAOs; it involves inter-communal violence perpetrated by militia groups as well. Their sentiments and demands are not heard and acted upon by concerned stakeholders with their exclusion from the peace process.

Disputes on process and NCA principles
Continued refusal of the non-signatory EAOs to sign the NCA have been premised on disagreements with the government and the Tatmadaw in the following: requirement by government and Tatmadaw for EAOs to sign the NCA prior to participation in the peace process; demand for armed groups to accept major restrictions on their areas of operation, including withdrawal of AA from Rakhine State; military code of conduct, demarcation, troop relocation, and ceasefire monitoring; establishment of a single national armed forces, including future status of armed groups and possible integration into the military; non-secession and right to self-determination; and possible form of federalism.

Meanwhile, disputes between the government and signatory EAOs over interpretation on some interim arrangements in the NCA, including coordination on programs and projects in EAO held territories on health, education, socioeconomic development, environmental conservation, and drug eradication, have stalled progress. NRPC has required EAOS to seek permission prior to implementing such programs and projects in their respective territories. EAOs, on the other hand, have argued jointly agreed upon projects and initiatives should be a partnership. Also, they have accused the government of introducing laws, such as on land acquisition, policies and programs affecting minority ethnic groups without any consultation.

Inability of JMC to resolve disagreements between military and signatory EAOs
Relatedly, the JMC, chaired by military officers at all levels, has been rendered inutile in resolving disputes between the military and signatory EAOs, thus further eroding trust and confidence in the peace process. The military has rejected proposals from EAOs to revise the said committee's structure or include international observers or advisers in the ceasefire monitoring process.

On the central government's approach and stance
NLD's Bureaucratic approach to negotiations
The NLD has allegedly been bureaucratic and inflexible in dealing with formal peace negotiations. It has given priority to formal talks over informal discussions, thus further marginalizing and excluding non-signatory EAOs.

Lack of neutrality
Its seeming lack of political will to challenge the military's position and unwillingness to make significant concessions to ethnic minorities allegedly betray its position as broadly aligned with that of the Tatmadaw's as well as its partiality towards the interests of the Burman Buddhist majority, thus further increasing resentment among EAOs (Aung, 2020; Lahtaw, 2014).

The NLD government of Aung San Suu Kyi has repeatedly assured the general population of its commitment to pursue peace negotiations to resolve the country's longstanding civil war, especially now that it has been given fresh mandate by the people in the November 2020 elections. Some stakeholders, observers, and critics, however, have remained sceptical and doubtful such negotiations could put an end to the conflicts. Armed actors involved, specifically the Tatmadaw and EAOs, both NCA signatory and non-signatory, have refused to relent and compromise their strong-held positions on the terms and conditions of the peace process. Complex and multidimensional, conflicts in the country encompass not only conflict between the military and the EAOs but also inter-communal and one-sided violence perpetrated by different armed actors, including militia and vigilante groups, against civilians.

Such conflicts require more than formal peace negotiations to be resolved. Economic, including international trade and investments, and sociocultural factors need to be looked into and addressed and a broader process of dialogue and national reconciliation needs to be conducted towards a lasting peace.

Women in Peacebuilding

Profile of Women Peacebuilders

A number of women in Myanmar are active peacebuilders, even as they have been underrepresented in formal peace negotiations and their participation in formal peace dialogues has been mostly relegated to discussions on social issues (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020; Khullar, 2019; Warren et al 2018). The 2019 NP Myanmar mapping project of women contributing to peace reveals that more than 670 women from about 400 organizations across 14 regions and states have been involved in peacebuilding. Of these women, however, only about a quarter has served as delegates to the formal UPC (Nyein, 2019; US Embassy Myanmar, 2019).

Meanwhile, this baseline study has been able to identify a total of 24 women peacebuilders as they are featured in different published materials, videos, and interviews on the net (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020; National Endowment for Development, 2020; Warren et al, 2018; PSF, 2016; Tawn, 2015; Search for the Common Good, n.d; AWPR-AIPR; GIWPS, 2014). Most of these women are highly educated, some even schooled abroad, co-founders and leaders of national and local women's organizations and networks, and international peace awardees. Some have held relatively high or leadership positions in government and international organizations. A few were former student activists and soldiers of EAOs. They have served as delegate to the UPC/21 CPC as observer or adviser, peace negotiator, facilitator, or mediator. They have served as peace and women's rights advocates, educators, and capacity builders. These women are: Naw Zipporah Sein; Khin Ma Ma Myo; Mary Twam; Nang Raw Zahkung; Nan Sandi; Saw Mra Raza Linn; Lway Aye Nang; Phyoe Phyoe Aung; Nang Lao Liang Won (aka Tay Tay); Khin Ohmar; May Sabai Phyu; Ja Nan Lahtaw; Mi Yin Chan; Dr. San San Aye; Zin Mar Aung; Dr. Wah Wah Maung; Mi Sue Pwint; Lway Aye Nang; Thin Thin Aung; Nang Phyu Phyu Linn; Nang Pu; Mi Kun Chan Non; Daw Doi Bu Nbrang; and Daw Mi Yin Chan.

Unidentified and unrecognized are the many women in local or grassroots communities who have participated and made a significant dent in peacebuilding outside the formal peace process (Pepper, 2018). These are ethnic minority women who rarely have the opportunity to get education, ordinary wives and mothers who take charge of the children, parents and in laws, and of the entire household.

Areas of Participation and Initiatives in Peacebuilding

Myanmar women, including women's CSOs, have engaged directly and indirectly in and outside the formal peace process. They have conducted various peacebuilding activities at the national and local levels. In formal peace negotiations, they have initiated the following: helped negotiate the NCA; served as negotiators and facilitators; served as observers (including to NCA signing) and official advisors to EAOs; monitored ceasefire implementation; and submitted policy recommendations resulting from discussions in civil society forums to the UPDJC (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020; Khullar, 2019; Warren et al, 2018; PSF, 2016).

Outside the formal peace process, women have conducted various advocacy, information, education, and communication initiatives. These include: collection and dissemination of information on issues concerning women's advancement and needs; capacity building of women leaders and women at the grassroots; advocacy for women's participation in the peace process and protection of women; and provision of basic needs of women and children in conflict affected areas (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020; Khullar, 2019; Warren et al, 2018; Pepper, 2018).

In formal peace negotiations

As mentioned, only about a quarter of the more than 670 women from about 400 organizations across 14 states and regions identified in the 2019 NP Myanmar mapping project have been involved in the UPC (Nyein, 2019; US Embassy Myanmar, 2019). In the NCA signing, one out of 10 government signatories, one in 24 EAO signatories, and two of 21 witness signatories were women (Warren et al, 2018; AIPR, 2015). In the 2015 negotiations, women comprised 5 percent of the total negotiators, and in January 2016 UPC, they comprised 8 percent of the total negotiators. Over the first three rounds of the UPC/21 CPC, women's participation had reportedly increased. It was at 13 percent in the August 2016 UPC/21CPC; 17 percent in May 2017; and 22 percent in July 2018. It, however, decreased back to 17 percent in the fourth round in August 2020.

Women comprised 5 percent within Myanmar's NCA mechanisms and 9 percent of the JCM members at the state level. They, however, had no representation at the union level JCM. In the February 2017 CSO Forum, women comprised about 37 percent of the total representatives. Meanwhile, women make up 10 out of 43 members of the CSO Forum Working Committee and 8 of the 75 members of the UPDJC Working Com-mittee. It is noted some of these women have acted as conduits to and backchannel with other women, including women's CSOs, on the ground, updating the latter on the progress of the peace process and providing opportunities for targeted advocacy (Warren et al, 2018).

Participation of six women in formal peace negotiations is noted. Saw Mra Raza Lin of the ALP and Naw Zipporah Sein of KNU were part of the 15-member senior delegation (SD) in the 2015 NCA signing with the latter serving as lead negotiator of the signatory EAOs in succeeding peace talks (Warren et al, 2018; PSF, 2016). Ja Nan Lahtaw and Nang Raw Zakhung of SF have served as technical advisers to the SD while Daw Doi Bu Nbrang and Daw Mi Yin Chan, both MPs, have served on the Union Peacemaking Working Committee (UPWC), the government's negotiating body (Warren et al, 2018).

Outside formal peace process

As mentioned, outside the formal peace process, women have engaged in various advocacy, information, education, and communication initiatives. They have lobbied conference delegates, specifically male, for issues concerning women's advancement and needs, such as strong legal protection against sexual and gender based violence (SGBV), women's inclusion in the peace process, and gender mainstreaming measures. They have consolidated women's voices through forums and communicated such voices to EAOs and officials in the peace process. They have conducted private meetings with representatives of the peace process and identified champions, the most progressive ones, among government officials to advance their cause (Warren et al, 2018; PSF, 2016, p.10; Pepper, 2018, p.68).

Women have tracked and issued press statements on the number of women directly involved in peace negotiations as well as the number of submitted and adopted proposals on gender-equitable policies at the 21CPC. They have used ethnic politics in enjoining concerned armed groups to protect their women towards maintaining a strong ethnic nation. They have documented women's experiences on the ground, including effects of conflict on women and their needs, as bases for drafting and submitting proposals towards a more inclusive peace process. They have empowered other women through capacity building activities to advocate for their own effective participation in peacebuilding. They have been involved in early warning systems, alerting fellow villagers of entry of troops, finding hiding places in the forest for women, children, and elderly, assisting men to flee from the village, and the like (Warren et al, 2018; Ryan, 2019; AIPR, 2015). Meanwhile, women's CSOs at the grassroots level have prioritised serving the needs of women and children in their respective conflict affected ethnic communities (Pepper, 2018).

Enabling and Constraining Factors in Peacebuilding

Women peacebuilders have encountered a number of enabling factors and constraining in advancing women's interests and needs in the peace process (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020; Warren et al, 2018, pp.19-28; PSF, 2019). Enabling factors include reputable personal characteristics of women peacebuilders; international and national frameworks on women's participation in decision making, including the peace process; and support from the international community. Constraining factors are biased personal perceptions and attitudes of women regarding peacebuilding; sociocultural discriminatory gender norms and expectations, patriarchal power structures, lack of national plan of action on UNSCR 1325, and fragmented nature of women's movement

Enabling Factors

Reputable personal characteristics of women

Women's personal characteristics, such as trust builders and brokers, knowledge and expertise in peace negotiations and conflict resolution, credibility, integrity, and cordial interpersonal relationships with male colleagues involved in formal peace negotiations, have facilitated advancing women's interest and needs in the peace process. With knowledge and expertise on peace and international affairs and positive reputations, some women have been invited to serve as technical advisers in peace negotiations. Other women, on the other hand, have capitalized on their cordial relationships with male colleagues who serve as representatives of EAOs in the peace process by rallying and convincing them to consider, accept, and adopt policy recommendations resulting from discussions in civil society forums convened by women's CSOs (Warren et al, 2018; AIPR, 2019).

International and national frameworks on women's participation

International frameworks, such as the CEDAW and UNSCR 1325, have served as platforms for women from diverse backgrounds to collaborate on common issues, such as safeguarding women against conflict-related sexual violence.

The NSPAW, the country's main policy document on gender issues, has 12 priority areas, namely, livelihoods, education and training, health, violence against women, emergencies, economy, decision making, institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, human rights, media, environment,

and youth ((Ryan, 2019, p. 13; Warren et al, 2018). It has allowed women leaders to effectively mobilize fellow women to participate in the peace process and advocate for women's rights despite limitations, such as lack of implementation of the plan, its disconnect with the grassroots women's movement, and fragmented nature of the women's movement (Warren et al, 2018).

The 2016 commitment by conflict parties to reserve 30 percent quota for women's participation in the peace process at all levels has allowed women to compel conflict parties to fulfil their commitment and ensure such agreed upon quota is reached.

Support from the international community
Support from the international community in the form of technical assistance, funding for peacebuilding initiatives, or projection of their plight to the public at the national and international levels, has allowed and even emboldened women peacebuilders and their CSOs to continue and sustain their various peacebuilding initiatives amidst challenges.

Constraining Factors

Discriminatory sociocultural gender norms and expectations
Discriminatory sociocultural gender norms and expectations keep women from actively engaging in peacebuilding. Cultural and religious norms and expectations vary across ethnic groups in Myanmar. They, however, sustain the mindset that women are inferior and powerless in relation to men. Men are expected to be the leader in both public and private spheres, head of the family, protector of the household, and decision maker. Women, on the other hand, are quiet and skillful in household chores. Engaging in the public sphere, specifically in politics, viewed as violent and dangerous, is not for them. Moreover, they have no skills in critical thinking and decision making (PSF, 2016; Nyein, 2015; GEN, 2015).
Relatedly, women have to carry the triple burden of caring for the children, parents and in laws, and household maintenance, thus leaving no more room for them to enter the labor force and participate in the public sphere. Furthermore, they need to negotiate multiple identities of ethnicity, class and gender. They are not to go against traditions and their identities as part of an ethnic group, as part of a social class, and as a woman.

Patriarchal power structures
Myanmar ranks 161 out of 191 countries in terms of women's representation in parliament, and the second lowest in Southeast Asia based from the International Parliamentary Union (IPU) (Ryan, 2019, p.9). The country's 2008 Constitution stipulates certain public posts as suitable only for men, thus limiting women's access to powerful economic and political positions, even as their labor force participation rate is 75 percent. Such limitation makes them underrepresented in politics and security sector. They are made to assume posts without decision making powers given their perceived lack of critical and decision making skills (Warren et al, 2018).

Such structural limitations for women in the public sphere are also apparent in EAOs. Women play subordinate roles in all EAOs despite undergoing basic military training in handling and using weapons and engaging in the battlefield. They are not permitted to take rigorous military training, told to follow orders from the men, assigned in non-political committees, medical and administrative works, and the kitchen. In the frontline, they are not allowed to fight but rather tasked to encourage their male counterparts and provide the latter with ammunition (Kolås and Meite, 2019, p.4).

Lack of NAP on the UNSCR 1325 is seen as

part of the reasons for the limited awareness among the people, especially those in government, women's rights groups, and youth organizations, of the relevance and importance of the WPS (Iyer and Yoon, 2020). For some women's CSOs, a NAP could increase the effectiveness of their advocacy and facilitate the coordination of an explicit WPS agenda inside Myanmar (Warren et al, 2018).

Fragmented nature of women's movement
In the same manner that alliance building consolidates and strengthens women's voices, so also the dynamics within and among women's CSOs adversely affects to a certain extent the advocacy for women's participation in the peace process. Women's movement in Myanmar has been described as uncoordinated and disorganized with CSOs divided into those established inside Myanmar ("insiders") and those established in exile during the junta years ("outsiders"). They have differing priorities depending on which level they operate. Grassroots CSOs are concerned with lack of access to justice for sexual violence and land grabbing while CSOs working with international organizations are wary of raising such issues that could result in alienating the government (Warren et al, 2018, p.25). Competition for resources, with the Yangon based organizations reportedly getting the bulk of the funding, causes friction within the movement as well.

Outcomes and Impacts of Initiatives in Peacebuilding

Through their various peacebuilding initiatives or initiatives in and outside the formal peace process, women, including women's CSOs, have been able to produce the following outcomes and impacts as discussed by Council on Foreign Relations (2020), Warren et al (2018):

Sharing of technical knowledge, expertise, and skills

- Contribution to the 2015 NCA, ceasefire negotiations and political dialogues as negotiators, co-facilitators, and official advisers to EAOs;
- Development of NSPAW (Some women leaders were involved in the development of NSPAW).
- Draft legislation on Prevention and Protection of Violence Against Women (PoVAW) bill that recognizes the need to protect women from all forms of violence (even as it was outside the peace process and was never passed).

Advocacy

- Inclusion of gender-friendly provisions in peace process frameworks, including a 30 percent quota for women's participation in the peace process at all levels;
- Joint decision-making provisions in the JMC ToR (Terms of Reference) requiring all decisions related to JMC implementation be made jointly between the government and EAO signatories;
- Raising and discussion of critical issues and roots of conflict affecting ethnic minorities, including land rights, equitable sharing of resources, native tongue education, community security, forced displacement, gender based violence, and health care in the political dialogues;
- Familiarization of peace process stakeholders with women's organizations, including their advocacies.

