

## **CHAPTER - 1**

# **INTRODUCTION**

The National Commission for Women (NCW), which is mandated to look at issues relating to women and their concerns and the challenges they face, requested the Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research (C-NES) to conduct a study on the **Impact of Conflict on Women in the states of Nagaland and Tripura** (Order no. 16[43]/2003-NCW/4754 dt. Sept.11, 2003).

The North Eastern Region (NER) of India consists of eight states — Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim. The region is bounded in the north by the eastern Himalayas, to the south by the Chittagong Hill Tracts and Chin Hills and to the west by the Shillong Plateau and the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Hills. It has over 4,500 kms of external frontiers with Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Bangladesh, making this region an extremely sensitive and strategically significant area. The region spreads over an expanse of 25,000 sq. km. with a relatively small population of less than 40 million.

The region is rich in oil, coal, limestone, and has immense forest wealth and hydro potential. Yet despite all this it stands much below the national average in terms of developmental indices such as per capita income, transport facilities, power consumption etc. There is a widespread feeling of being neglected by the Centre and of alienation from the 'mainland', a sentiment often expressed publicly. This, combined with the fact that the Indian State has done little to understand the hopes and aspirations of these people, has led to a number of insurgencies and conflicts. The two states which are the focus of the present study are Nagaland and Tripura, both of which are currently in the grip of low intensity conflicts and consequent insecurity. What this has meant, then, is continuing unrest, distrust and hostility. The issue of the nation state is still an unsettled one, with many questioning the legitimacy and authority of the Indian state. The effect of all this on women has been especially negative as is more than clear from the findings set out in this report.

Ms. Preeti Gill, who is an editor with Zubaan (an associate of Kali for Women), is Coordinator of the C-NES study. She has been coordinating the activities of the study by frequent discussions with the two research officers in Nagaland and Tripura by phone and email, developing a project outline and methodology, work plan, detailed questionnaires as well as analyzing and reviewing the recorded interviews. She has made a field visit to Nagaland state and over a period of six days has visited Dimapur, Kohima, Pfutsero, Khonoma and two villages in the Chakhesang area. She was able to meet with a number of women victims at meetings in Dimapur and Kohima as well as the villages and the

small town of Pfutsero along with the local Research Officer Wecheteu Kapfo who traveled with her and arranged the meetings. She also met women leaders, members of the NMA, the Dimapur Naga Women's Hoho, Church members, social workers and activists, members of NPMHR, NSF and also government officials, doctors with the AIDS Cell NSACS and the well-known psychiatrist, Dr Ngully, among numerous other concerned citizens and officers of the Assam Rifles. A meeting of concerned citizens and members of a number of prominent women's groups, university teachers, government officials, lawyers, representatives from the NSF and NPMHR was organized in Kohima during the visit. It was well attended and a number of important recommendations emerged from the discussion. Preeti Gill has, over the past years, worked on a number of issues related to the North East including writing scripts for television and film documentaries and working on a project on women writers from the region. Presently she is working on two books on the region, *Troubled Zones: Women's Voices From the North East of India* and *The Memsahib's Logbook: Stories from the Tea Plantations of Assam and North Bengal*. She is a member of the C-NES Advisory Council.

## **CHAPTER - 2**

### **FIELD STUDY AND RESEARCHERS**

This Report is based on findings from the field in order to establish the facts of the problem as well as on readings and research from secondary sources. A series of exhaustive interviews across the states have been personally conducted by the two Research Officers based in Kohima (Nagaland) and Agartala (Tripura) respectively who have been assisted by two Assistant Research Officers also based in each state where the study has been undertaken. Data has been collected and analyzed on the basis of an exhaustive questionnaire prepared by C-NES. This contained both open ended and structured questions to elicit responses from the direct victims of armed conflict as well as their relatives, neighbors and others. This is attached in the Annexure along with some sample interviews. The research has been more qualitative than a collection of quantitative data as it was important to get women to talk of their experiences and to hear their stories since in many instances this was perhaps the first time that these women had a chance to voice their anguish. More than a100 interviews were conducted (and at least 50 of these are detailed and exhaustive) by the Research Officers who have toured the region extensively in the course of their work. In this reports the names of some interviewees have been abbreviated or not mentioned in full at their request, as they were concerned about their safety.

The Research Officer for Nagaland is Ms. Wecheteu Kapfo, who belongs to Kohima. She has a diploma in business administration and worked with Dell Computers in Bangalore. She chose to relocate in her home state to help with this research project. The Assistant Research Officer is Ms. Akole Mero a social worker and active church worker with a number of years of experience of working with women affected by domestic and other types of violence. She lives in Dimapur.

The Research Officer for Tripura is Jayanta Bhattacharya, a senior journalist in the state and the Bureau Chief of the Press Trust of India, with an extensive network of contacts across the state. He has traveled and interviewed extensively for the study and the Report shows the depth and extent of his findings from an area that is abysmally under reported, and little known, in the national media. The Assistant Research Officer in Agartala is Kutika Das.

## **CHAPTER - 3**

# **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY**

### **Research objectives:**

1. To study the cases of victims of armed conflict in the states of Nagaland and Tripura and see how their lives have been impacted by years of conflict
2. To study the coping strategies of victims as well as health and other related facilities available to take care of their physical and mental trauma and suffering
3. To review the role of the government, Church, tribal or village organizations and the NGOs in providing help by way of compensation, livelihood generation and other schemes available especially to women
4. To set out a list of recommendations that has emerged out of the research and the extensive interviews and discussions.

### **Methodology**

1. Primary Sources: personal interviews and group interactions/group discussions
2. Personal interactions with a number of NGOs, Church members and office bearers, members of the Naga Hoho and women's organizations, media practitioners, medical specialists, government officials, teachers and student leaders human rights groups. In addition, the researchers have visited AIDS hospices, Mental Hospital, primary health centres and resource centres
3. Use of open ended questionnaire in the interviews which is attached as part of the Annexures
4. Secondary sources like books, journals, newspapers and other documents. A bibliography is also attached as part of this Report

### **Limitations of Study**

1. Paucity of time since the area of research is vast.
2. Difficulties in communications, travel and transportation during the research was defined as a major problem by researchers

## CHAPTER - 4

# ARMED CONFLICT SITUATIONS AND IMPACT ON WOMEN : AN INTRODUCTION

The twentieth century has witnessed 250 conflicts and over 100 million casualties. Civilians remain the main targets of contemporary conflicts and account for over 90 per cent of casualties. Over 23 million people have died in more than 160 wars and, after 1945, overwhelmingly in the Third World. These wars have resulted in millions of people being displaced from their homes, and the numbers are rising each year. In such a scenario the need for peace is even more urgent today, especially in Third World countries, where countries often resort to the use of military might to solve what are essentially political conflicts (Chenoy, 2001).

Women demand peace because they are directly and specifically impacted by conflict *as women*. They are the ones who do the daily tasks in everyday life in times of civil strife; they are responsible as mothers of the children, the hurt and the wounded, who are innocent hostages to the conflict not of their creation. They are the wives of injured, disabled or missing men, the soldiers of warring factions and the state. They suffer as civilians with their freedoms curbed and shackled. They are assaulted, beaten, humiliated, raped and murdered during conflicts. In fact, they face violence from three quarters—the State, the opposing community, and often in their own homes in the form of domestic violence.

Women are victims of war and conflict in a variety of other ways as well. The loss of family members, which includes husbands, brothers and children, has long-term psychological effects of women. The suffering endured by women as caretakers and those who 'pick up the pieces' after conflict and devastation results in emotional and mental stress. Their loss is not just emotional, it is also economic and most women experience a decline of social legitimacy. The loss of male family members often renders them completely poverty stricken—since they form the bulk of the unemployed and illiterate they are ill equipped to take over the burden of being primary earners or sole earning member and head of the household. All too often destitution follows the loss of earning men.

Food scarcity, destruction of infrastructure and basic facilities like water, roads, bridges, hospitals, shelters and farmlands have an impact on the entire social structure of a community. Studies have shown that when there is food scarcity, women are likely to reduce their own food intake. The devastation of the natural environment too has serious repercussions. Since women take on the role of food providers and caretakers, the responsibility of finding alternative sources of food and water

and rebuilding falls on them. Often it is they who single handedly bear the burden of growing food and finding fuel.

Either by choice or under coercion, young women in many parts of the world are increasingly taking on the role of militants. Women sometimes see this process as one of empowerment since it implies that they have broken out of the traditional mould. But often these non-traditional roles have to be legitimized before they can be accepted within patriarchal structures and this kind of freedom requires reinterpretations of history and tradition—something not easy to do. Often young women are forced into this role under coercion and within the training camps they find themselves marginalized and confined to the same inferior positions as they occupied within their homes. Sometimes it seems that they have only exchanged their traditional dress for uniforms.

It has been argued that force is necessary to ensure territorial integrity. But in places where social groups have been denied justice and the state has used coercive means to repress minority or ethnic aspirations for equality, such groups stop negotiating with the State and resort to collective violence as a means of getting their demands heard. When electoral processes get corrupted and the rule of law breaks down, the parliamentary process, as part of competitive politics, loses its legitimacy in the eyes of affected groups, which then resort to force. They reject democracy and formal institutions. Once they resort to armed struggle it becomes increasingly difficult to return to the process of negotiation.

### **Armed Conflict and the North East**

The North East has been the most continuously **militarized** region in India after independence. The common problems of economic underdevelopment, exploitation of natural resources by 'outsiders' and environmental degradation in the seven states (now eight, including Sikkim, the latest entrant) of the North East have led to a perception of 'backwardness' among severely alienated people. This is fertile ground for local militancy which has at times turned into secessionism. In places, militants run virtual parallel governments and collect contributions by way of 'taxes'. They challenge State authority and this often exerts a dual pressure on the local people. Sustained militancy and violence has affected the civilian population in a number of ways.

For example, highly mobile rebel groups take shelter with villagers, ambush security forces and then move on. In many cases, the security forces have retaliated by descending on the village and unleashing what are known as 'counter-insurgency' operations. This has translated into harassment for the local civilian population, including sexual abuse of women and girls and other human rights violations. Villagers are accused of and frequently formally charged with aiding and abetting the militants.

State response has, so far, been to see this as a threat to national security and to react with a number of sweeping laws that enable the suspension of democratic and representative processes. These laws and acts include the 1953 Assam Maintenance of Public Order Act, the 1955 Assam

Disturbed Areas Act and the Armed Forces Special Powers Act 1958. The AFSPA gives wide discretionary powers even to junior army officers to use force as a method of warning, to search any shelter that could be a hideout and to conduct searches without warrants.