Documentation and Information Dissemination

- Contribution to the UN's listing of Myanmar's military crimes of sexual violence in armed conflict;
- Better understanding of the extent of women's participation in the peace process;
- More informed advocacy for women's interests and needs resulting from communication of women directly involved in the peace process re: political stances of various individuals in the negotiations and updates on the progress of negotiations.

Networking or alliance building

- Consolidated and strengthened voices and influence of women in the peace process.

Capacity building

Changed women's mindset on the peace process and women's ability to participate in the political sphere;

- Developed and enhanced of skills of current and potential women leaders at the national and community levels.
- Increased knowledge and awareness of WPS of women at the community level.

Early warning system

- Mitigated effects of conflict on villagers or community members, including women, men, children, and elderly; keeping villagers from getting caught in the conflict.

Best Practices in Peacebuilding

Given the various peacebuilding initiatives in and outside the formal peace process, this study considers the following as best practices:

"Tea break" advocacy

Lobbying stakeholders in the formal peace process while serving tea during breaks is a strategy showing the ingenuity and creativity of the women in convincing stakeholders to carry women's interests and needs in the negotiating table. Women are able to see and take every opportunity to advance their cause. Their seemingly menial and insignificant task of serving tea becomes vital and significant in terms of advocating for the inclusion of gender-friendly provisions in the peace process frameworks.

Back channel discussions

Conducting informal discussions with stakeholders simultaneous with the ongoing formal peace negotiations is a creative strategy that allows women to optimize time and energy as they participate in the political dialogues.

Building of trust and confidence

Building trust and utilizing cordial relationships with male delegates in the negotiating table. This is another ingenious strategy that enables women to take advantage of their identity as a woman, a friend, and a colleague in a positive manner in order to change negative mindsets and behavior as regards women's participation and other gender related issues in the peace process.

Indigenous early warning system, mechanisms and practices

Developing and employing indigenous system, mechanisms and practices to alert the community on looming armed encounter are oftentimes assessed as effective and efficient, as they are undertaken by communities in great need of such. Such indigenous mechanisms and practices manifest ownership of the initiatives by community members themselves.

Building alliances and networks
In a male dominated society that rarely listens and responds to women's voices, it is quite imperative to consolidate and strengthen women's voices to become a formidable force in the transformation of structural arrangements promoting and institutionalizing women's marginalization.

Identifying champions
Effective and efficient initiatives towards the improvement of the plight of marginalized sectors, including women and children in conflict-affected communities, require supportive government officials and MPs to champion such initiatives and push for their institutionalization.

Documentation and information dissemination
Documenting and disseminating information on the progress of the peace process and political stances of stakeholders to concerned women on the ground. This strategy is essential in keeping women's organizations updated towards a more informed and effective advocacy and in encouraging and mobilizing women to participate in the peace process.

Capacity building across sectors
Conducting education and training in certain peacebuilding related areas or topics across sectors at the community or grassroots level is crucial in order to allow these sectors to gain confidence, become empowered, own the peace process, and take action towards conflict resolution and the achievement of peace.

Lessons Learned and Way Forward to Mainstream WPS

Based on the findings, the following are the lessons learned and way forward in mainstreaming WPS in the country:

Stakeholders' ownership of the peace process, including peacebuilding initiatives, is crucial towards its success and sustainability. Exploring and instituting gender inclusive indigenous peacebuilding initiatives, mechanisms and system towards the success of the peace process can facilitate ownership of the peace process.

Consolidating and strengthening women's voices is imperative in a male dominated society in order to advance women's interests and needs.

Institutionalizing effective and efficient peacebuilding initiatives is necessary in order to be sustained and adopted across sectors and at all levels. Such institutionalization requires champions in the government in order to be realized.

Countering discriminatory sociocultural gender norms and practices completes the advocacy for a more gender inclusive peace process. Well-entrenched norms and practices determine to a great degree societal structures, including political, economic, education, health, justice, and others.

Information, communication, and capacity building *are at the core of all peacebuilding initiatives* both in formal and informal peace process Advocacy, networking or alliance building, and early warning systems require ongoing information, communication, and capacity building activities in order to be effective.

Recommendations

Recognizing the complexity of the problem of armed conflict vis a vis the peace process, this study focuses on only three urgent issues with corresponding recommendations to move forward the mainstreaming of WPS

in the country. Basic across the recommendations is the intensification of information, communication, and capacity building initiatives.

Owning the peace process

Is quite difficult to sustain and move forward certain projects, including its objectives and initiatives, unless concerned stakeholders and beneficiaries acknowledge the need for such projects and own these projects themselves. There is therefore a need to intensify information, communication, and capacity building initiatives on the matter at the grassroots level. Integrated in such initiatives are the indigenous practices already being done at the community level, such as on early warning system. If possible, form and train core groups of indigenous women and men communicators and trainers from among community leaders and members with credibility and respectability and who are, more or less, supportive of and active participants in peacebuilding. Members of these core groups will take charge of educating, encouraging, and convincing their fellow community members, especially the women, to see the value of acknowledging and adopting the peace process as their own and get actively involved in peacebuilding.

Countering discriminatory gender norms and practices

There have been cases of women defying discriminatory sociocultural gender norms and practices that prevent them from actively participating in the public sphere. Most of these women, however, are educated and hold high positions in government and non-government organizations. Countering such restrictive and prohibitive norms and practices should be done not only at the higher echelons of society but more so at the grassroots level. People across sectors and genders need to be informed and educated about the adverse effects of such norms and practices on all aspects of the daily public and private life not only of women and girls but of men and boys as well.

Intensifying information, communication, capacity building initiatives on the matter at all levels, especially the grassroots, is therefore crucial. Integrated in these initiatives is the formation and training of core groups of indigenous communicators and capacity builders from among credible and reputable community leaders and members. Capacity building sessions need to provide opportunity to participants to review and assess sociocultural-religious practices in terms of their positive and negative qualities and effects on the everyday life of the people individually and communally. In so doing, participants may be able to decide which norms and practices to maintain and enhance and which to disregard and counter for their good and the good of the community.

Transforming patriarchal power structures

Changing well-ingrained power structures seems quite difficult to achieve and realize, as it requires changing mindsets, attitudes, and behaviors, (including the Myanmar 2008 constitution) that influence such power structures. Nevertheless, intensifying information, communication and capacity building initiatives on the matter complemented by creative and effective advocacy initiatives, including identifying champions who will push the advocacy forward, could perhaps attain relative success especially at the community or grassroots level which, in the long run, could produce a ripple effect on national level structures.

Measures to move forward the WPS need to consider the global pandemic and volatile political situation of the country -- recent military coup, arrest of government leaders, and violent crackdown of peaceful protesters

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Chapter 3
Case 2
Republic of the Philippines



Peace and Security Situation

Brief Profile of the Philippines

The Philippines is an archipelagic country located in the southeast coast of Asia, between Taiwan in the north and Borneo in the south. It is a critical entry point in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) market and a gateway of international shipping and air lanes suited for European and American businesses. Comprised of 7,107 islands covering land area of around 300,000 sq km, it is categorized into three major islands, namely: Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao (DOE, n.d.).

The Philippines is estimated to have 110.2 million in 2020 (World Population Review, n.d.). Luzon, the largest island group, accounts for more than half of the entire population of the country. Located in the southwestern part of Luzon is the capital of the Philippines, Manila. But the largest city is Quezon City. Both Manila and Quezon City are part of Metro Manila, a metropolis with a population of almost 13 million people. The official spoken languages of the country are Filipino and English. Nineteen more languages are regionally recognized (Nations Online, n.d.)



Mindanao is the second largest island in the Philippines where the peace and security situation is most delicate, with a population estimated at 24 Million in 2020, close to 24 per cent of the Philippine population (Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute, 2020). Meanwhile, the insurgency of the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) is spread in different parts of the Philippines from North to South (Uy, 13 December 2020.)

The Armed Conflicts

Nature, History, and Root Causes of Conflicts

Mindanao Conflict

Many forms of violent conflicts exist in Mindanao: communist struggle against the Philippine government; feuds between families and clans (*rido*); struggle of indigenous communities over rights to ancestral land; ideologically-driven violent criminality and banditry; and politically-motivated violence. And the most persistent among these violent conflicts is the decades-long protracted struggle of some Muslim groups over the right to self-determination for a Bangsamoro homeland (Santiago, 2015).

Although Christians are an overwhelming majority in the Philippines, Mindanao has for centuries been home to both indigenous peoples and Muslims called Moro (from the Spanish word "Moor") or Bangsamoro (the "Moro Nation"). One of the world's longest running, the conflict in Mindanao can be traced back to the colonial era from the 16th century until 1898 where Moro sultanates fought against the Spanish regime that dominated the northern Philippines (Dwyer and Guiam, 2010).

Three groups comprise the Muslim separatists - the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Abu Sayyaf. The MILF and the Abu Sayyaf are breakaway factions of the MNLF (BBC News, 2012). Muslims remained dominant in their traditional heartlands of the Sulu archipelago, Maguindanao, and Lanao. However, their political influence in the rest of the island declined, and so by the late 1960s, communal strife had intensified (Dywer and Guiam, 2010). One significant trigger event happened in 1968 during the time of President Marcos when at least 28 young Moro military recruits were killed by their superiors when they refused to carry out their secret mission to infiltrate Sabah, in eastern Malaysia which was formerly part of the Sulu sultanate and is claimed by the Philippines. The incident, known as the Jabidah Massacre, spawned more unrest and was a key motivation in the formation of armed Moro separatist groups (Asia Foundation, 2017).



Population is estimated at **24 Million** about **24% of Philippine population of 110 M**. Mindanao is divided into six regions: the **Zamboanga Peninsula, Northern Mindanao**, the **Caraga region, the Davao region**, **SOCCSKSARGEN**, and the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (**BARMM**). It has 25 provinces and 27 cities. Muslim, Christian and IPs are the biggest population of Mindanao.

In 1971, Nur Misuari founded the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) with the goal of fighting the Philippine state for an independent Moro nation. This led to the Tripoli Agreement in Libya in 1976, brokered by the UN-backed Organization of Islamic Conference which, however, failed to hold. In 1986, President Corazon Aquino personally met Misuari to hold peace talks and in 1989, signed a law setting up the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) that gave predominantly Muslim areas in the region a degree of self-rule and semi-autonomy (BBC News, 2012).

In 1996, President Fidel Ramos signed a significant peace agreement with the MNLF ending 26 years of war that cost some 120,000 lives. This paved the way for Misuari to run for office and he was elected as ARMM governor the same year. Yet, a number of splinter factions within the organization resisted the call to disarm. In particular, the MILF, which split from the MNLF in 1981 after its leader, Salamat Hashim, split from the MNLF in 1978, rejected the 1996 agreement in favor of a push for full Bangsamoro independence that aims to create separate Islamic state in the southern Philippines (BBC News, 2012).

In 1997, President Fidel Ramos decided to change government policy by appointing civilians, instead of only retired military officers to the negotiating panel. Thus, the first civilian was also the first woman appointed to be a peace negotiator. Emily Marohombsar, the first and only female president of the Mindanao State University and a Muslim belonging to the Maranao ethnic group, sat in the negotiations as a full member of the government panel. Prior to that no woman had ever sat at the table since formal peace negotiations on the Bangsamoro question started (Santiago, 2015).

Unfortunately, from 1998-2001, the Philippine government under President Estrada declared an all-out war against MNLF, MILF, NPA, and RPMM (Rebolusyonaryong Partido ng Managagawa ng Mindanao) instead of continuing the peace negotiations. He was later impeached after being in office for just two years (Santiago, 2015).

In 2001, violence flared up again after MNLF founder and first governor Nur Misuari, led a failed uprising. He was subsequently jailed, but eventually released in 2008. That same year, Misuari was ousted as MNLF chairman. Muslimim Sema succeeded him. Over the years, the MNLF is believed to have become weaker, and many factions have splintered from the main group (BBC News, 2012).

In 2007, although tension with MNLF had declined following compromises between the government and Misuari, the armed conflict continued with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). In 2008, more than 700,000 people were displaced after fighting broke out again when an agreement, which gave the MILF control over more than 700 areas in the south, was ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court (Dwyer and Guiam, 2010).

In November, 2009, Vice-Mayor Esmael Mangudadatu along with journalists and supporters were massacred on their way to provincial capital to file candidacy for governorship (Conde, 2009). The Maguindanao massacre, a result of a political rivalry between Gov. Datu Andal Ampatuan, Jr. and Vice Mayor Esmael Mangudadatu, is a clear case where a local level conflict had escalated into a state-insurgent electoral violence.

In 2010, Benigno Aquino III, son of former President Corazon Aquino, became the President of the Philippines. The protracted war in Mindanao became even more complex because MILF commander Ameril Umbra Kato broke away from MILF to form the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (International Crisis Group, 2011).

In March 2014, the Government of the Philippines and the MILF signed a peace agreement, which they called the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB). The implementation of the CAB had two main thrusts: 1) the political-legislative track that includes the drafting of the Bangsamoro Basic law (BBL), which when ratified, will give rise to the legal creation of the Bangsamoro Government that will replace the current ARMM, and 2) the normalization track, which runs alongside and complementary to the political-legislative work on the BBL (UNDP, 2017).

However, amid the high hopes on the CAB which served as the basis of the BBL during the Aquino Administration, the Mamasapano clash occurred on January 25, 2015 where 44 SAF were killed by MILF and the BIFF in the municipality of Mamasapano in Maguindanao. A total of 44 police officers, 18 MILF members, and five civilians died in the Mamasapano incident. Widespread public anger suspended the deliberations on the draft BBL in Congress. Public distrust of the peace process grew, and Congress failed to pass the legislation before Aquino's term ended (Asia Foundation, 2017).

President Duterte unveiled a new approach to the peace process shortly after he took office in June 2016. He envisioned a new autonomy arrangement negotiated with the MILF, a seeming preparation for establishing a new federal constitutional framework (Asia Foundation, 2017). The Duterte administration had a six-point peace and development agenda in line with the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2017-2022 strategy: 1. meaningful implementation of the peace

agreement with the MILF towards healing in the Bangsamoro; 2. completion of the implementation of the remaining commitments under the GPH-MNLF Final Peace Agreement; 3. accelerated signing and implementation of the final peace agreement with the CPP-NPA-NDF; 4. immediate conclusion of the peace process with the CPA-CPLA and the RPMP-RPA-ABB; 5. implementation of the peace promoting catch-up socioeconomic development in the conflict-affected areas; and 6. building of a culture of peace and conflict sensitivity (UNDP, 2017). Although the peace talks temporarily broke down and both parties suspended ceasefires in February 2017, the Bangsamoro Transition Commission was relaunched to revise the draft legislation that would translate the provisions of the peace agreement into law.

In May 2017, Islamic State-linked militants attacked the city of Marawi, situated on the southern island of Mindanao. It was the site of a bloody urban battle between ISIL fighters and government forces prompting months of heavy combat that caused hundreds of thousands to flee and left more than 1,000 dead. In the evening of the attacks, President Duterte declared martial law across the entire island of Mindanao (Betteridge-Moes, Aljazeera, 2017).

In a continued effort for peace, President Duterte signed the Bangsamoro Organic Law in July 2018 establishing the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region (BAR), replacing the ARMM. The successful vote in the January 2019 referendum paved the way for the establishment of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Regional Government (BARMM) to govern with greater financial autonomy and a more representative parliamentary system (Conciliation Resources, n.d.).
The heart of the conflict in the Philippines lies in economic marginalization and historically-rooted prejudices against its minority population—minority Muslims in Mindanao and its indigenous peoples. The conflict in Mindanao is ethno-religious-cultural, deeply rooted in the economic deprivation caused by competing interests in land and other natural resources, and identity issues emerging from the de facto second-class status of much of the Muslim population (Parks et al, 2016).

Up until Philippine independence in 1946, Mindanao region had enjoyed wealth and relative autonomy despite continuous colonization of the Philippines by Spain and the U.S. Although the Mindanao conflict has been perceived as a religious conflict between Christians, Muslims and indigenous people, it has its roots in indigenous resistance against political, economic, and cultural assimilation (Buenaobra, 2011). In Mindanao, poverty and a lack of social opportunity are both drivers and outcomes of conflict (Dwyer and Guiam, 2010).