Despite appeals to the courts, this particular Act continues to be operational. In 1972 the AFSPA was extended to all states and Union Territories. All the laws mentioned have been in force in various parts of the North East at all times since independence and they allow the state to suspend civilian rule for an indefinite period without review.

## CHAPTER - 5

# NAGALAND : A BRIEF BACKGROUND TO THE CONFLICT

### Land and People

Nagaland is a small land-locked state that became a state on December 1, 1963. It is bound by Assam in the north and west, Arunachal Pradesh in the northeast, Manipur in the south and Myanmar in the east. Geologically, it is part of the Alpine Himalayan mountain system with thick tropical forests, which used to cover most of the state. Various factors, including indiscriminate logging, have led to large-scale denudation of hillsides and a loss of tree cover. Nagaland is home to 16 major tribes and several sub-tribes each with its own language.

There are eight districts—Kohima, Wokha, Mokokchung, Zunheboto, Phek, Tuensang, Mon and Dimapur. Dimapur is also the commercial hub and railway head. Nagas live in the neighbouring states of Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh and also across the border in Myanmar. According to the anthropologist Verrier Elwin, the British were aware of the existence of the Nagas by 1764. The first British incursion into Naga territory took place in 1832 when Captains Jenkins and Pemberton with 700 troops and 800 coolies attempted to trace a land route from the Manipuri kingdom in Imphal to their headquarters in Assam. But the real exposure of the Nagas to the outside world took place in World War I when Naga forces went to France as part of the Allied Labour Corps. In the Second World War Nagaland actually became a battle ground and saw hostilities between Allied British troops and the Japanese. One of the turning points of that war took place on the tennis courts of the Deputy Commissioner of Kohima where the Allied forces and the Japanese fought fiercely before the latter retreated.

The well-preserved war cemetery in Kohima stands as testimony to the battle fought there and the memorial carries the famous and poignant words:

*When you go home  
Tell them of us and say  
For your tomorrow  
We gave our today*

Naga society remains basically rural and a large majority of them live in villages. Each village was an entity to which every resident owed allegiance. The supremacy, dignity, defense, and well being of the village was their pride. Their needs were few and they were self sufficient, hard working, brave,



honest and hospitable. That way of life is fast vanishing and the Nagas today have moved out into urban centres and into varied professions. Yet the basic allegiance that every Naga owes to his village and his clan is still very much a part of their cultural ethos. For most important decisions and at every important occasion in his life, it is to the tribe and the clan and the village that a Naga turns for support and succor.

### **A Brief History**

Historically, the Nagas have remained remarkably isolated from more 'advanced' civilizations that exist in proximity to them whether it is to the Meitei (Vaishnavite) culture of the Manipur Valley or 600 years of proximity to the Ahom civilization in Assam. The rugged terrain of the Naga Hills protected them from assimilation into "mainstream" Hindu society and being economically self sufficient the Nagas did not develop any regular trading relationships with Hindu societies of the plains. The most remarkable characteristic of pre-British Naga polity was its directness. As long as there were no codified legal norms the fluid ad hoc nature of village policy served to sustain the authority of traditional leaders (E.W. Clark in Smith, 1925). The advent of the British however brought in changes. This had a radical effect: it provided villagers an authority higher than their elders or traditional leaders. It changed the very notion of authority by establishing fixed legal codes as the norm against which actions were to be judged. Legal codification undermined the spontaneity whereby the Naga leadership had formerly exercised authority.

The British originally claimed the entire Naga country right up to the boundaries of Manipur and Burma as British territory. However, from Assam onward all Naga territory was for practical purposes outside of government control. The British were baffled by the unrelenting hostility of the Naga tribes and partly led them to, in the most part, to abstain from interfering in their affairs except to make the occasional foray into Naga territory. In 1866 for administrative convenience the British created the Naga Hills district and in 1873 the Inner Line regulation was introduced. By 1881 the British were able to establish their authority over the then Naga Hills district (the southern part of the present state of Nagaland) but the traditional Naga village administration continued to function with a high degree of autonomy.

On January 10, 1929 the Naga Club—the first formal organization of the Nagas formed in 1918—submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission at Kohima asking for self-determination after the British left India. In response to this, and to the recommendations of the Simon Commission, the British Government of India Act of 1935 classified the Naga Hills district as 'excluded' or 'partially excluded' areas placed under the direct administration of the governor of Assam. Between 1935 and 1945 the British divided Naga inhabited areas into two: one third was placed under the administration of Burma and the rest handed over to the Government of India.

In 1946 the Naga National Council (NNC) held negotiations with the British to protect Naga self-determination. The Governor of Assam entered into a Nine Point agreement with the Naga Council

in June 1947. This agreement however ended in controversy and the NNC declared Naga independence on August 14, 1947, one day before India became independent. (Bendangangshi, 1993).

Violence slowly began and the second half of the 1950s spilling into the 1960 saw some of the worst acts of violence. The Naga aspiration for a common homeland in which they themselves determine their own political, administrative and socio-economic affairs were countered by a series of government laws which were termed draconian and as 'black laws' by various sections of the Nagas (NPMHR pamphlet, 1978). Within a span of six years three Acts were passed: the Assam Maintenance of Public Order (Autonomous District) Act was promulgated in the Naga Hills in 1953; the Assam Disturbed Area Act in 1955 and the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act in 1958. Since then Naga areas have been intermittently under the AFSPA, which was amended in 1972.

Far from resolving any issues, these measures only exacerbated the situation increasing the antagonism between the Nagas and the Centre. For easier understanding, the history of the ongoing conflict in Nagaland may be broadly divided into these stages (Chasie, 2002):

1. The period upto the early part of 1950s when there was no division among the Naga people and there was no physical violence.
2. The second stage, from around mid-1950s to the latter half of 1970s when armed conflict began and disunity set in among the Nagas.
3. The third stage from around early 1980s when gradually the underground 'national workers', as the fighters were called, began started having differences among themselves. Factions merged and today there are four of them, the most powerful being the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (led by Isak Chisi Swu and Th. Muivah), and which is negotiating for an overall settlement with the Government of India. The others are the NSCN (Khaplang), the Federal Government of Nagaland (Adinno, under the NNC) and a NNC faction under Thinsolie Keyho.
4. Naga society today is ridden with mistrust and violence. Since April 1995 all of Nagaland has been under the AFSPA. In terms of armed conflict itself, Naga society, today has become the oldest sustained conflict situation in the world (Chasie, 2002). From head hunting to fighting the British, from being a battlefield in World War II to the present confrontation, the entire known history of the Nagas has been one of conflict. Naga society has not experienced the kind of "normalcy" that is meant when this phrase is used.

While there is no difference of opinion in calling the 50-year conflict a political one and that the might of the Indian army and paramilitary forces have been pitted against Naga militants, the situation on the ground is somewhat more complex. The various factions are not united and there is constant infighting and frequent killings. The clash of interests between the over ground (State political groups) and the underground (Naga militant groups) too has resulted in armed clashes and bloodshed.

## **Women and Armed Conflict**

Among the 'Naga national army' and the 'Federal Government of Nagaland' there were a number of women cadres in the 1950s and 1960s. These women have taken on various roles as we found during the course of this study. Some of these women have been working as informers, bearers of loads and rations for men cadres while others have cooked and kept young men safe in their own homes. There are also courageous stories of women like Adile who made the long march to China in September 1974 at the head of a contingent of nine women along with 174 men led by Th. Muivah to attend training camps there and to carry back arms to continue the 'struggle' against India. These women had harrowing experiences trying to outsmart the Indian army and paramilitary security personnel as they traversed great distances through thick jungles and forded swift rivers. A number of them died during these long treks.

Women experience armed conflict differently from men, whether as soldiers, refugees, and victims of rape and/or dislocation, victims of fragmented families, as those who have lost children, husbands and fathers; often the economic violence affects them even before the physical outbreak of conflict. Young widows are forced to head households even though in patriarchal systems they do not have legal access to land and property. Patriarchal societies place women, structurally and socially, at a disadvantage (Khala, 2002). As per customary law, Naga women cannot inherit ancestral property. If a woman is an only child the ancestral property will be given to her father's immediate male relative (Zehol, 1998). Naga women live within a patriarchal society in which they toil in the fields and at home but do not inherit or own. The notion of the female as the weaker sex is still prevalent in Lotha society where the assumption is that males possess six strengths whereas females possess only five: males are therefore christened on the sixth day and females on the fifth day.

As Mrs. Ayong of Tuensang, one of the economically backward districts of Nagaland, says, "Till today there is no inheritance given to women, except in the case of people who are rich and can afford it. In cases where the only child is a daughter and the father passes away, the property is taken care by the uncle and such. The younger generations are much more educated and so now they are beginning to ask for their shares." This is a view shared across classes and the younger women especially those who are educated and working and living in urban areas are beginning to ask for equal right in inherited property. The older women still cling to the traditional ways and are somewhat more loath to bring up prickly subjects for debate.

## **Arduous Conditions**

Another feature of North-East India is the arduous conditions in which women are forced to survive. More than 70 per cent of northeastern women are engaged in agriculture and as people are being forced to give up jhum (shifting) cultivation, poverty is on the increase (as is the mortality rate). Agricultural work in villages, a number of which were visited as part of this study, is done by women. It is they who are responsible for the bulk of the labour—sowing, weeding, reaping and other tasks.

Women are burdened by hard grueling work in fields often situated at great distances from their villages as well as performing all the household chores and also being solely responsible for childcare. Between 1981 and 1991 more than four per cent of cultivators lost their lands in Nagaland and joined the ranks of the unemployed or non-workers. The region has 192,623 female cultivators as against 178,974 male cultivators (*Statistical Handbook of Nagaland, 1997*) so a decrease in the percentage of cultivators affects women more than men. In many places women are the sole breadwinners and they are losing their livelihoods—all of this leading to impoverishment and severe economic hardship.

A trip to Phek district and extensive interviews at Losami and Phek villages revealed the impact of the years of strife on the women in that region.

“The village was under army operation right from 1956 to late 1960s. The burning down of villages has very badly affected the economy of the village. Trees, domestic animals, paddy and other properties were burned to ashes. Rebuilding the village took a lot of time and effort,” said one of those interviewed. “Women suffered as much as men. Those whose husbands were either killed or beaten and tortured and could no longer do manual work had to take over the entire burden of feeding the family and bringing up the children. Since the main source of livelihood is agriculture, women sometimes had to do double their share of work. Thus physically they are strained. The men those who are still alive suffer from the effects of the beatings. Those who died have mostly died bearing the scars of the beatings.”

**Whereas men are rehabilitated and given jobs and compensation in exchange of their losses, women who lose their 'honor' find it extremely difficult to lead a normal life and gain acceptance. Honor, victory and revenge are played out on their bodies. Men face violence and humiliation at the hands of their enemies and come out victorious as heroes and martyrs; women face violence and humiliation as victims of war, first at the hands of the enemy and then as an object of shame within their communities and homes. This difference in treatment is embedded in patriarchal norms and the ideology that governs states, communities and families. Armed conflicts not only take away lives but also leave a context of adverse circumstances.**

During the 1990s, in terms of numbers, there has been one soldier of the security forces for every ten civilians in the region (Chenoy, 2000) and in Nagaland for every 7-8 people there is one member of the Nagaland Police. Mapping the expenditure of militarism it is apparent that the expenditure on defence is higher than on development. The disproportionately low spending on human development and social development has had a negative impact on women's empowerment. The ultimate goal of our development policies must be human security in terms of protection against hunger, sickness, ignorance, neglect and persecution rather than enhancing military capacity alone.

### **Struggles of the Nagas**

**The Assam Maintenance of Public Order Act, 1953** which was imposed on Nagaland in 1953, and subsequently, **the Assam Disturbed Area Act, 1955** gave wide powers to the Governor and the Assam

Police and other para military forces deployed in the region. The homes of Naga leaders were searched and raided, crops destroyed, and the children and wives of several of the leaders were imprisoned.

A victim, whose uncle was a Naga leader, states that in 1956, 18 of her family members were in jail.

Army operations which began in 1953 soon spread to almost all villages and towns, and citizens were subjected to various forms of hardship and torture. The generation which lived through the period 1952–70 experienced at first hand violence in various forms. Normal life was totally disrupted; people could not go to their fields; schools were shut down; villagers fled to the safety of the jungles and lived there for months together eating grass and roots. The Indian army burned down entire villages and all the wealth, including granaries down to ashes. In several instances, people from three or four villages were gathered together in one village and there was little food to share.

People went through different forms of torture. While hiding in the jungles, they had to walk and sometimes crawl for fear of being seen, in the rough and perilous terrains through extreme cold weathers, rains and darkness at the risk of being attacked by wild animals; shifting camps several times. There were deaths due to starvation— mothers watched helplessly as their children cried for food. Rev. V.K. Nuh said, "When the Indian army began their operations in 1954, they burnt down villages; granaries and livestock. Men and women were separated, and they were tortured separately. While the men were beaten, some even to death, some women were raped, beaten and mentally tortured. Sometimes the whole villages would be made to gather in the local ground, and even women who were about to deliver babies were not even spared. They had to deliver in the open, in front of the whole public. Some women were even raped in the churches. Even mentally deranged women and little girls were not spared from being molested."

Another victim, a prominent women leader, says, "We were 14 of us, all women, two five year olds, and one male servant. We went to the Zeliang area because we had some relatives there, and also because the area has thick forests. Life in the forest was tough. We never knew what our next meal would be. I remember, one Christmas morning, we caught crabs from the stream, and roasted it as our Christmas meal. Sometimes, we would work for the villagers in the fields, and in exchange we were given food. We had to shift our camp 14 times to avoid being caught by the Indian army."

About 100 people comprising of church elders, Village Council Members, women church workers, etc., gathered at the Phek village church had these stories to tell of the early years after independence. "Almost all the villages on the main road were burnt down by the Indian army. Some villages were burnt up to 10 times. Their houses, their belongings, their paddy and all eatables were burnt to ashes. There was nothing to eat and the people had to hide in deep forests in order to escape the army. The huts in the fields were also all burnt down. The people were eating forest vegetables and herbs, roots of plants for their survival. Many people particularly the children died of starvation and of illnesses. Many innocent people were shot by the Indian Army.

"When they came back to villages for a short while during general amnesty, the villagers were herded like animals to camps and were treated inhumanly. The males were separated and were beaten with sticks, gun butts and many died of such affect after protracted illnesses of the beatings.

"Out of poverty, the mothers would collect food grains from the grounds which fell out of air droppings of the army rations to feed their sickly children, but many people died of starvation and sickness. The people were scorched in the sunshine, in the rain and in cold weather for hours together with little or no food and drink. Even the sick were not spared. The cattle were also not allowed to go for grazing.

"The males were tortured in front of their wives and children in the open ground. Some women who were in labor were made to deliver their children in front of the whole village. There were cases of molestation and rapes, though these are not disclosed in public."

### **Status of Women in Naga Society**

Traditionally, Naga society was constituted in such a way that men and women were assigned different roles. While the men were responsible for protecting their wives and children and to provide shelter, women were responsible for looking after the house and taking care of the children. The roles were clearly demarcated and they were happy doing their own 'duties'. Each village functioned as an independent unit with very little interaction with other villages. A system of direct democracy was practiced in almost all the tribes but in the patriarchal set up women had few decision-making powers and even today little has changed as regards the position of women. Marriages are preferred within the village, and on very rare occasions do women marry outside their village. They are not entitled to a share in the ancestral property and they have no representation in village councils or village bodies.

Adela Mero, Research Executive, Resource Centre at Dimapur says, "Women seem very liberated here, but actually it is only on the surface. I think that sometimes, the women feel that that is the way of life. For so many years, women have remained subdued, and it has become part of the culture. We can actually count those women who are 'up there', and you know who are the women whom you can approach. We need many more women like that. I feel that it is also because of our culture that the status of women is like this. Also, another aspect is that once a woman gets married, she feels that this is it; I don't need to improve myself any further. We need to educate our women, so that they can come out. Once a woman is educated and those who have really come up admit that then the men give her equal opportunities. But on the other hand, those women who are traditionally homebound are really suppressed—men feel that the role of the women is restricted to the kitchen."

Women who participated in the group interview at Phek Village felt that there is discrimination particularly in heredity and in education. The parent's property belongs mainly to their male children. Female children are given some property upon marriage, but after the death of females their property, particularly the land, goes back to their brothers. When it comes to education, male children are given preference to study further and female children are made to work in the fields. Even at the Village

Development Board, the share allotted to women is too little to carry out constructive projects. (As of now, women's share in VDB is 25 per cent only).

### **Women's Rights**

Women are increasingly getting their due recognition at the church level. All the church workers interviewed felt that if there is a woman competent enough to fill a certain position, she would be considered, be it 'pastoring' a church, or conferring the title of 'Reverend' There are already three women Reverends. Church workers feel that because of Christianity the status of women in churches is better. Even in remote areas, like Noklak village, church workers were of the view that if a woman fits the requirements, she would not be discriminated against. One resident of Phek village said that, "There is discrimination particularly in heredity and in education. When it comes to education, male children are given preference to study further and female children are made to work in the fields. Even in the village development board, the share allotted to women is too little to carry out constructive projects. But at the church level, if a woman is found competent to pastor the church, the congregation would not hesitate to appoint a woman pastor."

When a woman gets married, some tribes give the girl a portion of their property, which is passed on to their husband and later, their male child or nearest male relative if there is no male offspring.

An interviewee belonging to the Sangtam tribe, Tuensang District, says, "Up until now when a woman marries she is given clothes and household goods. She is not given property and land. But slowly we hope to see changes initiated by the women associations regarding this matter."

However, the Kuzhamis of Chakhesang tribe give a portion of their ancestral property, and the women get part ownership of that property; and it is passed on to their daughters. But this property is usually much lesser than what the sons get. After her death, the half of the property goes back to her brothers or nearest male relative.

Lekromi elders, of Chakhesang tribe say, "The mother's property is passed on to the daughters; while the father's property is passed on to their sons. The sons get majority of the property; because they feel that the daughter would get their share from their husbands."

The Rengma Women's Association Secretary says, 'some parts in Rengma area also give a portion of property to their daughters.'

Today, especially among the rich and/or the educated classes, the women are not totally cut off from inheritance. There are mixed responses in this regard. Some say that though a major portion of their property would go to their sons, they will give their daughters 'some' portion. Others say that they will divide their property equally; but some still feel that they would give their ancestral property to their sons and a part of their acquired property to their daughters.

Kaka Iralu, the Naga writer says, "In the Angami tribe, women do not get anything. The woman rather gets her share from her husband. The husband, in a sense brings the dowry from his side – landed property, house or whatever his father gives him. This will be equally shared with his wife. In case of a divorce, the wife is also entitled to get a portion of her husband's property - lands, utensils - both moveable and immovable property. Now if I as a father give something to my sons, their wives will also be getting something from them. So in a sense, the father of the male child is also providing for the future wife of his son. In that sense there is give and take from both sides."

He adds: "Personally, though a major portion of my property must go to my sons according to customs, I would definitely not forget my daughters. I am ready to challenge and change customs and systems. In this modern world, there are lots of cases of divorce where the women get nothing. So in order to countercheck those imbalances in the Angami society, I would definitely give my daughters their share. Many are now resorting to this."

An Ao leader remarks, 'Women do not get any immovable property traditionally, but nowadays, we do not differentiate between sons and daughters'.

### **Strong feelings on inheritance**

Most of the women's organizations of various tribes feel strongly about this issue. And they are articulating their concerns in no uncertain terms. But any move to legislate this at the state level is yet to be initiated. The issue of inheritance is a touchy topic in many seminars dealing with women's issues. In a recent seminar organized by the Nagaland University Teachers Association to mark International Women's Day prominent women leaders of Nagaland, women leaders of various organizations and academics from Nagaland University came together to discuss the role of women. One of the key issues that was hotly debated that of a woman's right to inherit ancestral property. It was unanimously felt that it was essential to document and codify these laws.

Some of the women interviewed in relation to this project felt that if a woman was denied property rights it would have a long term effect on her, not just economically but even socially because she would not get her due share of recognition. This affected women adversely especially in the case of divorce or desertion.

A prominent women leader, asked about inheritance rights, remarked that women were not recognized in the political area because of this. A lecturer says "It is only when women get their due share of ancestral property that the real question of equality can be answered." She adds: "The five decades of conflict have left so many women widowed, and in many cases, the house she lives in and the land she tills is not her own; she is a stranger in her own home."

Monalisa, who edits and publishes The Nagaland Page at Dimapur, states, "A small plot of land in the towns is a lot more valuable, financially, than having a whole mountain in the village. In any case our brothers who are already settled in towns are not going back and develop the land in the



village. It's not that the women are going to take the land away, we just want to retain a part of the clan to which we born to, even if we get married."