While hopes were pinned on the signing of Bangsamoro Organic Law in 2018 and the successful vote in January 2019 paved the way for the establishment of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Regional Government, economic hardship and political tensions and *rido* or clan wars have continued to persist in Mindanao (Conciliation Resources, n.d.).

Communist Conflict

While this study mainly focuses on the Mindanao insurgency, it is also important to note that the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), which aims to overthrow the Philippine government using guerrilla-style warfare insurgency, is considered one of the oldest communist insurgencies in the world. The nature of conflict with the CPP is ideological as it was established with Maoist leanings and modelled after the agrarian revolu-

tion of the Communist Party of China (BBC News, 2012). The CPP has two related units: its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA), which Jose Maria Sison established in 1969; and its political arm, the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) (Francisco, August 22, 2016).

With less international attention than the Islamic forces, the NPA has been waging war since the 1960s, and has engaged the government in sporadic peace talks. It has been pushing for a more equitable distribution of Mindanao's resources and greater attention to social development (Dwyer and Guiam, 2010). Many of the NPA's senior figures, including its founder Jose Maria Sison, have lived in self-imposed exile in the Netherlands (BBC news, 2012).

Conflict between the NPA and the Philippine government is rooted in the desire of the NPA for "Filipino people's right to national independence and freedom from the dictates and impositions of US imperialism (CPP, 6 January 2017, par. 2)." The NDFP, the political wing of the CPP, aims "to address the roots of the armed conflict in the peace talks, based on the principles of national sovereignty, democracy and social justice (CPP, 6 January 2017. par. 2)." Despite constant attempts to hold peace negotiations with the CPP and end the armed conflict, no final peace settlements had been agreed upon due to the contentious issues on sovereignty, release of political prisoners, and CPP's inclusion in the terrorist list (Francisco, 2016).

Most high-profile formal talks between the government and the CPP were in Oslo in 2011 under President Benigno Aquino but no clear agreement was reached. The following years saw unabated violent clashes, characterized by low-intensity fighting between government forces and the NPA. The NPA engaged in bomb and gun attacks killing civilians. Peace talks fell apart in February 2013 following failure by both parties to agree on a joint declaration. In the same year, the NDFP announced it would not resume serious negotiations until President Aquino left office. In 2014, the government and CPP officials discussed the resumption of peace talks, but disagreed on preconditions. In 2015, the government and Jose Maria Sison, CPP founder and leader, engaged in peace talks but In December the same year the government decided to negotiate with NPA military leaders instead of the CPP (Project Ploughshares, n.d.).

Peace talks resumed in August 2016 upon the release of 19 rebel leaders from jail by President Duterte. In February 2017, following the ambush of an army convoy by the NPA, breaking a unilateral ceasefire that held for five months, President Duterte scrapped the peace talks. Two months later, in April, both sides returned to the negotiating table, brokered by Norway, in the Netherlands and agreed on a bilateral truce. Despite such agreed truce, fighting had continued (International Crisis Group, 2019; Wikipedia, 2020).

In 2019, the Duterte administration officially announced the permanent termination of peace talks with the CPP/NDF/NPA (Roque, 2019). In December 2020, the government's anti-terror council labelled the CPP/NPA as a terrorist organization (Gonzales, 2020).

Effects of Mindanao Conflict on Women and Children

In its early stages, the Mindanao conflict has resulted in the neglect of gender concerns in addressing peace and security issues. Since women are often treated merely as conflict victims and passive receivers of protection, the men dominate the high politics while

women remain merely on the periphery (JICA and GIWPS, 2016).

Due to the widespread view that armed combatants are the primary drivers of peace and security, the analysis of the Mindanao conflict often conclude it to be a men's arena where gender issues have little importance. The crisis in Mindanao has generally neglected women's experiences when exploring potential responses (Dwyer and Guiam, 2010). For example, the majority of internally displaced peoples are women and children. Women are impacted by violence that does not affect the men in the same way such as rape or economic and personal hardship if they lose a male figure in their household to violence (Barron et al, 2016). Yet, women's experiences such as these are not addressed.

However, the need to involve women in peace processes and solutions has been a central focus due to the number of female victims of internal conflicts that have increased through time. The understanding of women as crucial actors in conflict mediation, resolution, and prevention has also changed mindsets on the importance of the role of women in peacebuilding. However, due to fragmentation along religious, ideological, and class lines, women are pressured to subordinate discussions of their core gender issues to claims of nationalist or religious identity (Buenaobra, 2011).

Government Interventions to Resolve the Conflict

In 2000, the landmark UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security called for the increased participation of women in peace processes and in all peacebuilding related activities. To implement UNSCR 1325, the UN Secretary called upon all UN member states to develop national actions plans (NAPs) outlining specific lines of national activity. In 2010, the Philippines became the first in Asia that launched a NAP to implement UNSC Resolutions 1325 and 1820.

NAP WPS 2010-2016

Galace recalls how the NAP started in the cafe of Miriam College: "Mavic Balleza, International Coordinator of the GNWP sometime in 2007 just wanted to know how CSOs are doing in terms of UNSCR 1325 (2000) and she needed a peace group to consolidate this. So, I called Prof. Miriam Coronel-Ferrer. We met up at Miriam College and the NAP WPS took birth with the support of then Presidential Adviser on Peace to the Arroyo government, Annabelle Abaya. The OPAPP adopted the plan (J.N Galace, personal communication, 29 December 2020)."

The Philippines was the first country in Asia to adopt a NAP. The NAP has four priority areas: 1. ensure the protection of women's human rights and prevention of violation of these rights in armed conflict and post-conflict situations; 2. build the capacity of women to engender peace and reconstruction processes; 3. mainstream gender perspective within the ongoing peace agreements and security reform agenda; and 4. institutionalize monitoring, evaluation, and reporting on NAP implementation (PeaceWomen, 2010, p. 1).

Launched on 1 March 2010, per Executive Order (EO) 865, NAP WPS created the implementing institutional infrastructure of the National Steering Committee on Women, Peace and Security (NSC WPS). Thereafter, the Women Engaged in Action on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (WE Act 1325), a national network composed of women's rights, peace, and human rights organizations, was established and became the main partner of the government on various WPS initiatives (Maligalig, n.d.).

Amended NAP WPS 2014-2016
The second generation NAP WPS introduced amendments in 2014 to institutionalize a system to monitor, evaluate, and report on the implementation of the NAP WPS in order to enhance accountability for successful implementation and the achievement of goals. The 2014 NAP WPS contains 11 action points and 37 indicators. It emphasizes the use of indicators side by side action points with corresponding government body identified to fulfill such indicators (PeaceWomen, n.d.).

On the amended NAP WPS, Galace (personal communication, 29 December 2020) recalls, "I remember Presidential Adviser Ging Deles calling me one day and critiquing that the first generation NAP we authored was a big shopping list. I saw the point of needing to trim it down and streamlining the plans with greater clarity. So, NAP 2010 was amended, leading to the second generation NAP from 2014-16.

NAP WPS 2017-2022
NAP WPS 2017-2022 adopted a broader frame of addressing the situation of women in armed conflict and recognizing their contributions to peacebuilding. Interfacing with the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2017 -2022, it serves as the explicit articulation of the incorporation of the gender perspective in the six-point peace and development agenda of the Duterte administration, specifically Agenda 6, on building a culture of peace and conflict sensitivity (OPAPP, 2017). It has four substantive pillars: 1. empowerment and participation; 2. protection and prevention; 3. promotion and mainstreaming; and 3. monitoring and evaluation.

In August 2017, ARMM Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (RAP WPS) was launched — the first-ever regional instrument on WPS. Similar initiatives have been undertaken in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), Davao Region, and the Caraga Region (Rallonza 2018).

In November 2020, Bangsamoro Women Commission (BWC) launched the Bangsamoro Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (BM-RAPWPS) 2020-2022. The launching was the highlight of BARMM's celebration of UNSC's 20th anniversary (ReliefWeb, 2020).

Role of CSOs in Peacebuilding
As a bridge and neutral ground for warring parties, civil society has forged sustainable peace in Mindanao. As civil society includes a wide range of organizations, from development NGOs to church-based groups and business associations, it has strengthened inter-religious dialogues between Muslim and Christians, created peace zones, and developed peace-promoting attitudes (Steven Rood, 2005).

CSOs, such as the *Bantay Ceasefire* (Ceasefire Watch), were able to mobilize help in implementing the ceasefire agreement. For example, civil society groups helped the Arroyo government move toward peace in consultations leading up to the August 2001 cessation of hostilities with the MILF. CSOs had been officially represented on the Local Monitoring Teams established under the Cessation of Hostilities and also had their own parallel ceasefire monitoring process in Bantay Ceasefire (Ceasefire Watch). They had been praised by both government and the MILF as impartial in analyzing accusations of violations of the terms of cessation of hostilities (Steven Rood, 2005).

In September 2009, a large group of women and peace organizations submitted the Mindanao Women's Framework for Civilian Protection, invoking UNSCR 1325, and proposed the establishment of a Joint Civilian

Protection Authority with a 70 per cent female membership. Additionally, most government negotiators for the peace talks in 2008-2012 came from civil society, namely the peace and human rights movements (Reimann et al, 2012).

CSOs have a major role in the whole umbrella of peace work—not in peacekeeping and peacemaking but in the bigger gamut of peacebuilding which involves building structures, partnerships and relationships that address the root causes of conflict such as peace education and coalition-building (J.N Galace, personal communication, 29 December 2020). Women Engaged in Action on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (WE Act 1325) was launched on November 17, 2010 in Miriam College with Dr. Jasmin Galace as its first national coordinator. WE Act 1325 was launched as a national network of civil society organizations to serve as a primary civil society network that helps implement the NAP WPS. Civil society organizations, namely, Sulong CARHRIHL, Center for Peace Education-Miriam College, Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute (GZOPI) and Miriam College's Women and Gender Institute (WAGI) banded together to concretely bring [the NAP-WPS] to the women most affected by conflict situations in the country ("Shadow report," 2016).

As a result of the efforts of CSOs and support from negotiating parties, gender provisions in the 2014 Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro are explicit in every substantive issue area, including provisions for 5 per cent of official development funds to be set aside for women's programs, guarantees for women's political participation at local and regional levels, and economic programs for decommissioned female armed rebels (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.).

Issues and Challenges in Peacebuilding

Mindanao Conflict

The Mindanao Conflict has led to massive displacement, destruction of homes and infrastructure, protracted war between the government and the insurgents, weak state presence, provincial and municipal governments controlled by the political elite and clan wars (*rido*). Apart from these challenges, the violations of peace agreements through the years have led to mistrust or guarded optimism creating more divisions among separatist groups.

Although the BARMM was established in March 2019, violence has continued across Mindanao. In the first half of 2020 alone, 66,000 were displaced as a result of the conflict. The 2017 Marawi siege, a five-month battle between pro-Islamic State fighters and the Philippine military, destroyed much of the city and displaced 400,000 people (ACAPS, October 30, 2020).

The biggest obstacle in the peace process in Mindanao is not whether or not parties could reach an agreement but whether or not sustainable peace could ever be achieved. Such doubt has led to suspicion among the general Filipino populace. Another challenge is coming up with a detailed roadmap addressing the grievances of the Bangsamoro. Only with active support of the constituents of the warring parties and the national government could this be attained. Reaching a common ground for pursuing an "autonomy/sovereignty" track is also a hurdle demanding an openness to other workable solutions to address the problems of the Muslim minority that have worked out elsewhere. Although peace processes have produced good agreements, their effective implementation demands a level of monitoring best performed by a neutral third party (Bacani, 2005).

Communist Conflict

A challenge is the ongoing protracted war between the military and the left that began in the late 1960s and has led to massive extrajudicial killings and political oppression. Although membership of the latter has weakened, estimated to have dwindled to 4,000, encounters between the military and the NPA have spawned violence in different parts of the country.

Over 100,000 combatants and civilians have died in the conflict since 1969, despite multiple efforts for peace across administrations. In 1972 alone, when Marcos imposed martial law to quell opposition, state security forces persecuted individuals perceived to oppose government policies. A total of 3,257 extrajudicial killings and 737 enforced disappearances were registered, and approximately 35,000 were tortured and 70,000 incarcerated. Even as martial law ended in 1981, state violence has continued (Asia Foundation, 2017).

Peace negotiations have continued to fail because of the lingering doubts on the status and sustainability of ceasefire agreements with perceived violations on both sides. A broader challenge inherent in reaching peace irrespective of the political will among warring parties are divisions in both camps – with some communists uncomfortable with certain aspects of a deal with the Duterte government and the Philippine security forces reluctant to acquiesce to a deal seen as too conciliatory. Given the complex security challenges and the current state of COVID-19 in the country, it is unclear whether both sides would have the necessary staying power to get past the obstacles they face (Parameswaran, March 31, 2020).

Women in Peacebuilding

Profile of Women Peacebuilders

Women peacebuilders are composed of community women at the grassroots level and high-level academicians, and government and CSO leaders who have taken the cudgels for a successful peace process. In the 1990s, many of the local Moro and indigenous leaders were undergraduates steeped in peace education and advocacy. These community women in Mindanao engaged in resolving community conflicts and small-scale disputes. They participated in activities organized by local non-governmental organizations which work to mitigate clan-based conflict, provide support to people displaced by conflict, and train citizens in family-level dispute resolution." (Dwyer and Guiam , 2010). To cite, a number of Moro women, like Hadja Giobay Diocolano, signed an agreement with ACT for Peace Programme of UNDP. Diocolano was one of the few women MNLF combatants in the 70's but eventually became the chair of Kadtabanga Foundation (Sunstar, 2010).

Women in the Mindanao peace process come from different fields. They have provided leadership in crafting peace agreements and their implementing mechanisms. They have influenced the peace negotiations not only because of their substantive knowledge but also because they have technical expertise and connections to concerned constituencies (I.M. Santiago, personal communication, 1 December 2020).

For the past two decades, a considerable number of women peace advocates and key actors have been CSO leaders, university professors, academics, journalists/writers, lawyers, public servants, and corporate consultants. Many have post-graduate degrees abroad. Davao-based Irene Santiago is an international peace consultant and founder

of Mindanao Commission on Women (MCW), an NGO with Muslim, Christian and indigenous women as members (I.M. Santiago, personal communication, 1 December 2020).

Many highly accomplished academics in leading state and privately-owned universities and CSO leaders have served as women peace negotiators. Emily Marohombsar, a Maranao Muslim, is the first woman appointed as peace negotiator. She was the first and only female president of the Mindanao State University. She sat in the negotiations as a full member of the government panel and was joined by Irene Santiago in the five-member government panel during the time of President Arroyo (Santiago, 2015). Later, Professor Nieves Confessor was appointed chair of the Philippine Government Panel negotiating with the CPP-NDF-NPA in 2005-2010.

From the corporate sector, Annabelle Abaya, PhD, was appointed as secretary of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process in the Philippines in 2009. Using her vast experience and expertise in conflict resolution, she successfully reopened negotiations on multiple deadlocked fronts with the CPP, NPA, and NDF during her tenure (Inquirer, 2012). In 2010, Abaya turned over the leadership as Presidential Peace Adviser to Teresita Quinto-Deles. Deles made a comeback in OPAPP under Pres. Benigno Aquino, Jr. after her appointment as the first woman Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process in 2003 under President Arroyo. She served in 2005 and in 2010-2016. Jurgette Honcolada served the OPAPP under the leadership of Secretary Deles as member of the government peace panel for talks with the CPP/NDF/NPA. During her time, the new GPH panel sought a balance in terms of geography and gender: two out of five members were female; and three out of five came from the south (Deles, 2014).