Women from various tribes like Phom, Chakhesang, Rengma, Chang, Zeliang, Sangtam, Yimchunger, and Khiamnuingan said that the men and women are not treated equally. This is more apparent among the uneducated and in rural areas.

In the Ao tribe, however, the status of women is much better compared to other tribes, says the Ao Watsümondang President.

In the Khiamnuingan area, interviewees say that the women do the major portion of the agriculture work, from sowing the seeds, to planting the seedlings, weeding and harvesting the paddy while the men sometimes till the land. The paddy is also carried by women to the village from the fields, which are usually 8-10 kms or more away.

As mentioned earlier, each tribe has its own traditional laws. Hence although the laws relating to inheritance may vary slightly from tribe to tribe, and even within the tribe, from area to area it is apparent that women do not inherit ancestral property. They may be given some portion of the acquired property if the father so decides. The fact that women do not get ancestral property rights could be because the property would eventually pass on to the husband's side and also because her husband would have already got his share; hence there was no need to provide for her. Traditionally, Nagas were fiercely protective of their lands; each village and tribe has its own clearly demarcated area. Thus if a women got married to an 'outsider', they feared that her property would fall into the hands of the outsider. Even today Nagas have very strong affiliation with their respective villages, even if they migrate to towns.

Traditionally, Naga society was not market economy driven. Each family would grow enough food to last them till the next harvest. They followed the barter system till the early 1950s because money was scarce. Newer avenues to earn money came in much later here and even now the Nagas own a mere 28.27% of business establishments in their own state according to a survey conducted by the Department of Agriculture, Government of Nagaland. (*Eastern Mirror*, Sept 5, 03). But despite this fact, in recent years, according to observations, women entrepreneurs have emerged very successfully. Incidentally, the DAN led state government has given a priority status to employment generation of the youth through entrepreneurship in the year 2004. The government is taking a lot of initiatives in this respect, though result is yet to be seen. A woman leader, in a recent interview said, "Though women are the main earners and generators of income in many families, schemes for woman rarely reach rural women."

Women pursue careers in churches, government agencies, NGOs, professions like doctors, teachers, and law. But 80 per cent of the women who live in rural areas are mostly cultivators.

Mrs. Y.K.A. of the Tuensang Mothers Association said, "Till now women who are not government officials and cultivators do not know how to do business. So they just stay at home doing nothing in terms of earning.

Shonio, a women leader in Noklak town said, "Daily wage as of today is Rs 30-35 for men and Rs 20-25 for the women." She said that there are very few women holding government jobs who are affluent enough to hire others to work in their fields. These women she say are taking advantage of the people by paying low wages. Hence economic conditions are very poor. Bringing essential commodities from other places is difficult and expensive because of long distances and the absence of roads especially in remote areas. Shops in and around Noklak and Tuensang areas are run by non-locals. Prices are high and local people cannot afford to buy most of the items.

Among the women belonging to the privileged and the middle group (1 per cent and 5 per cent respectively, according to Rev. V. K. Nuh, 2002) there is a growing sense of awareness of women's rights. Women's organizations and groups are strongly advocating the rights of women, and lobbying with the government. Mrs. Yenla Chang, President of Tuensang Mothers Association says, "The TMA has made a resolution to find out all about the rights of women in the Constitution of India and create awareness among our people."

About 69 per cent of the population lives below poverty line (*My Native Country*, Rev. Dr. V.K. Nuh, 2002). Many do not know life outside of their village, or at most the villages and towns nearby. Their lives revolve around going to the fields, church and home. So the question of women's rights hardly arises. A resident of Noklak Village, on being asked whether she was satisfied with health facilities in the village said, "I, can't say. I have never visited any other health facilities, so I cannot make any comparison".

### **Effect of Conflict on Women's Health: Physical and Mental**

If Nagaland's official records are to be believed, health indicators in the state surpass even those of affluent Scandinavian countries. The health department in the capital of Kohima claims that maternal mortality is below one per 1,000 as against a national average of 4 per 1,000 while infant mortality is 7 per 1,000 live births. The female literacy rate is said to be 55.7 per cent and immunization coverage is 60 per cent. Says a senior health official: "Our women are strong, they have stamina. They hardly ever go to a doctor with complications. They deliver their children safely at home."

The state's complacency is at variance with the Second Family Health Survey of 1998-1999, that reveals that less than 20 per cent women in Nagaland receive any ante natal care, and only 14 per cent of children receive their complete course of vaccination. Hospital based data does not reflect the reality of illness and deaths taking place in the villages.

In this scenario the only ones with some reliable data are the churches and womens' organizations. The Konyak Baptist Church, with 45,000 members belonging to the Konyak tribe, the largest among Nagaland's 15 indigenous groups, reveals that 384 women died in Mon district in 1998, mostly it is said in childbirth. Members of the Konyak women's Association in Aboi block point to the large number of infant and child deaths over the last few years. Compounding the problem of high maternal mortality and infant mortality is the high rate of miscarriages in the region, most of which go unreported. (Rao, 2004).

Most of the country's development programmes have made little inroad into these remote hill areas and although the government has poured millions of rupees for the state's development there is little evidence of its use. Naga society on its part has been unable to demand accountability from its political leaders and bureaucrats because of their preoccupation with finding a solution to the Naga political problem.

People have had to pay an extraordinarily heavy price for the ongoing conflict. Community health has been virtually crippled due to militancy and counter-militancy by state forces. There has been a marked increase in psychiatric disorders, attributable in great part to the highly militarized atmosphere. Immunization, nutrition, maternal and child health care programmes have suffered and even abandoned in rural areas due to lack of staff, essential medicines and infrastructure. Most district hospitals have become non functional because they lack facilities, staff or have been partially destroyed.

Beginning from 2002-03 the department of health services has transferred management of 302 Sub centres in the state to the community through the Village Health Committees which have been set up in each village by the respective Village Councils. The entire management of the Sub centres, such as the maintenance of roads, provision of medicines, disbursement of staff salaries and monitoring their attendance etc., includes planning for the community's preventive health is now in the hands of the community. This process of decentralization is called 'communitisation' Nagaland. The health department is providing necessary support and supervision. Though the real impact of communitisation will be known later, what is already happening is visible. Very simple and innovative measures like collecting Rs 10 per household in the village, growing fruits and vegetables to generate income to buy medicines, fixing annual village cleaning drives, donating community built houses for health sub centre and staff quarters, making bamboo fences for sub centre premises, private medical practitioners volunteering their services free on fixed days etc., are some positive measures reported according to the health services department. ('Success story of communitisation in Nagaland' newspaper report *Northeast Herald*, February 22, 2004 in Annexure.)

The exact economic cost of the conflict and militarization is difficult to calculate but the cost in human lives, infrastructure, education and health is enormous. Ordinary Nagas have been caught in the crossfire between the Indian army that tries to put an end to the "insurgency" in the area and the now-divided Naga militant groups. Though peace talks between the key insurgent groups and the Indian government have been initiated these decades of insurgency have naturally had a debilitating and disastrous effect in terms of the state's health infrastructure and a general feeling of insecurity and fear.

Chakhesang women of Chizami village, Phek district, say their lives are full of tension. They say that they are bothered by the loss of work culture, love, respect and dignity in their everyday social interactions. They can trust no one, not even people they know well. Insecurity is writ large in every aspect of their daily lives and there is a visible increase in crime. Their homes cannot be left unlocked as in the recent past and women cannot move around freely for fear of molestation and extortion. Poor families are apprehensive about the lack of food security too.

Rev. Dr V.K. Nuh, General Secretary CNBC says in a recent interview in Kohima that, "There is absolutely no sense of security for women. Even if a girl wants to pursue further studies, she fears traveling alone."

According to Daisy Mezhur, Secretary, Social Welfare Advisory Board, Kohima, "Our society is going through a transition period which is much too fast for us. We are running before we can walk. Hence there is so much chaos. In the whole process women are caught in the web. Atrocities against women are growing and we wonder why. We live under extreme tension and pressure everyday. If we hear a bang we crawl under the table. In the evenings, if any member of the family is still out, we are sick with worry and tension. In a way we all need professional help. We live in constant fear. There is a kind of fear psychosis in every one of us. All of us are victims in one way or another. I feel the need to talk to somebody before I go mad."

Talking of her own experience of being caught in a cross fire between security forces and a Naga underground faction she says she underwent some kind of delusion after that episode. She went to see a psychiatrist but "the general perception is that I have to be mad to see a psychiatrist. That worsens the situation. Besides the conditions of the mental hospital are terrible." The Mental Hospital in Kohima was started with 25 beds in 1974 as part of the Prison Department and handed over to the Department of Health and Family Welfare in 1994 but it continued to function as a part of the Kohima Jail till 1996. In 1996 a new building was put up at a new site at Aradura Hill and the hospital was shifted. According to data published by the department a total of 1594 outdoor patients were treated and 236 indoor patients were treated there

According to P Ngully, a well-known psychiatrist, many Nagas are in the grip of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). It started in the 1950s at the height of the Naga movement for an independent country when many villages were burnt by Indian armed forces, many people were wounded and killed, churches destroyed and women sexually assaulted. Crops were burnt and livestock destroyed. According to his findings, a sight of a uniformed person still evokes fear and terror in the village populace who have rarely seen any other face of Indian barring the army and the paramilitary forces whom they associate with harassment and violent behavior.

Says Mrs. Khrieleno Terhuja, Secretary Naga Mothers Association, "Around 1956 trouble started in Kohima. Schools were closed, and many had to discontinue their studies. There was total disruption of normal life. Houses were burnt down. Our house in Kohima as well as our house in our village (Khonoma) was burnt to ashes. Our family was targeted in particular because our uncle (A.Z. Phizo) and some relatives were involved in the Naga struggle."

### **Mental Trauma**

Dr Ngully cites the incident of December 1994, when the civilian population of Mokokchung town was caught in a clash between the Naga underground factions and the Maratha Light Infantry. A Red Cross Society study done some 11 months later revealed that the population was suffering from

stress disorders. Of the 115 victims, 81 (70.43 per cent) could be diagnosed as suffering from PTSD. Among these, 95 per cent continued having recurrent and intrusive recollections of the event; 88.95 per cent suffered from dreams related to the event; 88.88 per cent felt as if the traumatic events were recurring; 95.06 per cent were found to have psychological reactions mostly in the form of palpitations and breathlessness; 65.43 per cent were found to be lacking in feelings of love after the trauma; 96.60 per cent had difficulties in concentration and 66.66 had lost self confidence and developed a sense of a threatened future.

“The shock was heightened by the fact that the incident took place during the festive season when people least expected it. The horrific events included gunning down of people, looting and arson. Survivors saw and felt the agony of death, of people being roasted alive inside burning buildings. Women were stripped of garments that were rolled into balls, soaked in petrol and thrown into burning buildings. Many women were raped at gunpoint by the army.” (Red Cross Society, n.d.)

People would complain of pain and discomfort that could not be diagnosed despite extensive investigations. “These persons are filled with anxiety, worry, and unhappiness. There is no joy or verve in their life. They look at the future with a sense of doom. For the Nagas their village was like a nation by itself. When it was reduced to ashes and they were herded into concentration camps, their sense of belonging and security was shaken.” The signs of stress are manifest in several ways, Dr Ngully says.

In parents it could be anxiety over the safety of their children or excessive pressure on them to succeed. In others there is a tendency to keep to themselves and then explode in violence when the situation becomes intolerable. Many join any of the underground factions, which are sharply divided among themselves. Yet another trend is to turn to religion, evident in the large number of Naga youth perusing theology studies. Finally of course there is the oblivion of drugs.

The women have suffered severely, but they do not talk about it easily. Says Dr Ngully, “Their insecurity coincides with the lack of any expectation of what life has to offer them. They usually come with some intangible physical complaint, but deeper probing soon reveals that it a subjective disorder that invariably leads to their anxiety over children or husbands who have gone astray due to alcoholism or drugs.”

All these signs indicate that the mental health of the Nagas is far from well. Similarly the army personnel posted in areas under AFSPA have also been affected: they are under constant stress for prolonged periods of time, away from their families and homes and this is bound to affect the way they react under any given situation. Various incidents can be cited as examples here, such as those in Kohima and Akuluto. In the light of existing research cases of mental stress and disorder are bound to increase in Nagaland as long as the present political conflict continues and the AFSPA remains in place.

At present there are too few studies done on the mental health of the Naga people and there are too few practitioners even aware of the magnitude of the problem. It is essential that in-depth,

detailed research be done and data collected for this very important aspect of medical health. The state health department in its pamphlet entitled Opportunities and Challenges, published in February 2003 says "There is a growing awareness that mental health has to be given its rightful place in all health care planning because the problems of living, once considered distinct from symptoms of illness and did not fall under the domain of psychiatry are increasingly becoming a part of psychiatric practice, since they relate to psychological, emotional and social spheres of living, which have been further vitiated by the conflict situation in the state. Therefore the department has put in the 10<sup>th</sup> plan a proposal to set up a State Mental Hospital to augment the existing Mental Hospital at Kohima."

Mrs. Sano Vamuzo, who described herself as traumatized after a violent incident said, "I did not go for counseling. Everybody was suffering. Who will counsel?"

A victim of molestation said, "I went to the hospital for first aid. I did not go for any counseling, as there are no professional counseling centers available. Though friends and family and women's organizations offered help and consoled me."

A woman whose brother was one of five young men who had been allegedly hacked to death by Indian Army soldiers says that it is the surviving family members who were traumatized and deeply affected by the incident. "Their wives and children were the ones who suffered most, even though all the relatives and family members suffered. The wives of the deceased have aged considerably though they are not really old. Their children could not get proper education; they had to work extra hours in the fields. Relatives also had to share their burden. During festive season, when everyone is eating meat, the children had to settle for vegetables because they can't afford anything. Being fatherless, the sole responsibility rests on the mother to take care of the children, and sometimes it becomes difficult to control the boys also."

Monshai, a young widow of 30 says, "My own health has suffered as a result. I never had any health complaint earlier. Now I constantly suffer from gastroenritis, severe headache, sleepless nights, etc. I have been feeling okay since last year. Even my eyesight has become very poor, maybe because of the constant stitching. Though the pain is still there, I feel relatively okay. I decided for the sake of my children I have to keep myself fit. My daughter is realizing now that she does not have a father. She seems to be quieter than other children and withdrawn."

Another widow, aged 65 years, said her husband a Naga underground fighter was kidnapped by the cadres of another faction. His body was found the next day; had been brutally murdered. This happened in 1996 and his widow said, "After going through such mental trauma for many years, my health has been badly affected as there is no means of physical treatment. At my old age I cannot earn much due to physical weakness. Economically we are not sound enough to support my children in schools. Sometime back one of the cadres threatened me and said that the cultivated land belongs to him, and he damaged a portion of the paddy field. We are heavily taxed by the cadres and we have very little future prospect to develop our economy if such situation continues. In 1995-96 there was

a lot of fighting between the NSCN (IM) and NSCN (K). During that time the Army people would go house to house in search of these people, even in the early hours of the day. We were harassed a lot.”

A victim from Tuensang town says, “We lived in fear because both the Indian and Naga Army disturbed our peace, harassed us. But after the cease-fire we haven’t had any problems. My husband was once a member of the town committee, so during the firings the whole colony would hide in our house. There are still marks left by the bullets in our house.”

### **HIV-AIDS, Alcohol and Substance Abuse in Nagaland**

Nagaland State AIDS Control Society (NSACS) has 34 NGOs working under its preview and carrying out the programmes initiated by them. Some of the facilities provided by them are: STD clinics attached to all the district civil hospitals where free investigation and medicines are available for STD treatment; 9 voluntary counseling and testing centres; an AIDS hospice in collaboration with the Mothers Association and many community care and support programmes. They also run a twenty-four hour helpline, a blood bank as well as drop in centres for people living with HIV/AIDS. There are 23 targeted intervention programmes carried out by 18 NGOs under NSACS for the following: Intravenous Drug Users (IUDs) Truckers Project, Commercial Sex workers Project, Jail Inmates Project, Street Children Project, School Drop-Outs Project. A project to contain and prevent mother to child transmission has also been initiated in district hospitals where all pregnant women along with their spouses are encouraged to attend antenatal clinics and here necessary support and guidance and medicines are provided for HIV positive women. A number of initiatives targeting school children have been launched in the light of research data that is very unsettling. There is also a programme called the HIV-TB Coordination Programme to ensure complete free treatment for TB cases in all the districts.

The latest data provided by Nagaland State AIDS Control Society between 1994 – January 2003 gives the following figures:

AIDS cases reported :	462
Male :	300
Female :	162
AIDS related deaths:	172
Male :	117
Female :	55

“It is authentically not possible to say as I haven’t done any research myself, but generally speaking, conflict can cause a lot of stress. In order to relieve the stress, many turn to drugs/ alcohol, as these substances help to mask the stress”, says Dr P Ngully talking about the linkages between substance abuse and the low intensity conflict situation in Nagaland. Further, he elaborates, “I cannot say about HIV/AIDS because these are recent trends. The causes of AIDS are because of high-risk

behavior, and alcohol/drugs remove inhibitions. So there might be some indirect connections. Domestic violence cannot be ruled out. Because we live under tension all the time, there could be a lot of verbal violence. For example: It is not uncommon here for parents to be worried about their children if they are out late. This creates tension, and could lead to a lot of arguments."

Mrs. A K, a victim whose father was killed by a member of an underground faction, talks about her brother: "We were all in our growing stage at that time, and so our lives were very much affected. My youngest brother grew up rebellious. Because there is huge age gaps between him and us, after we all got married, he fell into depression. He got involved in drug abuse, and died very early in life. And I can say that if my father were around, he would have been a different person. All my cousins who used to stay in our house and study have all become educated, and they hold important positions in the Government, but none of my brothers have taken up government jobs."

Adela Mero, of the Dimapur Resource Centre, and a trained counselor who deals with school dropouts and troubled youths says that substance abuse is slowly decreasing because of education. But, significantly prostitution is increasing so is drug trafficking, and even women are involved in this, mostly from rural areas. "Nowadays, money is hard to come by. It is pocketed by a few—there is rampant corruption everywhere. Women do it mainly to fulfill the aspirations of their children to help them since they lack education or professional or intellectual skills. Even the excise department does not have enough personnel to check this."

Mongshai, the widow quoted earlier, says that the insecurity has contributed in an indirect way maybe because there are very few job opportunities. "Many youths get frustrated, and so they resort to drugs. There are no cases of prostitution that I know of."

An ex-President of the Chakhesang Mothers' Association says: "The reasons for growing increase in alcohol among the youths are several including the fact that entertainment for young people is non-existent. There are no concert halls, stadiums; etc where young people can find an outlet. "There are no proper vocational courses being offered by the Government, which is why there is a growing number of unemployed youth."

Kewepelou and Daili, of Kohima town on being asked whether they think that drug abuse/ alcoholism/domestic violence has escalated as a result of conflict, replied, "Certainly. When there is no peace outside, it definitely affects peace at home. When we are not free outside, and we cannot express our frustration, we quarrel at home."

Most shops and restaurants close by 4:30 PM in Kohima, the street are deserted and there is the visible presence of paramilitary forces stationed at different points. And have improved vastly over the last seven years after the ceasefire. The situation is still tense but residents tell visitor of the changes.

A young woman entrepreneur who has just opened the first discotheque in Kohima and indeed in Nagaland says, "There are no outlets where young people can just go and have a good time. They have no means of entertainment, so they drive to the jungles and booze themselves crazy."



An older woman remarked, "During the height of the struggle, some children whose fathers had joined the underground grew up without knowing their fathers. Some of them grew up rebellious. They did not have the chance of getting proper education. This in turn has a deep impact on their children. Today, Nagaland state is filled with corruption. "

Sentila, another counselor said, "From my experience, HIV/AIDS is mostly passed on through drug abuse and prostitution. These are mostly people who come from unstable homes."

A social activist who works with commercial sex-workers feels that there "absolutely no need to be hypocritical about this fact. There is flesh trade going on, there is prostitution. And about 99 per cent of them are there not because of their will but because they are trapped in one way or the other. Some of them are here because of the irresponsible behavior of their brothers, uncles and fathers. Because of poor economic status, some are pushed into this business by them. In a situation like this, it is hardly surprising that young people find ways to entertain themselves, which may not be always healthy. Widows who have been suddenly thrust with the responsibility of looking after the family affairs when their husbands are either killed or take away, in their struggle to cope with the shock may sometimes unconsciously not be able to direct their kids properly. Children may become rebellious when they encounter these incidents."

Another concern that was heard repeatedly was that because of corruption, deserving candidates are often deprived of job opportunities leading to extreme frustration especially among those from rural areas, who have had to struggle extra hard because of the level of education in rural areas. Lack of proper vocational training and employment opportunities even when one is trained adds to the frustration.