In 2011, the MILF panel appointed two women, Bai Cabaybay Abubakar and Atty. Raissa Jajurie, as part of the Board of Consultants of the Bangsamoro. Bai Cabaybay Abubakar, a Maguindanaon, was the president of the Shariff Kabunsuan College in Cotabato City in 2011 (ABS CBN News, 2011). Raissa Jajurie, a Tausug lawyer and a known defender of Moro and Lumad rights, was the Mindanao coordinator of the Sentrong Alternatibong Lingap Panligal (SALIGAN), a non-governmental organization for alternative legal services. She co-founded Nisa Ul-Haqq fi Bangsamoro (Women for Justice in the Bansamoro), an organization engaged in improving the lives of grassroots women through trainings, community dialogues, researches, and policy advocacy (Peace Women Across the Globe, Million. Philippines, n.d.).

In 2012, Miriam Coronel-Ferrer led the Philippine government team in peace negotiations with the MILF. She was the first—and remains the only—female chief negotiator in history to sign a major peace accord in 2014 (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.; Deles, March 2014; Santiago, 2015). Yasmin Busran Lao, a scholar of Islamic jurisprudence, joined the peace panel and became the presidential assistant on Muslim affairs (Deles, 2014; Ferrer, 2015).

Women's CSOs provided recommendations to the track-1 process, drawing on information gathered and consensus opinions built in parallel CSO talks (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.) through WE Act 1325. Jasmin Nario-Galace was the executive director of the Center for Peace Education during this period (J.N Galace, personal communication, 29 December 2020).

In 2016, USEC Gloria Jumamil Mercado, MNSA, PhD became the chair of the Philippine Government Implementing Panel and the Undersecretary of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) under the Duterte Administration. She is the first female commodore and founding chair of the Women in National Development and Security (WINDS) (NDCP, n.d.).

In February 2017, although the peace talks with the MILF stalled and the ceasefire suspended, composition of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC) was 27 per cent women (four of the fifteen members). BTC was relaunched to revise the draft legislation translating the provisions of the peace agreement into law (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.).

Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) is the body tasked to govern BARMM until June 30, 2022. It plays a crucial role in Bangsamoro's continuing assertion of the right to self-determination. It has a total of 16 women or 16.33 per cent of the total 98 members. The 12 women appointees comprise a powerhouse cast, including four lawyers and two civil engineers. Four occupy key posts in BARMM, two, in the Cabinet-- Raissa Herradura Jajurie as minister for social services, and one, Aida Macalimpas Silongan, as minister for science and technology. Karon heads the RCWB while Laisa Masuhud Alamia is minority leader of the parliament (Arguillas, 2019).

Areas of Participation and Initiatives of Women in Peacebuilding

Mindanao Conflict

Women have engaged in three major and one in between tracks of peace in formal and informal interventions (Chang et al, 2015). The first track involves direct negotiations between representatives of warring parties. The second refers to activities with influential non-official persons on both sides. The third involves grassroots actors and activities on both sides. The track in between tracks 1 and 2, track 1.5, involves official and non-official representatives of warring parties taking place in informal settings in a personal capacity. Track 1.5 has been quite useful in settling differences between conflicting parties during coffee breaks or casual conversations in formal peace negotiations.

In Track 1, women's participation has evolved and progressed through the years. In 2010, Mindanao women did not have to ability to participate in Track 1 negotiations (Dwyer and Guiam, 2010). Nevertheless, in the same year, Miriam Coronel-Ferrer became the lone female in the five-member peace panel and chaired the Philippine government panel under President Benigno Aquino III in 2012. She was the first woman to be a signatory to a major peace accord with the MILF as chief negotiator (Santiago, 2015). In 2011, the MILF panel appointed two women, Bai Cabaybay Abubakar and Raissa Jajurie, as part of the Board of Consultants of the Bangsamoro (Buenaobra, 2011).

Women have served as "trust" brokers in the formal peace process. Women at the negotiation table have facilitated the understanding between the government and the MILF representatives. Moro women are better at preserving inter-ethnic alliances than men as conflict escalates (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.).

In formal peace negotiations between the government and the MILF, women represented 22 per cent of the total number of negotiators—two of the four government

negotiators, and 27 per cent of the total signatories to the final agreement. There were no women on the MILF side. Women served as advisors on both the government and MILF teams (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.).

In track 2, most local women peace activists have been involved in drawing on their personal and political convictions, courageously tackling questions of social justice, human rights, and gender-based violence (GBV). The same positive trend of increased women's participation and leadership can be seen in track 3. Women-led CSOs have closely monitored the substance of formal negotiations and ensured that negotiators advocate for the priorities of groups previously excluded from the process, including such issues as access to basic services, women's political and economic participation, and their protection from violence (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.).

To build public support, women's groups have conducted grassroots campaigns to gather input for the formal peace process, relay updates to the public, and lead extensive national consultations to ease community fears regarding specific provisions to the peace agreement (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.). Local CSOs have focused their attention on mitigating clan-based conflict, providing support to people displaced by conflict, and training citizens in small-scale dispute resolution with high levels of women's participation (Dwyer and Guiam, 2010).

Muslim women, in general, have been engaged in peacebuilding as "mothers of the nation" since women have a unique perspective on the human costs of conflict and often have an intimate view of the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on children. Suffering so much in war can push women to assert the necessity of non-violence (Santiago, 2015). Across the three tracks, women have served as negotiators, mediators, consultants, trainers, community mobilizers, or monitors of the normalization process such as the decommissioning of firearms (Ferrer, 2015).

Communist Conflict

Since the stalling of formal peace talks between the government and the CPP/NDF/NPA, no opportunity to incorporate women's participation in peace and security issues has been provided. In the protracted peace process with the CPP, gender has not been part of the formal agenda. In short, opportunities for gender equality dialogues have been curtailed (OPAPP, 2016).

Enabling and Constraining Factors in Peacebuilding

Enabling Factors

Enabling factors in women's participation and leadership in peace initiatives are resilience, capacity for organizing and network-building, women engagement in the informal and formal peace processes, and women leadership in key positions.

The resilience of women survivors has impelled them to set up CSOs that empower women through advocacy, literacy, and livelihood programs. Such has engendered the capacity for organizing and network-building. MCW, for instance, has advocated for a Mindanao peace agenda with a gender perspective eventually resulting in the formation of the Mindanao 1325 (Buenaobra, 2011).

Another enabling factor is the public leadership of women in peace negotiation process. Miriam Coronel-Ferrer (2020) shared the favorable conditions of her appointment as

chief negotiator were a product of time and cumulative reform initiatives. The persistence of the conflict with erstwhile separatist Moro liberation forces and the various communist groups in the country has made government realize and shift their perspective that the sustainable solutions can only be found by using broader human security lenses. Thus, expertise must come from professional fields other than from those with military backgrounds (M.C. Ferrer, personal communication, 18 December 2020).

Mindanao peace process has made women's participation possible because women peace leaders have ensured that peacemaking is understood not only about ending war but also about building peace through the transformation of the political, economic and social structures perpetuating injustice and deprivation. Peace has been pursued nationally and internationally using multiple tracks through CSOs, grassroots groups, and media—where women are significant actors. Religion and culture have not come in the way to achieve this end. Key actors have championed the role of women by using religion and culture, among others, as effective arguments for the inclusion of women (Santiago, 2015).

Constraining Factors

Major constraining factors in women's participation in the peace process are the diverse and limited concepts of human security, cultural stereotyping, and patriarchal practices.

The prevailing limited notion of security that only those in the midst of war and conflict are considered key players in WPS issues has constrained women's participation in the peace process (I.M.Santiago, personal communication, 1 December 2020). Another constraining factor is the sociocultural stereotyping of women as victims and uncritical advocates for peace. Hierarchy, patriarchy, gender bias, and lack of political will of the national leadership on valuing women and gender equality have constrained women's participation (Lao, Yasmin B., personal communication, 4 December 2020).

Influence of patriarchal practices precludes addressing peace and security issues, such as violence against women (JICA and GIWPS, 2016). Gender-based violence remains unaddressed in most peace negotiations and agreements (UN Women, (2012). Implementation of peace will remain lopsided in addressing its legal, social, and economic concerns if women's issues are framed in a manner replete with gender dynamics and power relations (Reinmann, 2014).

Outcomes and Impacts of Initiatives in Peacebuilding

The impact of peacebuilding initiatives in relation to the Mindanao and Communist conflicts lies in the substantial changes in the public leadership of women in all tracks of the peace process at all levels.

Key milestones have been achieved through the amended 2014-2016 NAP: inclusion of gender provisions in Philippine Government and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) peace agreement; first woman chief negotiator to sign the peace agreement with a rebel group; and the adoption of the first Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (RAP WPS) in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (Rallonzo, 2020).

Opening of avenues for women's participation in the different processes has raised awareness, especially within the MILF, on the importance of political participation of women (J.N Galace, personal communication, 29 December 2020).

The peace process in the Philippines has shown how local women have gained extensive experience as peace and change agents. Meaningful women's participation is evidenced by women survivors who set up organizations and associations of women advocates to address political subordination, gender-stereotyping, and violence against women. For instance, the MCW advocated for a Mindanao peace and development agenda from women's perspective. In 2010, Santiago of MCW provided gender training to members of the International Monitoring Team which has been tasked by both negotiating panels to monitor the ceasefire compliance, civilian protection in conflict areas, rehabilitation and development of affected communities, and socio-economic agreements between the government and the MILF (Buenaobra, 2011).

Other successful outcomes are women's participation and greater women leadership in track 1 peace negotiations. Among them are: Irene Santiago as member of the government peace panel negotiating with the MILF from 2001 to 2004, and as first chair of the panel implementing the Comprehensive Bangsamoro Peace Agreement; Prof. Nieves Confesor as chair of the government panel negotiating with the CPP-NPA-NDF from 2005 to 2010; Teresita Quintos-Deles appointed as presidential adviser on the peace process from 2010 to 2016; and Presidential Assistant on Muslim Affairs Yasmin Busran-Lao. Women served as heads of technical working groups on normalization and wealth-sharing, secretariat, and legal team. Two women, Jurgette Honculada and Lulu Tison, took part in the government peace panel for talks with the CPP/NDF/NPA, and a woman headed its secretariat (Deles, 2014).

Galace (personal communication, 29 December 2020) recounted an experience in one of their peace consultations prior to the 2010 formal peace negotiations with the MILF. Community women saved them in a situation wherein a university head declared women should not be involved in peacebuilding, as they were too emotional. The women went to the microphone one after the other and expressed their opposition to his declaration. They emphasized that nothing in Muslim teachings say that women were inferior and could not participate in decision-making.

Santiago (2015) noted that during the Mindanao women's peace summit in 2006, the MILF representative told the women gathered there that women had no role in public decision-making. But five years later, in 2011, he was proven wrong. The MILF appointed Raissa Jajurie as member of its Board of Consultants. She relates an interesting anecdote behind Jajurie's appointment: One day, she happened to be riding in a car with a member of the MILF. She told him she was interested in helping the MILF in the peace negotiations. Before long, the chairman of the MILF peace negotiating panel himself asked to speak with her. He explained that there was no injunction in the Qur'an against women taking leadership positions. Such incident shows how religion is no deterrent to the active participation of women in decision-making. The importance of building strategic alliances with men is also manifested in Jajurie's story. The coming together of women and peace groups "across the aisle" enabled dialogues forging commitment to advance WPS in the country.

Such strategy has implications on the following: levelling on the meaning of "meaningful political participation of women;" understanding of peace and security beyond just ending war; debunking of the "hierarchy of tracks" in peace negotiations; negating that

religion and culture are drawbacks to the peace process and cannot be utilized to further pursue peace; and concretizing the meaning of women leadership which does not mean putting women at the helm not because of their gender but because of their competence.

Best Practices in Peacebuilding

Best practices in women peacebuilding are: 1. utilization of early strategic alliances with men; 2. civilianization of the peace track and involvement of women's CSOs; 3. popularization and normalization of the positive aspects of culture and religion; and 4. practice of courage, competence, and creativity of women leaders.

Utilization of early strategic alliances with men

This practice has helped overcome stereotypes and changed power relations so that both men and women enjoy "parity of esteem." These alliances created a platform for conversations and dialogues to build solidarity among diverse men and women. Alongside this view, Elisabeth Siattum, Norwegian Special Envoy for the Philippine Peace Process, emphasized the following factors that helped in conflict resolution, particularly in Mindanao: 1. importance of dialogue; 2. long-term perspective; 3. parties involved own the process; 4. partnership is key; and 5. inclusivity (Siattum, 2015).

Civilianization of the peace track and involvement of women's CSOs

Such practices have led to the enhancement of national institutional mechanisms and "homes" or various platforms for women's participation and have helped concerned stakeholders to veer away from the usual notion that only those from the military or have military background can be effective in the peace process (Ferrer, 2015). WEAct 1325, composed of different women CSOs and NGOs spearheading the creation of the NAP WPS, is proof of the impact of building a sense of sisterhood among women. In the GPH panel for talks with the CPP/NDF/NPA, many members came from CSOs (Ferrer, March 2015). Politics and negotiating peace are so important that women should not be left out and excluded.

Popularization and normalization of positive aspects of culture and religion supporting women empowerment.

Popularizing and normalizing positive aspects of culture and religion supporting women empowerment have allowed greater acceptance of the women's participation and leadership (Ferrer, 2015). Rather than making them as deterrents for WPS implementation, culture and religion have been highlighted as bases for ensuring sustainable peace in society.

Practice of courage, competence, and creativity by women leaders

Women leaders have practised courage, competence, and creativity in peace advocacy and negotiation. Emma Leslie, director of the Cambodia-based Center of Peace and Conflict Studies, affirmed that women need to be prepared for the myriad of dynamics in the peace table. She commended the Philippines for two things: having the political will to locate and promote competent women into the process and "women bringing in other women;" and creative use of UNSCR 1325 in talking with the MILF to respect UNSCR 1325 and have more women in place.

Lessons Learned and Way Forward to Mainstream WPS

Mindanao Conflict

Mindanao insurgency has been a long journey for decades but sees the light of hope in addressing its economic, political and cultural implications. Rooted in the need for self-determination and sovereignty which the Bangasamoro lost in the course of Philippine history due to prejudices, injustice and human rights violation have been committed. Lessons learned in this long, arduous journey of peace with the Bangsamoro include: respect for diversity; competency of women at all levels of the peace process; women must be at all levels of peacebuilding; pragmatic moving away from traditional security; and leadership is key.

Respect for diversity

With diversity analysis apart from gender analysis, women need to carry through a gender agenda regardless of religion, ethnicity, social status, education, and ideology which is fundamental to peacebuilding. Just as men are not a monolithic race, so are women.

Competency of women in all levels of the peace process

Women must be competent in all levels of the peace process, both formal and informal processes, from tracks 1 to 3 of the negotiations. By including all women in training, planning, and implementation of various activities, they develop their expertise, prove their capabilities, and earn the respect of men (Ferrer, 2015). As Santiago shares, "I was not included in the peace negotiating table until I became an expert in ceasefire (I.M. Santiago, personal communication, 1 December 2020)."

Competence of educated women at the top, however, cannot be the sole basis of the success of peace talks. Grassroots leaders are competent. The basis of their competence is not their formal education but their community leadership experience and their indigenized culture and practices supporting the peace process. For instance, the babaylans during the pre-colonial Philippines were considered spiritual leaders of the barangays. In the North, peace pacts are led by women who are the bodong peace pact holders (M.C. Ferrer, personal communication, 18 December 2020). Additionally, there should be more *Hadjay Diocolanos*, Moro leaders from the ground who have given up their arms and have led sustainable peace initiatives.

Women must be at all levels of peacebuilding

Women must be in all peace and security platforms and spaces. "Women don't just bring women's perspective but bring the perspective of other sectors, because they are care-givers of children, parents, and families." (Y.B. Lao, personal communication, 4 December 2020)

Women are needed to keep peace by ensuring parties in conflict do not hurt each other, "make peace" which the peace negotiators and mediators do between parties of conflict, and build peace, which is a huge arena that addresses the root causes of violence through social structures and policy advocacy CSOs do (J.N Galace, personal communication, 29 December 2020).

Women from both parties of the negotiations are experts in coalition building. They have advocated for the inclusion gender-responsive provisions in the peace agreement. CSOs and grassroots women have been involved in the process. There has been greater participation of women in activities organized by local CSOs working to

mitigate clan-based conflict, provide support to people displaced by conflict, and train citizens in small-scale dispute resolution (Dwyer and Guiam, 2010).

Women's role in public decision-making and peace negotiation process has been championed by top-notched key players, such as Miriam Coronel Ferrer and Raissa Jajurie. Indeed, these top-notched women key players have been few. They, however, have become "powerhouse" influencers in highlighting gender issues and including gender perspective in the legislations of peace agreements.

Pragmatic moving away from traditional security

There must be a pragmatic moving away from traditional security to a broader view of peace and security which covers human security, where the focus in not just on the combatants but whole communities, has led to the interface of socio-economic, security, and political components in addressing the problem of violence (Ferrer, March, 2015). Ferrer said, "You can't really have a perfect agreement, but you make an agreement more imperfect if you don't have the women's perspectives in that agreement, or if you don't have their interests and welfare also at the back of your mind as you negotiate all the different components: political, social, economic, and cultural (Applebaum, 2016)."

Indigenized, community-driven initiatives are encouraged for gender-responsive local governance and collaborative politics that addresses the needs of the local community. At the same time, national and international interventions and funding support are needed to implement peace. Only then can robust economic recovery address poverty to achieve sustainable peace.

Leadership is key

Leadership change in the Bangsamoro has provided an opportunity to reinvigorate and seek new approaches to the peace process (Bacani, 2005). In the Bangsamoro peace process, MILF male leaders were open and supportive of the peace process, ready to listen and learn. Mohagher Iqbal, chair of the peace commission of the BTC, was a notable leader who knew his end-game of peace well and was determined to take all the risks to attain it (J.N Galace, personal communication, 29 December 2020).

Communist Conflict

While the peace process with the BARMM has seen more opportunities for greater self-determination and economic empowerment among the Muslims in Mindanao, failed negotiations with the CPP/NDF/NPA have taught some lessons: importance of peace as a strategic decision; need for more expert women in public leadership; and equal importance of tracks 1-3.

Importance of peace as strategic decision

If peace is the end-game and the goal for both warring parties, it is much easier to sit in the peace table. Good faith, trust, sincerity, political will, and a clear strategic goal for peace are important elements of a successful peace negotiation (J.N. Galace, personal communication, 29 December 2020; Y.B. Lao, personal communication, 4 December 2020).

Need for more expert women in public leadership

There is a need for more expert women in public leadership for all peace tracks. This does not mean simply substituting male leaders with females. Women leadership in public life must be normalized (M.C. Ferrer, personal communication, 18 December 2020). Women's participation alone does not guar-

antee gender-sensitive peace agreements. There must be leaders involved in the decision-making. In this regard, the NAP WPS plan should be legislated (J.N Galace, personal communication, 29 December 2020).

Equal importance of tracks 1-3

Tracks 1-3 are equally important for successful peace processes. It is imperative to reframe and move beyond Track 1- dominated negotiations and initiate backdoor informal advocacy with grassroots elders and armed groups. Peace process is not only about ending war but also about transforming the entire economic, political, and cultural relationships and systems to foster social justice and equality (Reinmann, 2014). Thus, even with failed peace negotiations of the top leaders and ceasefire violations, there is hope. Localized Peace Engagements (LPEs) are milestones that can be conducted where key stakeholders, including the rebels, can be provided with opportunities to be productive members of society again (Uy, 2020).

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Women have performed various roles that help foster peace and reduce tension among conflict parties. While they have never really given up their traditional roles as healers and caregivers, they have ably taken on new roles as dialogue facilitators and village patrollers.

Chapter 4
Case 3
Kingdom of Thailand



Peace and Security Situation

Brief Profile of Thailand

Thailand, formerly Siam, meaning Land of the White Elephant, is a Kingdom in Southeast Asia. It is bordered on west and northwest by Myanmar, on southwest by the Andaman Sea, on east and north east by Lao PDR, on southeast by Cambodia, and on south by the Gulf of Thailand and Malaysia. On the south, the country occupies a part of the Malay Peninsula. Thailand shares maritime borders with India, Indonesia and Vietnam (Thailand, 2021). Thailand is the only Southeast Asian country that was never taken over by a European power. This is the reason why Thais call their country *Muang Thai*, meaning Land of the Free. Its capital and largest city is Bangkok.

Thailand has an area of 513,120 sq km. It has an estimated population of 69,799,978 people (UN Population Division, 2019), 93 percent of whom are Theravada Buddhist and 5 percent, Muslim (United States Department of State, Office of International Religious Freedom, 2019). Official language is Thai (Thailand, 2021). Majority of Malay Muslims live in Southern Thailand or Pattani, comprising the border provinces of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and four Malay-speaking districts in Songkhla province (Hayipiyawong, 2016, p.2).

Pattani is home to a population of more than two million: 80 percent are ethnic Malay Muslims (Pattani Malays), the rest are mostly Thai Buddhists and Chinese (Abdulsomad, 2017, p.16). The Thai Muslim community in the country is divided into two groups: assimilated and unassimilated. The former is composed of Thai Muslims with similar culture to the Thai Buddhist ethnic group. They live everywhere in Thailand (Hayipiyawong, 2016, p.2). The latter is composed of Pattani Malays who live in Southern Thailand with different culture, language, and tradition from the former group.

Although Thailand is middle-income, the three provinces in the Pattani region are among the underdeveloped areas. Poverty is widespread and household income is below the average of rural Thailand (Abdulsomad, 2017, p.16; Melvin, 2007, p.17). Economic development in the southernmost provinces, also known as the Deep South, has been affected by the ethnic and religious conflict for more than a century. The conflict is concentrated in an area along the Thai-Malaysia border, where majority of the local population are ethnically Malay and Muslim (Burke, Tweedie, and Poocharoen, 2013, p.1).



Source: https://smallwarsjournal.com/sites/default/files/inline-images/thaiinsurgency1.jpg

The Armed Conflict

Nature, History, and Root Causes of Conflict

The conflict between Thailand and various Pattani Malay separatist groups can be traced back to more than a century ago, when the Anglo-Siamese treaty was signed

in 1909 between British and Siamese leaders (Abdulsomad, 2017, p.42). This treaty drew a border region between Pattani (then a sultanate) and the Malay states of Kedah, Kelantan, Perak, and Perlis. Under the treaty, the British turned over Pattani to Siam sovereignty. In return, Siam gave up its territorial claim over Kelantan and recognized British control over the other Malay states of Kedah, Perak, and Perlis (Hayipiyawong, 2016, p.3).

With the turnover, the Pattani people were forcibly assimilated into the Thai culture. Malays were taught Thai history in schools; Malay language (mother tongue for the majority in Pattani) was replaced with Thai as the official language. Malay culture and Islam were discouraged while Thai customs and Buddhism were seen as more developed. Thai Buddhists governed Pattani. These national policies created "unequal structures and power relations" among the different ethnic, social and religious groups in Pattani (Abdulsomad, 2017, p.42; Horiba, 2014).

Malay separatist groups opposed the Thai government policies and fought for independence but were suppressed by military responses from the state. The insurgency movement, which began in 2004, was based in Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat and the southernmost four districts in Buddhist-majority Songkhla province (Abdulsomad, 2017, p.10).

The early phase of the insurgency was focused on separating the Deep South from Thailand and rejecting the assimilation policies of the Thai state. Armed groups and fronts which made up the separatist movement included the Barisan Nasional Pember-Basan Pattani (BNPP), the Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN), and the Pattani United Liberation Organization (PULO) (Horiba, 2014).

The late 1960s saw a resurgence of Islam among Thailand's Malay Muslim community and further stoked the instability in the south. "This close interrelationship may have played a role in changing conflict identities from ethno-nationalism, which was at its peak from the late 1960s to the 1980s, to … more overt religious themes. Since the late 1970s, the violence in Pattani has increasingly been characterized as between Buddhists and Muslims rather than between ethnic Thais and Malays (Melvin, 2007, p. 20)."

Some analysts suggest that Islamist terrorist networks have played a role in reigniting the insurgency and altering the character of the conflict. But while the Pattani insurgents have adopted the language of jihad, they do not espouse a global or regional jihadist agenda (Melvin, 2007, p.25).

Even with the resurgence of Islam, religion is only a part of the Pattani conflict matrix. The complex nature of the conflict in the south is rooted in a variety of factors. Insurgent leaders cite long-running grievances of the Malay Muslim community with the Thai state. These include "systematic discrimination in local governance, political marginalization, forced assimilation to the national Thai identity, and abuses of the local population by security forces and state officials (Burke et al, 2013, p.2)." Melvin (2007, p.34) warns the decentralized nature of the insurgency, the rise of Islamist ideology, the Thai Buddhist mobilization in the South, and the lack of a clear and effective approach to the conflict from the side of the authorities suggest that the conditions are in place for a further rapid escalation of violence.

Effects of Conflict on Women and Children

More than 6,000 have died since the violence escalated in 2004. The violence came from all sides: insurgents attacked government

targets and civilians; Thai security forces were accused of rights abuses in counter-insurgency operations. The impact was not only the loss of lives. With the loss of every male head of household, the role of women dramatically shifted.

Between 2004 and 2017, about 19,516 violent incidents resulted in 6,653 deaths and 13,198 injured (Buranajaroenkij, 2018, p. 5). These violent incidents mainly occurred in Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and adjacent parts of Songkhla (Ganjanakhundee, 2020). Within the same period, 513 women were killed, 75 women maimed, and 1,704 injured as a result of shootings or bombings. Around 84.5 percent of the victims were male household heads with an average of three dependents per family (Buranajaroenkij, 2018, p.5). Between 2007 and 2017, 9,226 persons under the age of 25 lost a parent. Of this figure, around 200 persons lost both mother and father; 8,578 youth lost their father and 448 lost their mother (pp.5-6).

Although men were mainly the victims of violence, women bore several burdens in their households and communities. Women who lost their husbands were forced to earn a living. Women whose spouses and family members were charged with security-related offenses suffered separation from relatives who feared the authorities. Frequent visits from security officials were psychologically distressing for family members of suspects and former detainees. An average of three violent incidents per day disrupted women's sense of security and peace in their homes, places of worship, schools, markets, and hospitals (p.7).

Government Interventions to Resolve the Conflict

Hard line Policies

Among the Pattani Malays' enduring grievances against the Thai state were the latter's hard line policies to contain the insurgency in the south. These include the 1914 Martial Law Act first imposed in January 2004, then replaced in July 2005 by an emergency decree called the 2005 Executive Decree on Government Administration in States of Emergency (Buranajaroenkij, 2019, p.71).

Martial Law was re-imposed after the 2006 coup d'état. The 2008 Internal Security Act is now in force in all conflict-prone areas. Such laws allow military officials to hold suspects without charge for at least 37 days. Security officials insist such laws are necessary and help contain the violence. Local and international human rights organizations, however, maintain such laws perpetuate a reign of terror and injustice and have called for their repeal or revision.

Peace Talks

The Thai government initiated peace talks for the first time in 2013, during the administration of Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra. Three rounds of dialogue were held with the main separatist group BRN or National Revolutionary Front, which controls the majority of fighters on the ground, but talks failed to yield results. The failure was due to poor management of the talks and the political turmoil in Bangkok (Ganjanakhundee, 2020). In 2014, Yingluck was toppled by a group of generals sceptical of the peace efforts.

After the military took power, the military junta restarted the dialogue process with the coalition of the insurgent groups, Majlis Syura Pattani (MARA Pattani). In April 2016, the talks stalled after the two parties could not agree on the Terms of Reference for the process.

Women's groups pushed for a proposal for safe public spaces to be included in the

peace dialogue agenda in 2017. But the dialogue parties and the women's group had different concepts of what later became known as the "safety zone" initiative (Buranajaroenkij, 2018, p.8). Representatives of the separatists to the peace talks also changed several times since the talks began – from BRN to MARA Pattani during the 2015-2019 period, and then back to BRN in 2020 (Ganjanakhundee, 2020).

In January 2020, Gen. Wanlop Rugsanaoh, peace talks chief, said in a news conference in Bangkok that Thailand wanted to have bilateral talks first with the BRN, the most influential group. Other groups, he said, could join later (Ahmad & Lee, 2020, par.5). Wanlop and Anas Abdulrahman (also known as Hipni Mareh), a leader of the BRN, announced during a joint press conference in Kuala Lumpur on January 21 that the two sides were launching their first official direct talks in years to be facilitated by Malaysia.

Srisompob Jitpiromsri, director of a think tank known as Deep South Watch, however, said he did not know how far the peace talks could go. "We have to wait and see." (Ahmad & Lee, 2020, par.8). Bangkok would neither recognize the insurgents on an equal basis nor discuss political matters with them. The Thai government said it wanted peace but would not change its position (Ganjanakhundee, 2020). It has consistently rejected BRN calls to involve impartial mediators and international observers in the peace process and has long insisted on calling the conflict an internal domestic affair.

Role of CSOs in Peacebuilding

Civil society groups have been crucial in providing various support and services to victims and survivors of violence. Women volunteers, some of whom were victims of violence themselves, reached out to families struggling with the trauma of murders, rape, detention, or disappearance of family members. Other groups try to prevent retaliatory violence by building channels of communication between divided communities through dialogue and meetings.

For women, forming voluntary groups or joining relevant organizations helped ease the impact of violence. Self-help groups and an informal network provided mental and social healing, as well as a source of economic aid. The Peace Agenda of Women (PAOW) network, a major civil society organization (CSO), is composed of 23 women's groups. Established on April 28, 2015, it advocates for women's involvement in the formal peace process and for the cessation of violence by armed actors on both sides especially in public spaces, such as schools, hospitals, places of worship, and markets (Buranajaroenkij, 2019, p.71). The network developed a policy paper on safe public spaces and submitted it to negotiating parties upon the resumption of the peace talks in September 2016 (NP unpublished document).

PAOW is led by a core group of 30 women from the Network of Civic Women for Peace (NCWP). NCWP, also known as Women's Peace Network (WPN), has been an active proponent of safe public spaces to ensure the security of civilians from physical threat or acts of violence. It has an inclusive membership with members coming from various civil society backgrounds, including Muslims and Buddhists. It upholds the principles of impartiality, non-partisanship and inclusivity—principles considered as basic requirements in building a broad-based peace constituency. It has been engaged in peace-related activities since 2004 when a core group began its humanitarian work for victims of the armed conflict (NP unpublished document). It has gained support from inter-

national organizations, such as UN Women and Oxfam. It has worked closely with local CSOs and national NGOs, including media and academia, to support their activities (Buranajaroenkij, 2019, p.72).

NGO WePeace, founded in April 2004 by Pateemoh Pohitaedaoh, supports and empowers women affected by conflict and violence. She also established women volunteer groups to provide assistance to women survivors of violence. To date, NGO WePeace has more than 871 women volunteers from almost all villages in the southern provinces (Pohitaedaoh, 2020).

Women in Peacebuilding

Profile of Women Peacebuilders

Violence has transformed women in Thailand's Deep South from that of victim to that of a human rights defender or peace activist (Buranajaroenkij, 2019, p.70). Victims of violence include those whose immediate male family members were either killed or injured in violent incidents. Women who lost their husbands became breadwinners and assumed the role of their husbands as head of household (Sukka, 2014, p.26). Others cared for family members who were disabled by violence while others helped family members who faced charges of security offenses.

Women recognize the importance of being involved in solving the conflict, as it affects their livelihood (Sukka, 2014, p.3). They make up around 80 percent of those involved in peacebuilding projects (Buranajaroenkij, 2018, p.34).

Women engaged in peace work come from many sectors -- government, commercial, academic, not-for-profit groups, media, and ordinary people (pp.33-34). Most women joining women's groups come from middle-class families, university graduates from prominent educational institutions, and are well-connected with Bangkok and international organizations (Abdulsomad, 2017, p.57). These women tend to be leaders of organizations or well-known female activists. Women with high positions within the peace movement and who grew up outside of Pattani also tend to be more critical of the conservative gender order in Pattani.

Majority of the women are professionals who earn a living in other fields (p.48). Women who are not yet financially stable do not care much about politics. Economic stability is essential to women's political engagement (Abdulsomad, 2017, p.51).