Extortion demands by various factions for 'taxes' discourages many young people from setting up business establishments; shops close early due to the same reason. Incidents of extortion and corruption are going up steadily and there is no punitive action or check. Even in government offices, top officials are often harassed by factions, and also those posing as members of factions in their demands for money.

All these add to the confusion and social unrest in the state. It may be concluded that conflict definitely has a direct or indirect relationship to the growing menace of social problems here.

### **Human Rights Violations**

Human rights groups and activists have documented abuse and violations by security forces and there are reports of violations by insurgent factions as well. Besides direct violations, citizens, especially women, in a militarized zone face regular mistreatment by security forces during search operations on roads and in residential areas. The brusque, rude questioning, the touching and feeling up of women during body searches is ugly and humiliating. Besides innumerable incidents of rape, harassment and gendered punishment, the everyday existence of woman has been full of humiliation and terror. In situations of economic and environmental destruction women find themselves totally alone, left to fend for themselves and for traumatized children after the death and torture of husbands, sons or fathers.

Many crimes committed against women go unreported. Hence in many cases, culprits go unpunished. There are also instances where the culprit is not tried for several years, and they are held in district jails.

In certain cases, if a crime is committed by underground cadres, the authorities in that particular faction take the matter into their own hands, and punish the guilty according to their rules. In some cases this means execution.

The crime data procured from the office of Inspector General of Police (Crime) shows that between the years 1994 and 2002, the total number of rapes committed in Kohima District is 29. This is a grossly low figure when one considers the number of stories told to the team and which have been reported in the newspapers. Women face increased level of insecurity in Nagaland.

There are several reasons why crimes go unreported. A member of the Dimapur Women's Hoho, an organization that takes up issues of crimes against women said that in many cases, the family members of the girl themselves try to hush up the matter because of the social stigma attached to it. Hence it becomes difficult to pursue such cases.

A counselor we spoke to in Kohima said, "This is one area which I feel very strongly. Nagaland being a very small area and society everyone knows everyone. Wherever you go, people know the story already. In fact, even the family wants to hide the incident because once they are ostracized it's as if they have no opportunity to come out. The victim is stigmatized and looked down upon. There is a lot of social stigma attached to this. Even when it comes to counseling, very few people come. In fact we have to go to them. When these kinds of incidents happen, there will be a loud noise, but after some months, it is all forgotten, these people are left to take care of themselves. Many would rather resort to traditional and customary laws and let the village elders and leaders judge the case."

Another social worker who is involved with issues relating to crimes against women says, "Often the verdict is a fine that the perpetrator has to pay in terms of so many pigs or other commodities for the crime committed, and then culprit is left free. And it is the men of the families and the tribe who sit and arbitrate and decide. Women don't do this."

Another reason why crimes go unreported is because of the slow and complicated judicial procedures. This discourages people from seeking justice from the court of law. A victim of sexual assault says, "Two of the miscreants are still under police custody. They haven't been tried. It is much safer and comfortable for them to be in jail than loose, because the public would have taken action against them through our customary laws." She adds, "Crimes against women should be viewed more seriously. Criminals should be suitably punished."

There is only one women's police cell in the state that women can freely approach if they want to seek protection or lodge complaints. Daisy, a social worker says, "There are no women cells in the police department. (Even if there is, I'm not aware of it). And when a girl wants to report a crime

committed against her, she has to tell her story to a man. This becomes an even more harrowing experience."

### **Some Well Documented Cases**

#### *Yankeli 11 July 1971*

The First Maratha regiment drove out the entire male population of the village and detained the women and children under heavy guard. Many women were assaulted and a pregnant woman, the wife of a pastor was hit with a stone on her abdomen which led to premature delivery of a dead baby. Four girls were forced inside the Yankeli Baptist Church by the commanding officer and his subordinates. There the girls were interrogated, tortured and raped by the army personnel. The girls were all under 18 years of age. Miss Rose of Ngapurum village in Ukhrul, committed suicide the day after she was raped by two army officers. (NPMHR Issue Commemorating 25 years, 2003). The WISCOMP team that visited the village in November-December 2000 and the village elders presented written material as documentation of the incident. Some were apparently apprehensive about the team's visit, as the army had warned them of severe repercussions. However they confirmed the incident and showed the church where the rapes had taken place. It has since been abandoned. They confirmed that one of the young women raped died shortly after the incident and that the surviving three have migrated to neighbouring villages. (Khatoli Khala, 2002)

#### *Kohima 5 March 1995*

"On March 5, 1995 we had just returned from church when we heard gunshots right outside our house. We instantly lay down on the floor. Our youngest daughter was playing on the terrace but we couldn't even go up to get her." This is how a couple with five children at their home in Kohima recalled a major attack by Rashtriya Rifles column which thought it had come under attack from underground militants. Instead, it later transpired that the only explosion was a tire burst that they mistook for a blast. In retaliation, they showered mortar rounds and automatic fire on the unfortunate town in which not less than seven persons were killed and provoked an outraged Chaman Lal, Director General of Police and one of the country's most outstanding police officials in terms of integrity and courage, to rush to the site and eventually testify against the army. The couple interviewed for this study said: "They announced on the streets for us to come out on the street or we will all be dragged out from the house. So we came out, even our children. Some of our tenants were dragged out from the house. Two, three of my neighbors were shot. The men were separated from the women. We were all asked to line up with our hands in the air. The men were forced to remove their jackets. We were about a hundred people on the street. Even the SP was not allowed to cross."

One man was hit on the neck and bled profusely but he was not allowed to seek medical help. "Our house was damaged by stray bullets. Altogether 29 bullets hit our house. Firing went on for about two hours. Men and women were dragged from their houses and harassed mercilessly. Many were physically assaulted. Many were killed or injured." In this incident army used six inches mortar shells on civilian area in the heart of the state capital.

Unfortunately, many newspapers and government reports place the blame on such events on "anti-national secessionists". There are few independent commissions of inquiry or a sustained political initiative to bring justice to the civilians concerned. The question of compensation rarely arises and in some cases the government has deliberately used inter-ethnic rivalry as a political strategy.

### **Abduction, Torture and Rape by Insurgent Groups**

Incidents of abductions, torture and rape by cadres of the various insurgent groups and factions too are not uncommon and the people face a dual threat to safety.

The following account from a report obtained from the Office of the Kohima Chakhesang Hoho, Kohima is one such prominent case where the underground executed one of the guilty men. This is one case that received wide coverage in the local newspapers as well.

"On November 11, 2000 at around 9pm three NSCN cadres abducted four youths as they were about to park their vehicle inside the Chakhesang Baptist Church, Kohima. The victims were asked to drop the miscreants above the Seikhazuo colony as the army was chasing them. When the victims refused on the plea that their vehicle was defective and was also running out of petrol, they were forced to comply at gunpoint.

"They managed to start the ignition and one of the miscreants drove the vehicle at breakneck speed. The vehicle broke down on the way. The victims were then asked to push the vehicle and somehow it started again. When they reached a forest area the driver stopped the vehicle and ordered the victims to get off. They were told to remove their shoes and the hands and legs of the two men were bound with shoelaces. The men were made to wait at that place while the girls were taken to another spot a few meters from the main road.

"While one of the miscreants led one of the girls above the road, the other two led the second girl to a separate spot below the road. When the victims retaliated two random shots were fired barely missing the victims. The girl who had been taken away by one of the miscreants managed to free herself after a prolonged struggle by spraying perfume into his eyes. She was physically assaulted.

"The other girl who had been taken away by two miscreants was beaten. She was asked to bite a bullet and hold another in her hand. She was then raped. Meanwhile the two men managed to free themselves, and they went to the police station at around midnight. The police along with some people rushed to the spot where they intercepted the culprits along with one of the girls".

It is significant that the underground faction executed one of the culprits while the other two are in police custody. The case is still pending in court.

In an interview one of the girls admitted that the incident had changed her life in many ways. She lives in constant fear now. Many organizations like CPO, Church, women's organizations helped her. Many condemned the act. About the two miscreants who are still in jail she said, "They haven't

been tried. It is much safer and comfortable for them to be in jail than loose, because the public would have taken action against them through our customary laws." She did go to the hospital for first aid ("I had to travel about 5 kms to get first aid treatment.") but did not go for any counseling, as there are no professional counseling centres.

In addition to routine harassment women face the threat of assault and rape. Reports from Nagaland indicate that the incidence of rape of Naga women by security forces is four times more than what is reported. Women's organizations report "women are constantly subjected to and paralyzed by fear and unable to perform their normal activities. The very sight of men in uniform is traumatizing." Besides this kind of harassment, prostitution, bribery and abduction are commonplace as we have seen.

### **Effect of Years of Conflict on Education**

Education was brought to the Naga hills by American missionaries. In many families, while the male child went to school, the female child stayed back and ploughed the fields and helped out with the household chores. Many of them said that they had supported their brothers in their education; some would spend sleepless nights weaving for the family and also to sell the woven clothes to support their brothers in schools. Some would do their brothers' shares in the fields. A retired government officer in Kohima said, "We were a large family, and two of my sisters stayed back at home to help our parents in the fields, while the rest of us got our education."

Many of those women have either died early, while some who are alive suffer from the effects of over work. Women were never encouraged to study, except in few families who were educated enough to realize the importance of education.

One of the older women interviewed said that in the year 1956, there were only two girl students in 10th standard in Government High School, Kohima. Many of the women who did get to go to school during the period 1954 – 1964 also had to discontinue their studies because the schools were either shut down or occupied by armed forces, or burnt down.

In the interviews in the Phek region women said that had their education not been disturbed during those days, they would be much better off today in terms of financial stability as well as socially.

Asked if many girls discontinued their studies during the height of the conflict between the 1950s and 60s, a noted women leader said, "I'm sure that is what happened. I for one, come from an educated family, so studies were foremost in our minds, so I continued my studies." Her studies were disrupted, though, when they had to flee to the jungles where they hid for almost two years. But she resumed after tensions were eased.

It is apparent that among the tribes where the level of education is higher the status of women is also better. The Ao's were the first to embrace Christianity and thus they were the first to get educated. Hence in the Ao community, today, after about 125 years of Christianity, the women in the Ao community are relatively better off than their counterparts in other tribes. The spread of education

coupled by Christian principles have helped the Aos to understand the fact that 'women and men are equal', faster than other tribes in Nagaland. At present the level of education among the various tribes in Nagaland is highest among the Aos. The 'Ao Watsü Mondang' – Ao Women's Organization – has presented a bill to the Ao Senden – the highest organization in the Ao Community- to legislate the inheritance rights of women among the Ao community, says the President, Ao Watsu Mondang, when interviewed in Mokokchung.