This study was able to identify six women peace advocates: the late Jirapon Bunnag who played a crucial role in a secret peace talk between the government and separatist groups (Isranews Agency, 2015); Senior Justice Officer Wanrapee Kaosaard who has served as the lone woman member of the six member technical working group for peace dialogue panel; and Lamai Manakarn, Pateemoh Pohitaedaoh, Sunee Maha, and Suwara Kaewnuy who have served at the local level inter-agency coordination working group (Buranajaroenkij, 2018, p. 41).

Jirapon Bunnag was a driving force behind the national language policy – a joint project between the NSC and the Royal Academy to formulate national language policy aimed at changing the attitude of majority of the Thai people to accept the languages of other ethnic minority groups in the country. She died of cancer in 2015 (Isranews Agency, 2015).

Areas of Participation and Initiatives in Peacebuilding

Women have performed various roles that help foster peace and reduce tension among conflict parties. While they have not given up

their traditional roles as healers and caregivers, they have ably taken on new roles as dialogue facilitators and village patrollers.

Women have been seen as trust builders. Women's groups have reached out as impartial agents to earn the trust of different groups and conflicting parties. They have tried to reduce tension between security officials and local people by creating communication channels (Buranajaroenkij, 2018, p.36; Quinley, 2020; Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Thailand to the UN, 2020; Conciliation Resources, 2015).

Women with training from professional facilitators have promoted dialogues in their communities. Women's groups initiated dialogues between Buddhist and Muslim communities, so each side could vent their grievances and foster empathy and friendship (Buranajaroenkij, 2018, p.37; Quinley, 2020). Women have acted as connectors by promoting dialogues between officials and villagers. Through these dialogues, the latter have been able to understand the responsibility and mission of authorities while the former have come to know the villagers' problems and concerns during operations in the area (Buranajaroenkij, 2018, pp.37-38; Conciliation Resources, 2015).

A number of Buddhist and Muslim women in conflict areas have joined their village security force to help guard their community. Women have also served as liaison between officials and villagers to reduce tension and increase trust between conflicting parties (p.38).

Women have monitored and patrolled their communities to maintain peace. Some of them have joined the Thai army. A study reveals female rangers, through the use of soft power rather than coercive power, are able to build relationships of trust and achieve the mission of their organizations. Female paramilitaries have helped Thai authorities reduce the violence (Buranajaroenkij, 2014, p.134).

Women have been at the forefront of humanitarian assistance as healers and human rights defenders, offering help to victims affected by violence (Buranajaroenkij, 2018, p.34; (Pohitaedaoh, 2020; Quinley, 2020). Women's groups have been involved in the informal peace process as caregivers, educators, leaders and providers of various services (Abdulsomad, 2017, p.82; Conciliation Resources, 2015; Quinley, 2020).

Former Ambassador Nongnuth Phetcharatana, who has spent 32 years in peacebuilding, said female peacekeepers have a key role in engaging communities and establishing rapport with local women through their intelligence-gathering capabilities. Unlike their male counterparts, female peacekeepers are able to cross social and cultural boundaries and gather valuable information on security (Phetcharatana, N., personal communication, December 23, 2020).

The former director of the Devawongse Varopakarn Institute of Foreign Affairs also said, "Women are usually attentive and caring which makes them sensitive to underlying social dynamics. Female peacekeepers are usually capable of demonstrating empathy and understanding, which are greatly needed among local women, especially in Muslim society where women are prohibited from speaking to men." She explained a major task of female peacekeepers in the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan is conducting routine patrols for intelligence gathering, investigating and interacting with the locals.

Thailand has deployed 14 female peacekeepers in three UN peacekeeping operations.

The Thai government said it was fully committed to UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and would make every effort to expand the role and contribution of women in the UN peace keeping operations (Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Thailand to the UN, 2020).

Enabling and Constraining Factors in Peacebuilding

Enabling Factors

Conflict has necessitated women to provide care for the victims of violence but women have provided more than that. Suffering has given women a new status from that of a victim to an agent of social justice, because women have several advantages.

In conflict areas, women have more mobility and easier access to certain places than the men (Abdulsomad, 2017, p.82). Men expose themselves to higher risk if they actively engage in human rights advocacy (Buranajaroenkij, 2019, p.74). Women are able to engage various groups, even the hostile ones, and are highly committed to non-violent measures. Women are strongly motivated to restore security in their homes, farms, markets, hospitals, schools, and places of worship (Buranajaroenkij, 2018, p.45).

Women's ability to work with all actors and stakeholders has secured for them the trust of diverse groups – from the Thai government and its sympathizers to the resistance movement. As evidence, both government and resistance movement have become receptive to proposals of the women's movement to prioritize public safe spaces as a major agenda item in the talks (Buranajaroenkij, 2019, p.74; Pohitaedaoh, 2020).

Further paving the way for women's involvement in the peace process is the notion of women being *Muslimah* -- a good Muslim meant being a good mother, wife, and woman (Buranajaroenkij, 2019, p.73). Women's groups have been involved in the informal peace process because of the need for them to serve as caregivers, educators, leaders and providers of various services. Conflict has thrown women in their old roles but this brings new responsibilities when they lose their men in the conflict (Abdulsomad, 2017, p.82; Sukka, 2014, p. 11).

Experience of suffering has steered women to a new status -- from that of a victim of violence to an agent of social justice (Buranajaroenkij, 2018, p.10; Conciliation Resources, 2015; Sukka, 2014, p. 11; Quinley, 2020). Suffering has equipped women with knowledge and skills on non-violent action, dialogue facilitation, special laws in the area, international humanitarian law, and international human rights frameworks. With such knowledge and skills, they have been able to monitor cases of their husband or sons prosecuted on security charges (Buranajaroenkij, 2019, p.70). Knowledge of relevant laws and Thai language, aside from their own Melayu language, has enabled Pattani women to help others in need, champion human rights, and promote peace and reconciliation (p.74).

Relevant international and national laws and frameworks allowing women to champion human rights and promote peace and reconciliation are: CEDAW and its Optional Protocol, Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), certain constitutional provisions clearly stipulating equal rights of men and women, Gender Equality Act (GEA) 2015 that establishes the Committee to Promote Gender Equality (CPGE), and the 2017-2021 Women Development Strategy (WDG) (UN Women, 2020).

Another relevant national framework is the National Measures and Guidelines (NMG) on women, peace and security (WPS), Thailand's counterpart to the National Action Plan (NAP) on WPS of other countries. The NMG sets down an inter-departmental framework providing measures for adoption by relevant agencies to its operational plans and actions. It identifies the following key expected outcomes: 1. increased number of women's participation at all levels of peace process; 2. better protection of women in conflict-affected areas; 3. inclusive and participatory process for peace and security by CSO, religious leaders, community, and the public; 4. mechanism established for women's participation in conflict resolution and peace process; and 5. availability of central data base system on WPS (NP unpublished document).

Apart from the above mentioned frameworks, support and influence of international organizations have enabled the women's movement to negotiate for gender equality. Academic institutions have supported women's groups with empirical studies to shed light on women's voices and roles and their advocacy in the peace process (Buranajaroenkij, 2019, p.74).

Constraining Factors

Women have had to wage battle against a host of constraints, not least among them the ingrained links between religion and culture dictating how a good Muslim woman should behave in society. Other limitations are: military's role in defining the scope of the peacebuilding process; lack of unity among women's groups; and lack of resources, education and training of women.

The limited scope of the peacebuilding objective has contributed to the exclusion of women. Only main groups in the conflict were invited based on their assumed power to stop the violence. Women exclusion in the Pattani peace process reveals the dominance of patriarchal power structures (Abdulsomad, 2017, p.82).

Many global peace processes, including in Thailand, neglect women's security concerns, because they are seen as distinct from the security concerns of the main conflict parties. Women's security perspective is regarded as a view from below and seen as different from the state's security perspective, which is depicted as the view from above (Buranajaroenkij, 2018, pp.9-10).

Military's role in politics and institutions is another key factor in women's limited political participation. The Thai state has suppressed the conflict in the south with a heavy hand. Pattani has been a militarized area since 2004 with the declaration of martial law rule (Abdulsomad, 2017, p.24). To illustrate, in the recent round of peace talks, the government delegation was predominantly composed of male military officials. "The male dominance in the talks strongly indicates a problematic gender hierarchy, where individuals adhering to militarized masculinities are valued while people deemed to have feminine traits such as women and civilians are excluded (p.24)."

Military plays a key role in Thai politics. As of 2009, 18 military coups have taken place in Thailand. "Military masculinities are closely connected to unequal power relations, the glorification of violence, dominance of men and subordination of women (p.24)." Research shows societies with a strong culture of militarism and military masculinities are more likely to accept violence as a tool to exercise dominance.

Another main barrier to women's meaningful

participation is lack of unity within the women's movement (p.60). Division among women's groups is a reflection of the division in Thailand's civil society. Women's groups have failed to formulate any clear overreaching strategy and vision for advocating gender -inclusive participation. International and national funding for gender issues and women's rights suit the objective of many donors and several women's groups compete for it. Women's groups adopting the same objectives as their donors' to obtain funding are seen as mere tools of foreign actors (p.72). Meanwhile, women's groups accepting funding from the military regime are regarded as an extension of the government. They are seen as a direct threat by organizations that expose misconduct of government agencies. Top women leaders have failed to unite various groups. No link between two camps of women's groups seems to exist and communication between them is poor. Such factors have diminished the potential of a united coalition negotiating for women's inclusion in the peace process (p.61).

The conflict has polarized civil society -- groups seen as loyal to the government are on one side while organizations close to the Pattani Malay population are branded as having ties with the independence movement. The latter are often suspected and intimidated by state agents. Different ethnic, social and political groups seldom work together, other than in some projects initiated by foreign donors (p. 61).

On the individual level, a key constraint is the lack of resources. Women have to balance multiple responsibilities limiting their engagement in civil society (p.32). As noted earlier, women who are not yet financially stable cannot afford to be politically involved full time. Economic stability is a prerequisite for women's political engagement.

Women's participation in high-level negotiations is also hindered by their lack of education and training, despite their experiences and knowledge about the conflict (Abdulsomad, 2017 p.32; "Women's leadership", 2018).

Phetcharatana (2020) said biases that perpetuate gender inequality hampered women's participation in peacebuilding. Women are oftentimes seen as victims and uncritical advocates for peace (Phetcharatana, N., personal communication, December 23, 2020).

A key cultural barrier is the idea of a "good" Muslim woman. Being a "good" mother, a wife, and a woman is a way of controlling women and preventing them from taking an active role in peacebuilding (Buranajaroenkij, 2019, p.73; "Women's leadership", 2018; Sukka, 2014, p. 24). Women cannot engage in social activism because a good woman is supposed to be docile to her husband. Her priority is to take care of the needs of the household and look after the family. The men, as the main breadwinners, are the leaders of their families. In order for men to exercise their leadership role, women have to become their followers (Abdulsomad, 2017, p.65; "Women's leadership", 2018; Neelapaijit, 2009, p.18).

Women have restrained themselves from taking active roles in the peace process because of their understanding of religious and socio-cultural norms (Sukka, 2014, p.32). Challenging a religious is tantamount to directly challenging the religion (Abdulsomad, 2017, p.67). Strong links exist between religion and culture making it difficult to distinguish the two (Abdulsomad, 2017; Sukka, 2014). Such links have profound implications on the perceptions of women and men about themselves and their role in society (Abdulsomad, 2017, p.67).

Outcomes and Impacts of Initiatives in Peacebuilding

Outcomes and impacts of women peacebuilding in the informal peace process are: 1. securing the trust of diverse groups and their receptivity to proposals of women's movement; 2. Change in negative attitude and behavior of women; 3. reducing tension and violence, and promoting understanding between conflicting parties.

Trust in and receptivity of conflicting parties to proposals of women's movement.

Women have been able to secure the trust of the government and sympathizers to the resistance movement owing to their ability to collaborate with diverse groups. Such trust has allowed the government and resistance movement to become receptive to proposals of the women's movement to prioritize public safe spaces as a major agenda item in the talks.

Change in negative attitude and behavior of women

Knowledge and skills on laws and other issues relevant to the armed conflict and peace process have transformed submissive and fearful women into assertive defenders of their family members and able facilitators of dialogues between military and villagers.

Reduction of tension and violence, and promotion of understanding

With their ability to facilitate dialogues, women have been able to reduce tension and promote understanding between the military and villagers, thus averting the incidence of violence.

Best Practices in Peacebuilding

Women's groups have pushed their agenda through ways that have avoided unnecessary resistance from men. The list below covers the range of strategies that have worked for them.

Avoidance of focus on women's participation

Some CSOs in the southern part of Thailand apply the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) mainly to advocate an end to violence against women but not to promote women's participation in politics and the peace process. This indicates women groups' capability to use a compromise approach to avoid unnecessary resistance from men (Buranajaroenkij, 2019, p.75).

Strategically contextualized campaigns were recommended in pushing for women's human rights in the south. As Fareeda Panjor, a lecturer at the Center for Conflict Studies and Cultural Diversity at Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus said in Buranajaroenki's study: "If women's groups focus on recognition and enhancement of women's participation, it is likely to cause social friction (p.76)."

Avoidance of gender stereotype

To include the impact of the conflict on women's lives in the agenda of peace dialogues, women's groups in Thailand highlight their rights as political subjects rather than emphasize the feminine traits of motherhood. Studies show not using a gender stereotype leads to greater legitimacy in the peace processes (Buranajaroenkij, 2020, p. 10).

Watching the language

Rosida Pusu, chair of the Southern Women Overcoming Violence Network, said her group avoids using gender terms and feminist language. (p.15) Some organizations deliberately refrain from using the terms "feminism" and "gender" in their advocacy (Buranajaroenkij, 2019, p.76).

Among Muslims in the Deep South, promoting women's leadership can be controversial, as majority of Muslims believe that only men can be leaders. Thus, it is important to adjust the language. For example, local groups avoid mentioning "gender equality." Instead, they use the term "social justice" in their advocacy (Buranajaroenkij, 2020, p.16).

Focus on common issues
Championing issues of public concern also helps make dominant actors and other women more receptive to demands and proposals by women's groups. Public issues could include education, the environment or politics where women highlight issues that affect all sexes and marginalized social groups – and are not limited merely to issues that affect women (Buranajaroenkij, 2019, p.76).

Stress on skills, peacebuilder image
Women's organizations and peace movements in the southern provinces emphasize developing the knowledge and skills necessary to promote social justice and security in everyday life instead of highlighting the number of women in the peace process (Buranajaroenkij, 2019, p.76).

PAOW with NCWP has deliberately shifted the image of women from that of a victim of violence to that of a peace activist to promote them as potential actors for peacebuilding (Buranajaroenkij, 2020, p.8). It advances its peace builder role to stakeholders and the public through various channels, such as hosting a local radio program, producing news reports for television programs on the public broadcasting agency, and engaging in activities organized by the government.

Phetcharatana considers women peacekeepers' ability to build trust in areas of conflict as best practice. Qualities, such as integrity, situational awareness, and humility are instrumental in facilitating and building trust, "Peace is a process rather than a goal. We need to bear in mind that building peace has building trust as its core. It takes time and persistent work to strengthen relationships and identify solutions towards reconciliation (Phetcharatana, N. personal communication, December 23, 2020)."

Keeping men informed
Women's groups extend their network by forming alliances with powerful male figures (e.g. religious leaders, politicians, and social activists). They keep men informed about the goals and objectives of their activism and exchange ideas with them to improve their network. Keeping potential actors informed is important and can reduce potential resistance (Buranajaroenkij, 2019, p.76; Pohitaedaoh, 2020).

Lessons Learned and Way Forward to Mainstream WPS

Women's participation in the peace process in the Deep South has yet to become the norm because of ingrained sociocultural conventions. Also, other issues need to be addressed: notion of security which tends to emphasize security only from a military perspective; gender stereotypes; and involvement of a partisan mediator.

Decentralization of administrative power over the south
A key factor for the success of the peace process is Bangkok's willingness to accept the decentralization of administrative power over the south (Ganjanakhundee 2020). Another critical element to fruitful peace talks is the broker. Malaysia should be regarded as a stakeholder, not a mediator. Malaysia has never been non-partisan. Malaysia has brought the insurgents to the negotiating table. Many insurgents with arrest warrants and bounty on their heads in Thailand have

sought shelter in Malaysia. Some even hold dual nationality. (Ganjanakhundee, 2020).

Recognition of women's issues as political

Every party must recognize and agree the issue of security is more than just a military dimension. All parties must recognize women's issues are political. Women's issues are overlooked in peace talks that emphasize security from the military perspective. Women's concerns are usually connected to the well-being and safety of their family and community. Such private issues tend to be regarded as apolitical and therefore irrelevant to political negotiations (Buranajaroenkij, 2018, p. 45).

Proper implementation of national frameworks and guidelines to ensure women's participation in the peace process

The Thai government has adopted a number of frameworks and guidelines on WPS and gender equality, including the NMG, WDG (2017-2021), and National Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDP) 2017-2021 that incorporates guidelines on gender equality and women empowerment (PeaceWomen, 2020). However, it has yet to properly implement such frameworks and guidelines to realize women's meaningful participation in both the formal and informal peace process.

Provision of education and training to women

Women's organizations and other institutions should provide training to develop knowledge and skills on peace, security and gender to diverse groups of women. A critical mass of skilled and knowledgeable women in peacebuilding is essential to the visibility and recognition of women as active participants in the peace process (Buranajaroenkij, 2018, pp.45-46).

Cultural sensitivity and contextualization of feminism

Engendering peace processes needs to be sensitive to the culture and to the ways in which gender equality is understood by stakeholders. In order for gender awareness and gender equality to be accepted by both men and women, each country needs to develop its own version of feminism (Buranajaroenkij, 2020, p.17).

Strategic plans and actions in women peacebuilding

Women's peace networks need to strategize their plans and actions to be better able to challenge male dominance and avoid the gender traps of token participation and male resistance (p.18).

Avoiding the use of a gender stereotype as a best practice promotes greater legitimacy in the peace processes (p.10). Strategically contextualized campaigns have been recommended. Women's groups focusing on recognition and enhancement of women's participation is likely to cause social friction (Buranajaroenkij, 2019, p.76). It may also be prudent to adjust the language, for example, using the term social justice in place of the term gender equality.

It is important to keep the momentum of social pressure on the inclusion of women's groups and their agenda in negotiations to strengthen their legitimacy, support and power (Buranajaroenkij, 2018, p.48). Women must continue building on-the-ground support networks in case of a need for social pressure through mass action to raise public awareness and to get their voices and interests heard and acknowledged.

"Peace is not an agreement, but a process. In this respect, we need to focus on promoting and sustaining a constructive social dynamic that promotes engagement between and within conflicted groups and communities. Individuals from different walks of life need to be ensured of participatory peacebuilding efforts through a broad consultative process (Phetcharatana, N. personal communication, December 23, 2020)."

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Women across the three countries have been accorded limited space in formal peace negotiations. Nevertheless, ingenious and resourceful as they are, they have been able to optimize such limited space to advance the interests and needs of women affected by the armed conflicts. Outside the formal peace process, they have broadened the available space and found other avenues for their engagements.

CHAPTER 5
Patterns and Trends Across the Three Countries



Peace and Security Situation

Ongoing armed conflicts highlight the unending struggle of marginalized groups.

Across the three countries of Myanmar, Philippines, and Thailand, the ongoing armed conflicts between the government and rebel forces highlight the longstanding and often protracted struggle of marginalized groups towards self-determination, self-rule, autonomy, secession, equitable distribution of wealth, and even the overthrow of legitimate democratic government. Such struggle spans decades for various ethnic minority groups in Myanmar, Moros, and ideologically (Marxist/Maoist) indoctrinated rural poor in the Philippines, even as the struggle of the Moros can be traced back to centuries under the Spanish rule. The struggle of the Malay Pattani in southern Thailand is relatively recent, less than two decades, even as their marginalization started more than a century ago with the signing of a treaty between British and Siamese leaders turning over the then Sultanate of Pattani to Siam sovereignty and forcibly assimilating the Malay Pattani into the Thai culture.

Armed groups, such as the EAOs (Myanmar), the MILF/MNLF and NPA (Philippines), and MARA Pattani and BRN (Thailand) supposedly represent and wage war on behalf of these marginalized groups. Ironically, there have been reports about these same armed groups perpetrating violence and preying on the very people they are supposed to protect and fight for (Myanmar).

Political and economic control over territory complicated by sociocultural factors serves as main driver of conflicts.

Political and economic control over territory, including its people and rich natural resources, located mainly in border-states or –region (Myanmar, Thailand, and Philippines), countryside, rural or depressed areas (Philippines), can be considered the root cause or main driver of armed conflicts, even as ethnic-religious hegemony, exclusion or violent extremism further fueled and exacerbate such conflicts. Complicated by various sociocultural gender norms, expectations, and stereotypes (across the countries), inter communal or clan disputes (Myanmar and Philippines), or one-sided violence (Myanmar), the conflicts remain unabated and continue to cause destruction on the individual and communal life and property of the civilian populations.

Devastating effects of armed conflicts are similar across countries.

Devastating effects of armed conflicts on women and children across the countries include indiscriminate shootings and bombings on civilian population, killings, physical abuse, mass displacement, forced relocation, family separation and loss or disappearance of family members, loss of livelihood, sexual and gender based violence, forced labor, human trafficking, poor living conditions in refugee camps, lack of access to basic needs and services, diseases, and mental health problems. Women and children bear the brunt of such effects, even as the men become victims of violence as well. Countless documented and undocumented human rights violations directed against hundreds and thousands of women and children have been committed with impunity by armed actors, including militias or vigilante groups, on both sides.

Government peacebuilding initiatives vis a vis UNSCR 1325 are inadequate.

Concerned governments have initiated measures to resolve the conflicts, such as declaring bilateral ceasefires (Myanmar and

Philippines) and peace talks (across three countries) with concerned armed or insurgent groups. Unfortunately, violations of ceasefire agreements by government and rebel troops and stalling of peace negotiations owing to disputes among stakeholders regarding peace process frameworks as well as provisions and principles of peace negotiations contributed to the worsening instead of resolving and mitigating the effects of the conflict.

Concerned stakeholders have expressed openness to settle differences and move the peace process forward, even as governments and rebel forces have remained unrelenting and continued to posture hardline positions on certain issues, such as terms and conditions on the peace process (Myanmar and Philippines), government labelling of rebel forces as terrorists (Arakan Army in Myanmar and NPA in the Philippines), and rejection of BRN call for impartial mediators and international observers in the peace process (Thailand).

Meanwhile, government initiatives vis a vis UNSCR 1325 can be considered as relatively inadequate. Of the three countries, only the Philippines has an NAP on WPS interfaced with the Magna Carta of Women, PDPlan 2011-2016, and Women's EDGE plan. It is now in the process of working on the implementation plan for the NAP.

Myanmar has no NAP on WPS but has the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (NSPAW) that provides for women's participation in decision making on various social issues at all levels, even as it has gaps, including lack of an implementation plan. Also, delegates to the formal peace process issued a commitment allocating 30 percent quota for women's participation at all levels. Women's groups used the NSPAW as leverage to advocate for women's participation in the peace process. The allocation of the 30 percent quota was an outcome of such advocacy.

Thailand has no NAP but is party to the CEDAW and has the National Measures and Guidelines (NMG) on WPS. Women used the CEDAW to promote women's human rights and call for a stop to violence against women in conflict areas. However. the NMG, has yet to be properly implemented and used as leverage of women to advocate for their inclusion in the formal peace process.

Local CSOs play varied roles vital in peacebuilding.

Across the three countries, CSOs, including women's CSOs, have played varied roles vital in peacebuilding, despite limited space accorded them in the formal peace process. CSOs limited participation includes as observers and technical advisers to stakeholders, for instance, as representatives of EAOs in the Myanmar peace process. Outside the formal peace process, CSOs varied roles are as advocates, alliance builders, educators or capacity builders, communicators, community facilitators and mediators (across the three countries), unofficial monitors of ceasefire or peace agreements (Myanmar), and providers of support services and humanitarian aid (Philippines and Thailand).

Particular to Myanmar women's CSOs is their role as researcher and documenter. They document human rights violations, such as rape and torture, committed by armed actors, and disseminate and project such documentation nationally and internationally. They continue to monitor, docu-

ment, and publish the progress of the 30 percent quota for women's participation in formal peace dialogues.

Women Peacebuilders and their Role and Participation in Peacebuilding

Women peacebuilders come from diverse backgrounds.

Women peacebuilders at the national and local levels come from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, including education and social class (across the three countries). In the formal peace process, however, women who are highly educated, well-connected in society, and founders and leaders of women's organizations and alliances are able to participate, even as some were former student activists, rebel soldiers, and victims of armed conflicts themselves (Myanmar and Philippines). In the Philippines, mainly women academics and professionals are at the forefront of high profile peace negotiations.

Women remain underrepresented or unrepresented in formal peace negotiations.

Women have remained underrepresented or unrepresented in formal peace negotiations across the three countries. In Myanmar, over the four rounds of the UPC/21 CPC, percentage of women delegates straddled between 13 percent and 22 percent, still far from reaching the 30 percent quota. In the Philippines, in peace negotiations between the government and MILF, 22 percent of negotiators were women and 27 percent of total signatories were women. But these women were mainly on the government side and none on the MILF side. In Thailand, over the three rounds of formal peace talks, only armed actors and no women were allowed to participate in.

Women advance WPS amidst limited space in formal peace process.

Women across the three countries have been accorded limited space in formal peace negotiations. Nevertheless, ingenious and resourceful as they are, they have been able to optimize such limited space to advance the interests and needs of women affected by the armed conflicts. Outside the formal peace process, they have broadened the available space and found other avenues for their engagements.

In formal peace negotiations at the national or union level, women have served as negotiators, facilitators or mediators, technical advisers, observers, witness signatories but are not allowed to take part in decision making. In the Philippines, one woman became the first woman signatory and chief negotiator to a top level peace agreement between the government and the Moro rebels.

To address such lack of decision making power, particularly in Myanmar, the women have utilized their cordial relationships with male delegates to adopt policy recommendations on gender inclusion in peace process frameworks. They have conducted back channel discussions with concerned stakeholders simultaneous with the ongoing dialogue and communicated to other women on the ground the progress of peace negotiations and stances of stakeholders on issues towards a more informed advocacy.

At the local or community level, particularly in Thailand, women with training from professional facilitators have promoted dialogues in their respective communities. Seen as trust builders, they have served as facilitators of community dialogues between Buddhists and Muslims, or government officials and villagers. Similarly, in the Philippines, seen as mothers of the nation, women have assisted

in conflict resolution in small scale disputes and in mitigation of clan-based conflicts.

Women conduct varied and vibrant peacebuilding initiatives in the informal peace process.

Outside the formal peace process, women have engaged in advocacy, capacity building, alliance building, research and documentation, information and communication, monitoring of ceasefire or peace agreement compliance, early warning system, and provision of humanitarian aid. Some women have joined the military and have been sent as part of the UN international peacekeeping mission. Knowingly or unknowingly, they have used their socio-culturally constructed roles, such as homemakers, caregivers, servers at gatherings, and others, to their advantage.

In Myanmar, women's CSOs have convened peace forums to discuss among themselves gender related issues in armed conflicts, formulate policy recommendations, and submit such recommendations to political dialogues. They have conducted tea break advocacy wherein they convinced concerned stakeholders or dialogue delegates to adopt gender inclusive policy recommendations while serving tea during breaks. They have identified champions or progressives in government and parliament to support and push forward conflict affected women's interest and needs in the peace process.

At the grassroots or community level, women in Myanmar have carried out indigenous early warning practices to mitigate the effects of the conflict on the community and unofficially monitored compliance of armed actors to the NCA.

In Thailand, women have monitored and patrolled their communities to maintain peace. They have gathered intelligence for security purposes, served as connectors between officials and the villagers, and assisted in providing humanitarian aid to victims of the conflict. Some have joined the Thai army and have been sent as part of the UN international peacekeeping mission.

In the Philippines, women have identified and enhanced early strategic alliances with men to push forward women's agenda in the peace process as well as assisted in the rehabilitation and development of conflict affected communities, even as they engaged in providing assistance to displaced people.

Enabling and Constraining Factors in Peacebuilding

Personal agency of women, international and national frameworks, and support from local and international communities enable peacebuilding.

Personal agency refers to the totality of one's qualities to directly control events in one's life (Bandura, 2001). Women's individual qualities as trust builders, able servers and workers, ability to establish cordial relationships or strategic alliances with the men, and conviction to take control of their life in peace and security have facilitated their peacebuilding activities. Women in Myanmar have rallied male friends and delegates to support and adopt their policy recommendations while serving tea during breaks. In the Philippines, women have tapped their established alliances with men to push forward women's agenda in the peace process. In Thailand, with their ability to build trust, collaborate, and engage with diverse stakeholders, women have been able to make the government and the resistance movement responsive to their proposals.

Women have used international frameworks, such as the UNSCR 1325, CEDAW

(Myanmar and Philippines), and national plans, such as the NAP on WPS (Philippines), and the NSPAW and 30 percent quota (Myanmar), as leverage to advocate for women's participation or gender inclusion in the peace process. In Thailand, wary of causing social friction, women have utilized the CEDAW to advocate not for women's participation in politics and peace process but for women's human rights, including an end to violence against women.

Support from concerned sectors outside the conflict areas and the international community have served as impetus for women to continue and sustain their advocacies for conflict affected women's interests and needs and project their plight at the national and international levels (across the three countries).

Discriminatory gender norms, patriarchal power structures, and biased personal perceptions and attitudes constrain peacebuilding.

Sociocultural constraints include the perceptions that security is about war and war is the domain of men. Therefore, the issue of peace and security is the men's concern and beyond the women's realm. Also, peace negotiations require certain knowledge and expertise. Therefore, poorly educated and with nothing to contribute technically, women, who are mainly in the grassroots and in conflict affected areas, are kept from participating in such negotiations. Only highly educated and professionally trained women, well connected in society, have the leverage to take part but are, nevertheless, kept from decision making.

Discriminatory gender norms, expectations, and stereotypes relegate and confine women to the home and keep them from taking part in the public sphere. Women are supposedly docile, obedient and acquiescent to the husband and responsible for taking care of the household, including children, parents, and in laws. Men serve as head and breadwinner of the family or clan and leader of the community. As head, breadwinner, and leader, men have the sole power and authority to make decisions for the family, clan, and the community.

Societal structures, influenced by deep-seated sociocultural discriminatory gender norms, expectations, and stereotypes, merely condone or reinforce male domination in the private and public spheres, specifically in politics. Such patriarchal power structures accord limited space for active women's participation. In Myanmar, for instance, certain government posts are suitable only for men as stipulated in the constitution. In the Philippines, relatively strict division of labor exists in the private and public spheres, including peace negotiations. There is high level of insecurity and personal threat for women participating in official peace negotiations. In Thailand, the narrow scope of the peace process framework only allows the participation of warring parties, with their assumed power to stop violence, in the negotiations, thus contributing to women's exclusion.

Just as women's personal characteristics have facilitated their peacebuilding activities, so also biased personal perceptions and attitudes have constrained other women from engaging in peacebuilding. Influenced by discriminatory gender norms and expectations, fearing community reprisals and censure, and lacking in proper education and training, grassroots women have refrained from getting involved and participate in peacebuilding activities.

Dynamics within and among women's CSOs or movements constrain peacebuilding across the three countries as well. Differences in approach and strategies, including

ideological and theoretical frameworks, and competition for funds among women's CSOs hamper work in WPS.

Significant Structural and Sociocultural Gains in Peacebuilding

Women peacebuilders have been able to achieve relatively modest but significant structural and sociocultural gains in relation to WPS in their respective countries given their various initiatives amidst formidable challenges.

Inclusion of women, gender-friendly provisions, women empowerment, and raising of gender related critical issues in peace process as structural gains

Notable structural gains across the three countries are inclusion of women in peace negotiations, albeit with limited role; empowerment of women, specifically at the grassroots level or conflict affected areas, to actively participate in peacebuilding outside the formal peace process; and raising and discussion of critical issues, including roots of conflict and women's human rights, needs and interests, in formal peace negotiations.