Today, especially in towns like Kohima and Dimapur, most parents do not differentiate between their children when it comes to education. In fact, the newest data shows that girls education in recent years is on an upswing and is increasing at a fast rate. The District Schools Inspector, Dimapur said, "in fact, the enrollment of girl students in schools is more than boys." (Another reason to this could be that ratio of girls to boys are more.) In all public examinations – at the school level or college level, girls show consistently better performance. In recent years, girls have also started to venture outside the state to pursue academics or careers. One interviewee felt that this could be because of the growing awareness of the rights of women among the younger generation, and that they have nothing else to fall back on except their education. Parents who have realized the fact that, girls are no less than the boys have started to give equal opportunities to their girl child to study, with the hope that once the girl starts working, she can help her parents support her other siblings.

In the villages though, especially in the remotest parts of Nagaland, girls are still considered second to their brothers. Some families still put their sons. If they cannot afford to send both their children to school they will send the boy but keep the girl home. Interviews in Phek and Tuensang districts clearly revealed this fact. Monshai, a widow in Noklak village says, "Even today girls are treated differently from the boy child. Many parents send their male children to private schools and send their girl children to government schools. Women do not participate much in decision-making. Men do not consider that women are important, though the scene is changing slowly. Women are not aware of their rights. This is what our organization, Noklak Mothers Association, is fighting against and trying to create awareness in the community."

Between the periods late 1950s to 1970s, schools were either burnt or shut down. People had to flee to the jungles. This period really affected education in the state.

An older woman who saw the early years of trouble said, "I passed the 9<sup>th</sup> standard, and we had to flee to the jungles. After I came back, I did not study 10 standard because of the disturbance. But I did my matriculation as a private candidate in 1957, and passed. We went to Khonoma village because we couldn't stay in Kohima. Almost everyday, our houses were searched, especially we the relatives of A. Z. Phizo. I was totally disturbed. All our property was burnt down. We had to start everything afresh."

Another victim says, "Education is one area which was seriously affected. Because schools were either shut down or occupied by the army, education came to a standstill for several years."

Lack of money to support their education and also mental unrest caused many to discontinue their studies.

Another woman whose father was killed by members of a faction said, "We are eight children in all, five girls and three boys. I was studying in college in Golaghat, and my sisters and brothers were in Shillong. My youngest brother was 6 months old. My siblings who were studying in Shillong had to come back to Wokha and continue their studies because of economic reasons. I continued my studies in Golaghat, because my college was not very expensive. I failed that year because I couldn't concentrate in my studies. My two brothers would not take up Government jobs even though they were offered officer's posts, because there were very few educated Nagas at that time. One of my brothers is a contractor now, but he doesn't deal with the Nagaland Government."

Turbulence in the state sometimes retards the smooth functioning of schools and colleges. Also students are affected because of the dismal infrastructure. The Meluri Mothers Association members said, "only few buses connect Meluri with the other towns, and when these buses breakdown, the students miss their classes or exams whenever they come home for holidays."

Children whose fathers had joined the Naga army were the worst affected since the parents were constantly moving and hiding families could not give settled education to their children. Some young boys and girls too were forced to join the army.

Kaka Iralu, the well known Naga historian feels that "In many cases, during the height of the struggle, the system was, every 10 houses have to contribute one soldier, and the remaining 9 houses has to support the soldier'. He adds, "Children whose fathers had joined the underground grew up without knowing their fathers. Some of these children grew up rebellious. They did not have the chance of getting proper education. This in turn has a deep impact on their own children."

### **Role of Women in Government**

So far, the state has elected only one woman to parliament: Mrs. Rano Shaiza, in 1977. There has been no one after her. The state assembly, has never had a woman representative. Naga women decided to field candidates for elections to both the state and central legislative assemblies this year, but were not able to name a common candidate for the Lok Sabha poll. Educated women are confident and ready now to take on the responsibility of governance in Nagaland – a role that has been denied them for so long because of the patriarchal structures in the state. This also speaks very positively about the fact that women are willing to use the rights conferred upon them by the Constitution and to use these to their advantage.

At the village level, the mandatory requirement of having women representatives in the village development board has remained on paper. There has been no representation of women on any local village council or board or indeed on any other traditional body either. But now women are beginning to demand 50 per cent representation on local and village level bodies as well. These are significant trends over the past 2-3 years although the number of women bureaucrats remains small.

**The state has recently constituted a State Department for Women. It is, however, headed by a man!**

## **Naga Women's Groups and their Response to the Conflict Situation**

With armed conflict and its adverse impact as a backdrop for the last 50 years or so Naga women have been working to safeguard their homes and families and have been trying to resolve differences and work proactively to end the conflict. An outstanding role has been played by the Naga Mothers Association (NMA) in bringing solace to affected families and often by giving respectful burials to unclaimed bodies. Along with the Naga Women's Union of Manipur (NWUM) the NMA presented a case in which women took the lead in peace building exercises aimed at halting the fighting as well as to initiate dialogue with the state government and underground elements towards a ceasefire. They propagated the message of 'shed no more blood'. Peace was at the core of their message.

In a changing political scenario the NMA has been involved in political issues, as they believe that the need now is for a peaceful atmosphere to rebuild the state of Nagaland.

The NMA has been attempting to get the state to enforce prohibition in the state. During their night and day vigils they destroy bottles of liquor to draw attention to the effects of alcohol abuse on men and the youth. Although Nagaland is a dry state, liquor (both IMFL and country-made) is available. The local village women's associations too have taken up this cause with enthusiasm. The NMA also blame army is in some way, responsible for the sale of liquor through their outlets for their own personnel finds its way to Naga youth. But a piquant situation has now arisen with section of state government as well as prominent NGOs' supporting a partial lifting of prohibition.

In the Chakhesang area, for example in February 2004, the research team witnessed a road-block—a huge gate being guarded by about 30 women. These women stop every vehicle that enters the region and subject it to a thorough check to see if there is any liquor being smuggled into the area. Each bottle they found was being emptied of its contents and lined up by the side of the road. There must have been at least 3000 bottles lined up in neat rows. They had been doing this since 31 December 2003 and plan to sit to the end of this year on vigil. Women have shown that social and economic changes can be brought about by sheer persistence and courageous action.

Naga women have also made efforts to tackle the growing problems of drug abuse and trafficking. The NMA established a de-addiction and rehabilitation centre to combat the addiction crisis. Centres like the Mount Gilead Home at Kohima functioning in collaboration with Kripa Foundation, Mumbai, is the first of its kind for drug abuse victims in the North East.

According to Phangoubom Tarapot the issue of drug abuse is even more dangerous than the decades- old insurgency problem in the area. Various reports confirm that Nagaland is the second highest consumer of psychotropic drugs after Manipur. According to the Drug Report of 1997, the "rapid disintegration of traditional social structures has been put forward as a contributing factor to new patterns of drug abuse in countries in a state of transition." Feelings of marginalization, of non-identification with the cultural environment are attributed as reasons for drug abuse. The non-ending



psychological tension and uncertainty has been the *raison d'etre* for drug addiction. In many cases, easy access to money has facilitated drug abuse—a large number of users are found to be from among the well to do. Nagaland's border with Myanmar and access to the 'Golden Triangle' is critical to the ease with which drugs enter Nagaland.

According to a Home Ministry publication: "As far as the northeast states of India are concerned there are clear intelligence reports to indicate that the Naga underground organizations [names withheld] are involved in trafficking of drugs and precious stones since 1981. The insurgent group [real name withheld] of Manipur also is involved in the trafficking of drugs." (*Sangai Express*, 2000)

Other issues that have been addressed by the NMA include conservation of forests and the prevention of the degradation of land, natural resources and livestock, crucial for the existence of Nagaland's rural based economy.

The other prominent women's group is the Thankul Shano Long (TSL), which was instrumental in protesting against Operation Bluebird in some villages in Manipur's Senapati district including Oinam. They also strongly condemned the rape by BSF personnel in 1987. During the clashes between the NSCN (IM) and the Assam Rifles the latter went on a rampage in Ukhrul town (in Manipur) and detained many innocent villagers. The TSL was instrumental in negotiating the release of these people by persuading the armed forces to dialogue. In 1995 during the ethnic conflict between the Nagas and the Kukis in Manipur the TSL appealed for peace and asked the village elders to intervene and act as peace brokers.

The TSL is also involved in addressing the issue of illegal liquor sale, drug trafficking and other social issues.

The value and importance of peace is perhaps best understood by mothers. A mother's desire for a better future for her offspring is natural. The various women's movements that have cropped up in the northeast states stems from a very basic survival instinct—the need to resolve situations of violence, coercion, unrest and conflict.

The NMA was instrumental in bringing about a ceasefire between two warring factions of the NSCN and have the distinction of being the first women's organization to effect such a change. Their role is a pointer to the effective contribution of women in resolving conflict.

### **Recommendations from Nagaland**

The following are some of the major concerns emerged in the course of this study and which must be addressed if peace and normalcy are to return to the state:

1. The government should help women, especially in the rural areas, in specific ways. A marketing outlet for women in the rural areas, especially for agricultural produce is required desperately. It is also important to help women make use of whatever training they have gone through. NGOs also can come together and help each other in getting together such schemes.

2. A key to change lies in pressing forward strongly with the "communitization" process in the education system, which involves local teachers, governing groups and villagers in a participatory exercise.
3. Politicians feel that if a political settlement is reached, reconciliation will follow. But the church and prominent independent figures say that peace and reconciliation should come hand in hand and that the first step is to reach an internal settlement among the four armed factions.
4. Health sub centres in villages should be upgraded to dispensary level because of the rise in population.
5. There are no government programmes for women victims and even if such relief packages do exist the women do not have any knowledge of it. There should be fewer schemes which should be extensively disseminated and practical steps should be taken.
6. Traditional/customary laws that are discriminatory against women should be changed or done away with as for example women do not have acquired property rights.
7. Implement a state policy for women at the earliest
8. A State Commission for Women must be established at the earliest. This is felt to be a real lack.
9. Review the Armed Forces Special Powers Act especially in the light of the period of ceasefire
10. Address the issue of mental health seriously. Recognize the need for rehabilitation centres and counseling centres for traumatized people. These counseling centers can be integrated to the church and conform to the culture of the people. As mentioned earlier, Nagas rarely give expression for their emotional sufferings, and they may not readily respond to conventional counseling centers. So initiation at the church /women/tribal organizations' level would be more effective, because these organizations are integral to the Naga way of life.
11. Sensitization of media to gender concerns
12. Strengthening of peace process by creating a conducive atmosphere for peace dialogues; creating democratic space for people to decision making process
13. Organizations, Government, Naga national workers, Media, Police and security forces, like the CRPF, BSF, etc to be sensitized about human rights issues
14. More women cells and recruitment drive for women personnel in the police department
15. Mental health should be addressed more seriously. There is a great need for professionals in this field. Awareness on mental health should penetrate even the most interior areas. Awareness on the need for professionals on mental health needs to be created.
16. Traditional and customary laws which are discriminatory against women should be identified. In this regard, thorough research involving every tribe and different clans within the tribes need to be carried out and changes made at the earliest.