In Myanmar and Philippines, a crucial structural gain is the inclusion of gender friendly provisions in the peace process frameworks and agreements. Specific to the Philippines are the government's issuance of EO 865 mandating the creation of the NSC WPS and the adoption of the first WPS regional action plan in the ARMM.

Changed mindsets, attitudes, and behaviors as sociocultural gains

Socioculturally, an important gain in Myanmar is the changed mindsets of grassroots women on the peace process and their ability to participate in the political sphere.

Meanwhile in Thailand, a vital gain is the changed perceptions and attitudes of concerned stakeholders in government and resistance movement on the women's movement allowing them to become more responsive to the latter's proposals. Also in Thailand is the changed attitude and behavior of women from being submissive and fearful to being assertive defenders of their family members and able facilitators of dialogues between military and villagers. In the Philippines, MILF leaders, with increased awareness of the importance of women in the peace process, became open to appointing women to leadership positions in the BARMM.

Best Practices in Peacebuilding

Best practices of women in peacebuilding are in line with their initiatives in advocacy, capacity building, alliance building, and early warning system.

In advocacy, best practices are:

In Myanmar

Rallying male delegates to support women's agenda in the peace process while serving tea during breaks;
Identifying champions in government and parliament;
Building and utilzing cordial relationships with male delegates to adopt their policy recommendations; and
Projecting the plight of women and children in conflict affected areas based on well researched evidence to the international community.

In the Philippines

Utilizing early strategic alliances with men;
Civilianizing peace track and involvement of women's CSOs;
Popularizing and normalizing positive aspects of culture or religion in support of women's participation in public decision-

making; and
Practising courage, competence, and creativity by women leaders.

In Thailand

Watching language used: refraining from using terms that seemingly offend the sensibilities of the men, such as feminism and gender equality; using terms such as social justice and women's human rights instead of women's participation and gender equality;
Keeping men informed about goals and objectives of women's movement; and
Utilizing all available communication channels to build peace among concerned stakeholders or conflicting parties.

In capacity building, the best practice across the three countries is focusing on building the capacities of women at the grassroots level in relation to peacebuilding. It is the women (and men) at the grassroots, in conflict affected areas who are in desperate need of education and training in order to be empowered to get involved in peacebuilding for their own good and the good of their families and communities.

In alliance building, the best practices specifically in Myanmar are knowledge management and resource sharing. In early warning system, the best practice, also specifically in Myanmar, is employing indigenous practices in alerting villagers on looming armed encounter in order to mitigate the effects of the conflict.

Lessons Learned and Way Forward to Mainstream WPS

Key lessons and way forward to mainstream WPS across the three countries underscore the importance of as well as the urgency of effectively responding to the following issues: 1. Ownership of peace process; 2. Appropriate, acceptable, and applicable peacebuilding strategies and initiatives vis a vis diverse stakeholders and contexts; 3. enhancement of best practices, especially indigenous; 4. institutionalization of best practices; 5. personal and collective agencies of women peacebuilders; 6. countering of sociocultural gender norms, expectations, and stereotypes; 7. contextualization of gender concepts and frameworks in particular countries; 8. transformation of patriarchal structures; and 9. building on and sustaining significant gains.

Ownership of the peace process

Ownership of the peace process by women stakeholders at all levels is crucial towards building sustainable peace. Ownership requires recognition, acknowledgment, and lived experience of the individual and communal benefits of the peace process by the women, specifically those directly affected by the conflict.

Acceptable, appropriate and applicable strategies and initiatives

Certain contexts require certain acceptable, appropriate and applicable peacebuilding strategies and initiatives. It is crucial to determine and employ acceptable, appropriate and applicable strategies and initiatives in dealing with diverse stakeholders and responding to diverse contexts to support and advance women's participation in peace and security. A set of strategies and initiatives may be acceptable, appropriate and applicable to certain stakeholders and contexts but may not be so to another.

Enhancement and institutionalization of best practices

Enhancing best practices, especially indigenous, of women peacebuilders ensures that a substantial part of the engagement is done. Institutionalizing such enhanced best practices completes the engagement and ensures the sustainability of the gains resulting from such engagement.

Personal and collective agencies of women in peacebuilding

Underlying all the best practices of women in peacebuilding are the personal and collective agencies of the women, including their self confidence, conviction that they can influence the peace process, trust and credibility they have built with other stakeholders, and their courage, inner strength, competence, resiliency, ingenuity, resourcefulness, and common vision of a gender inclusive peace process, in order to effectively respond individually and communally to particular situation or challenge and direct the course of their life. Enhancing personal and collective agencies of women (and men), especially at the grassroots, in relation to WPS through various capacity building and other related activities is imperative.

Countering of discriminatory gender norms, expectations, and stereotypes

Countering sociocultural discriminatory gender norms, expectations, and stereotypes impeding women's participation in peace and security is a tall but doable order as evidenced by cases of intrepid Myanmar women defying and countering such norms, expectations and stereotypes, risking personal safety and security. Influencing the personal agency of women restrained by such norms and expectations as well as inspiring and encouraging these women individually and communally to do the same require ongoing awareness raising, education, and capacity building activities with resource persons as much as possible from among renowned and experienced grassroots women peacebuilders the former can identify with. Sociocultural transformation requires an honest and serious assessment and recognition by concerned ethnic and religious groups of their customs and practices engendering marginalization of women in the private and public spheres. Women and men peacebuilders in such groups have the crucial role and responsibility to facilitate such assessment and recognition and enjoin fellow members to evolve or enhance customs and practices that promote equality among women and men.

Contextualization of gender concepts and frameworks

Each country has specific sociocultural, economic, and political context. Similar concepts and frameworks, such as on gender equality and feminism, may have different meanings and understandings across countries owing to varying contexts. Such differing meanings and understandings are further complicated in cases where such concepts and frameworks are foreign to a particular country and no equivalent terms in the native language exist. Therefore, contextualization of gender and feminist related concepts and frameworks vis a vis peacebuilding is imperative in promoting and mainstreaming WPS in particular countries.

Transformation of patriarchal structures excluding or limiting women in peacebuilding

Transforming formal peace process structures and frameworks excluding or limiting women's participation across countries needs to be supported and strengthened by related policies and legislations. Structural changes necessary to move forward the mainstreaming of WPS across the three countries require first and foremost the willingness, sincerity, and political will of incumbent governments to institute and sustain such changes.

Building on, strengthening, and sustaining of significant gains

Building on, strengthening, and sustaining significant gains in WPS need to be supported by policies and legislations creating structures and frameworks for the said purpose. Even as they await the passage and proper implementation of needed policies and legislations, stakeholders need to intensify efforts to strengthen and sustain the gains achieved especially at the grassroots level, in conflict affected areas.

Compliance to the UNSCR 1325 and fulfilment of commitment to the 2017 joint statement of the ASEAN in promoting WPS in the region have been found wanting across the three countries.

WPS covers a whole gamut of issues cutting across the physical, sociocultural, economic, and political life of all across ages, sexual orientations and gender identities, classes, races, creeds, and ethnicities. It is not a matter for women peacebuilders alone. Each one has a stake and has the duty and responsibility to get involved.

CHAPTER 6
Conclusions and Recommendations



Conclusions

In the 2019-2020 WPS Index (GIWPS, 2019, p.1), the Philippines ranked relatively higher than Thailand and Myanmar, with Myanmar lagging far behind. Of total 167 countries ranked, the Philippines placed 90th with a WPS index of .709; Thailand placed 92nd, with .707 WPS index, and Myanmar placed 150th, with .587 WPS index. A WPS index of 1 is the best possible score. The WPS Index systematically measures and ranks as well as provides insights into patterns and progress on women's well-being and empowerment worldwide. It underscores that countries are more peaceful and prosperous when women are accorded full and equal rights and opportunities in all aspects at all levels.

Given the WPS rankings, the three countries seem a long way to even get to the top 50. Results of this ASEAN WPS baseline study apparently reinforce the three countries' rankings. Women peacebuilders across the three countries had gone to great lengths to confront and somehow break personal, sociocultural, and structural barriers and had to deal with diverse stakeholders and contexts to push forward women's agenda in the peace process.

Given the study findings, it can be said, compliance to the UNSCR 1325 and fulfilment of commitment to the 2017 joint statement of the ASEAN in promoting WPS in the region have been found wanting across the three countries, even as the Philippines has already adopted a NAP on UNSCR 1325 and has started working on its implementation plan. Decisive measures and actions have yet to be instituted and implemented in terms of the four pillars of the WPS agenda, specifically women's participation and representation.

WPS is not merely about women's participation in the peace process, even as this study focuses on the role and participation of women in peace and security across the three countries. Indeed, it is all about the well-being and empowerment of women ordained by nature to carry the burden of bringing forth life to the world. Certainly, the state of their well-being determines the state of the well-being of others in the family, community, and larger society as well.

WPS covers a whole gamut of issues cutting across the physical, sociocultural, economic, and political life of all across ages, sexual orientations, and gender identities, classes, races, creeds, and ethnicities. It is not a matter for women peacebuilders alone. Each one has a stake and has the duty and responsibility to get involved.

At the ninth and final session of the December 2018 AIPR and UN workshop on ASEAN perspectives in conflict management and conflict resolution in the region, H.E. Marty Natalegawa, member of the UN Secretary-General's high-level advisory board on mediation and former Indonesian foreign affairs minister, emphasized two essential characteristics in managing potential conflict or resolving ongoing conflict in the region: trust and synergy at the national, regional, and global levels (AIPR, 2018, p. 27). In the same manner, this study wishes to reiterate and underscore the same two essential characteristics, trust and synergy, to move forward the mainstreaming of WPS within and across countries in the ASEAN.

NP Philippines has recently started a learning exchange initiative on WPS specifically aimed at increasing understanding on activities, challenges, and opportunities of emerging women leaders as well as increasing communication and collaboration among these women leaders in Myanmar, Mindanao in the Philippines, and Southern Thailand. Activities under this initiative include exchange visits, capacity building workshops, and public lecture on WPS. Modalities of such initiative need to be adjusted given the global pandemic and volatile political situation in Myanmar. Undoubtedly, however, such initiative could be considered an initial and crucial step in engendering the "trust and synergy" among women leaders and peacebuilders essential in moving the WPS forward.

Recommendations

This study surfaces a number of issues and challenges on WPS across the three countries. It, however, wishes to underscore the following issues with corresponding recommendations to particular stakeholders in WPS mainstreaming in the ASEAN region:

To the ASEAN

Institutionalization of best practices

Institutionalization of best practices of women peacebuilders is crucial in moving the mainstreaming of the WPS forward. A common best practice of women peacebuilders across the three countries is properly and cordially collaborating with the men in the peace process. Women have utilized their cordial relationships (Myanmar), early strategic alliances (Philippines), and worked well (Thailand) with the men to advance the interests and needs of women in conflict affected areas. They have postured a non-confrontational stance in rallying the men to their side, thus gain the latter's trust, confidence, and support. Therefore, the ASEAN could perhaps issue a policy enjoining concerned member states to institutionalize such best practice or find space or body within its structure for the institutionalization of such practice. Such space or body may be composed of an equal number of women and men tasked to develop and implement programs solely on the WPS agenda in coordination with ACWC or other relevant ASEAN bodies, or serve as a funding window that processes proposals on WPS from the different ASEAN member states.

Bridging of gap in communication and information access and promotion of collaboration among women peacebuilders

Access to communication and information is essential in women's participation in peace and security. Women peacebuilders in tracks 1 and 2 more than women peacebuilders in track 3 seemingly have had more access to relevant communication and information on the peace process. Therefore, it would be best to institute policies or measures to bridge such gap in order to allow women in track 3 to gain equal access to such communication and information. Relatedly, it would be best to institute policies or measures to promote collaboration among women peacebuilders, especially in track 3, across countries.

To the CSOs

Building on, strengthening, and sustaining gains

Most of the best practices and significant gains in peacebuilding have been undertaken and achieved outside the formal peace

process. The bulk of peacebuilding work, the fight as it were, has been on the ground. It would be well for CSOs to build on, strengthen and sustain such gains by stepping up their efforts and invest more of their resources, both human and material, in addressing the needs, especially in capacity building, in relation to WPS in conflict affected areas. A strong base is likely to positively influence the dynamics of the peace process all the way to the top. In situations wherein a top-down approach is unlikely, a bottom up approach, its opposite, might be more feasible and effective.

To the Donor Agencies

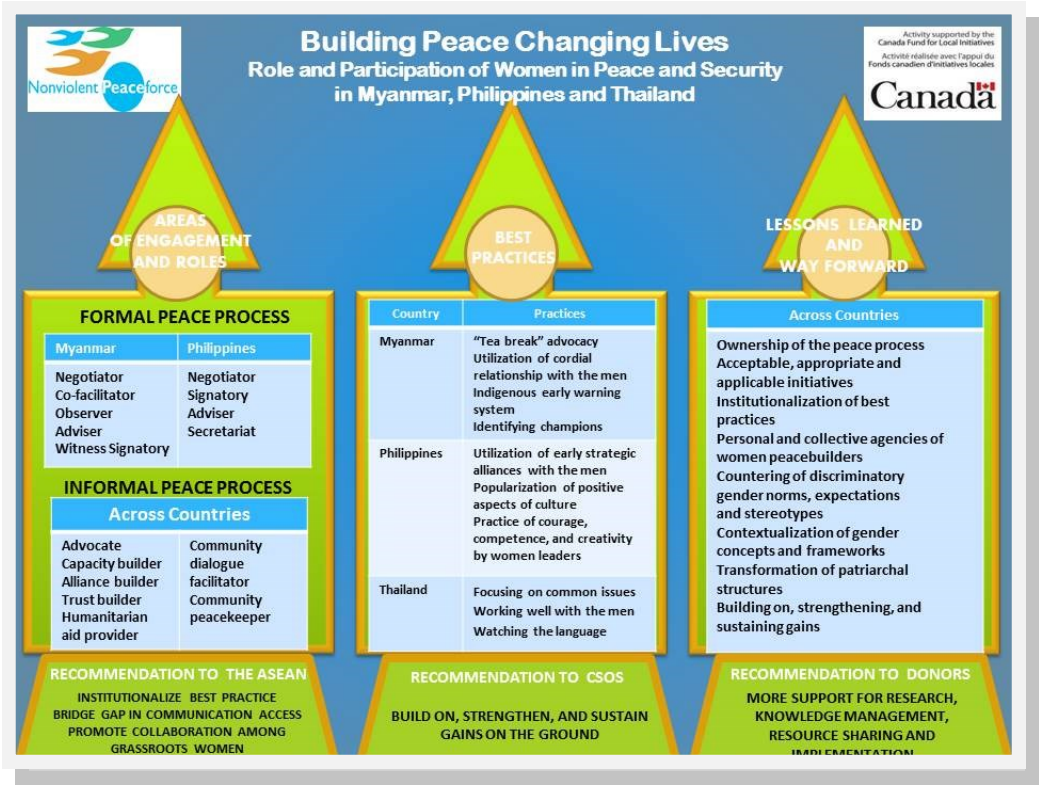
More Support for research, knowledge management, resource sharing, and implementation activities

Research and documentation and knowledge management and resource sharing are crucial towards a better understanding of and more effective response to the situation and needs of victims, specifically women and girls, of armed conflicts. Study findings reveal only women peacebuilders with their CSOs in Myanmar have been able to maximize such strategies, specifically in surfacing and projecting violations committed by armed actors against the rights of women and girls in conflict affected areas. Therefore, there is a need to push for the conduct of more of such activities not only in Myanmar but also in the other two countries. It would be well for donor agencies to provide more funding support in this area.

This study covers three ASEAN countries only. Conducting similar studies to cover other conflict affected ASEAN Member States will allow for the establishment of a more complete picture of the role and participation of women in peace and security as well as the crafting and implementation of appropriate policies and programs by concerned stakeholders towards WPS mainstreaming in the region.

"Two essential characteristics in managing potential conflict or resolving ongoing conflict in the region are trust and synergy at the national, regional, and global levels."

- H.E. Marty Natalegawa,



Nonviolent Peaceforce Philippines
Main Office
House # 003, General Luna Street
Rosary Height IV, Cotabato City 9600
Tel/Fax: (+63 64) 421 1977
Website: www.nvpf.org