17. Rehabilitation schemes and compensation for widows and orphans who have been affected by conflict. (This should be done on a case to case basis. Tribal organizations/ Hohos, church or other voluntary organizations involved in this kind of issues can recommend people in their areas).
18. Government schemes should be made more accessible to genuine cases. Simpler steps should be assumed to implement programmes for these women. More effective communication strategies should be adopted to communicate about these programs, so that even rural people can avail of the opportunities. There should also be a mechanism to check whether concerned authorities are carrying out the specifications properly, so as to discourage corruption.
19. More women participation in matter concerning them, especially in decision making bodies like VBD, Legislative assembly, etc
20. Justice corresponding to the severity of the crime committed, particularly crimes against women, should be addressed. Delays and lengthy court procedures should be erased.
21. Coordination must be a central component in the effective implementation of a comprehensive peace building strategy. Different groups involved in peace building initiatives could find a common platform to air their views collectively, which would be more effective.
22. More research on a wide range of issues concerning women required so that effective strategies can be formulated.
23. Important to include women in the peace and reconciliation committees

## CHAPTER - 6

# TRIPURA : A BRIEF BACKGROUND TO THE CONFLICT

### Land and People

Tripura is a small hilly state situated, bordered by Assam's Cachar district, and Mizoram on the east; Comilla, and a part of the Noakhali district of Bangladesh on the west and south; the Chittagong district of Bangladesh on the south east and Sylhet district of Bangladesh on the north west. Tripura became a full-fledged state of the Indian Union on July 17, 1972. It derives its identity from the Tipera community, or Tripuri in the Sanskritized form which belongs to the Kirata stream. The community speaks the Kokbarak language.

In the pre-colonial period Tripura received immigrants from many parts of the country. From the east they came in search of land and work on the tea gardens. However it was only after independence that the largest wave of migration occurred. Bordered by Bangladesh on three sides, Tripura witnessed an influx of refugees that trebled the population and reduced the proportion of the tribals. This makes Tripura a unique case of demographic metamorphosis.

Tripura has an 856 km long porous border with Bangladesh. The border is peculiar and the international line runs through many villagers. In many cases the bedroom opens in India and the kitchen in Bangladesh!

The northern and southern parts of the state have a hilly terrain and are home to some 32 communities including the Chakmas, Jamatias, Noatias and Riangs. The plains in the western region are dotted with multi ethnic, non-tribal settlements. The communities living in Tripura are patrilineal, and the status of women is considered low although they play an active role in the economy and contribute substantially to the family income. A high level of participation has been reported in agriculture, animal husbandry and fishing. Land is the main economic resource for most of the communities and is controlled by individual proprietors in most of these communities. The tribals have retained their customary laws. They have two institutions: one at the village level and the other at the inter-village level. These tribal councils exercise social control in 37 communities and the statutory panchayats implement welfare and development activities.

### Population

Tripura had a population of 27,57,205 comprising 8,53,345 tribals (30.95 per cent of the total) and 4,51,116 (16.36 per cent of the total) scheduled caste (non-tribal) according to the census

conducted in 1991. The literacy rate was 60 per cent. But according to the 'Provisional Population Totals – 2001' the population on March 1 2004 stood at 31,91,168, a growth of 4, 33,963 persons over the 1991 population. The population of the state has grown by 15.74 per cent during the decade as against the national average growth of 21.38 per cent in the same period. The literacy rate in Tripura, according to the just-released census, is 73.66 per cent as against the national average of 65.38 per cent.

In the North Eastern, Tripura stands second only to Mizoram (88.49 per cent) in literacy. The density of population in Tripura is 304 per square km as against the national average of 324. In 1991 population density in Tripura was 263 as against 267 at the national level. However, the total population figure announced by the census department here has triggered a major controversy as 'mid year 2000 estimated population' of Tripura was 38,27,052 as recorded in the 'economic review-2000' of the Tripura government, tabled in the budget session of the assembly in February-March this year a huge difference between the census figures and that of the state government. Besides, decadal growth rate of population in Tripura had always been higher than national average till 1991. The decadal growth of population in 1961 as recorded at 76.86 per cent over 1951 mainly because of influx of refugees from erstwhile East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), in 1971 the decadal growth of population slowed down to 36.28 per cent, in 1981 it was 31.91 per cent while in 1991 the decadal growth rate was 34.30 per cent. The overall growth rate of population per decade was always 8-10 per cent higher than the national average.

The tribal-non-tribal breakup of the population will take at least one more year to be finalized and announced. All the political parties in the state have questioned the authenticity of the census figures saying the enumerators failed to visit rebel-infested interior areas and returned incorrect figures. They have demanded a complete re-census. The state CPI (M) party organ *Daily Desher Katha* on 28 March, 2001 has also described the growth rate of population as 'abnormally low'. This issue is at the root of the conflict and insurgency in the state which has impacted women and children in particular.

### **Demographic Imbalance**

Regarding the demographic imbalance it must be mentioned that contrary to ideas put forward by a section of the intelligentsia, princely Tripura ruled by the Manikyas from 1464 to 1947 always had a Bengali population since the earliest times as recorded by 'Rajmala' the court chronicle of Tripura kings. As per census records, tribals constituted 52.89 per cent of Tripura's population in the first census of the last century held in 1901 while non-tribals formed 47.11 per cent.

The balance remained relatively stable in 1931 census when Tripura's tribal population was 50.26 per cent and non-tribal Bengali population was 49.74 per cent. Even in 1941 tribal and non-tribal population was respectively 50.9 per cent and 49.91 per cent. But, the beginning of communal clashes involving Hindus and Muslims in British-ruled East Bengal (later, East Pakistan and now Bangladesh)

from 1943 led to a trickle of influx into princely Tripura from neighboring Chakla Roshanabad area, a zemindari of Tripura kings spread over present Comilla, Brahmanbaria districts and parts of Habiganj, Sylhet and Noakhali districts in present Bangladesh. The kings welcomed the refugees as they were their subjects and helped them settle down here. But as communal clashes grew in intensity over the Muslim League's demand for Pakistan, influx from other parts of East Bengal also started. The major changes in the demographic balance of Tripura was reflected in the 1951 census when tribal population was recorded at 36.85 per cent and the trend continued till 1981 census when tribal population reached its lowest point and fell to 28.44 per cent.

### **A Fractured World**

Tripura, once a proud tribal kingdom ruled by a succession of 183 Tripuri princes who held sway over a land whose history is etched over centuries in the *Rajmala*, the state chronicle, is today swamped by migrants from Bangladesh since the 1950s. In 1947, Tripura had a population of 600,000 of whom 93 per cent were from indigenous tribes. By 1981 the tribals had been reduced to a minority of 28.5 per cent of a population of 2.06 million. An estimated 610,000 immigrants entered Tripura between 1947 and 1971.

This drastic demographic change in Tripura was the most immediate cause of the conflict situation in the state. Political power slipped out of the hands of the tribals as they were displaced by the new settlers. This caused an enormous pressure on scant tribal resources and led to an identity crisis among the tribals. An insurgency began against the Bengali settlers in 1980 but it ended by 1988 after the central government offered more representation to the tribals in the state legislature and a promise to stop illegal migration and land alienation. However, this political arrangement has not been satisfactory and militant activity has resumed, aimed at Bengali settlers and security forces and more lately among the different factions targeting the tribal villages.

The first manifestation of opposition to the Bengali refugee influx was the formation of Seng Krak, a militant organization of tribals formed with the objective of protecting tribal interests as early as 1947. It was outlawed but spawned the Paharia Union in 1951. Two other tribal bodies, the Adivasi Samiti and the Tripura Rajya Adivasi Sangh came into being and the three merged in 1954 and formed the Adivasi Sansad. In 1967 another militant outfit named the Tripura Upajati Juba Samiti (TUJS) was formed under the leadership of Samacharan Tripura, a teacher. The Tribal National Volunteers (TNV) was formed in 1978 by Bijoy Hranghkawal, who belonged formerly to the TUJS. The members of this group were sent to the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh for training. They raided police stations and outposts, killed jawans, looted markets and damaged property.

By the middle of 1979 communal tension in Tripura was very high. The tribal uprisings of 1980 were accompanied by large-scale devastations and killings of hundreds of men and women by the TNV extremists. "Numerous villages were laid waste. Lakhs of people were rendered homeless. Properties, both movable and immovable were destroyed, damaged, burnt, looted and captured. Hundreds were

murdered. Women were raped. All contemptible crimes in human history were committed." (Gan Chaudhry, 1985). The TUJS was helped by the MNF of Mizoram and in 1982 formed the All Tripura People's Liberation Organization (ATPLO), which surrendered in 1983.

In a March 17, 1983 letter, Hrangkhwal wrote to the centre,

"Armed insurgency was necessary to reach your heart...Either you deport all foreign nationals who infiltrated into Tripura after October 15, 1947 or settle them anywhere in India other than Tripura. Restore tribal majority interest. It may not matter to you much but delaying implementation will mean that the TNV will fight for total self determination."

A memorandum of understanding in 1988 was signed between the TNV and the central government with the understanding that the surrendered militants would be rehabilitated and the TNV would give up its secessionist policy and abjure violence and all underground activity.

Finally the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council came into being in January 1992. However not all TNV cadres were happy about laying down arms and some went underground in 1990 to form the All Tripura Tribal Force (ATTF). Some formed yet another splinter group called the All Tripura Tiger Force. In 1989 the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) was formed. There are around 11 militant outfits operating in Tripura and the NSCN (IM) and ULFA have forged links with some of them, especially NLFT which is currently the major insurgent organization.

Tribals in the rural and urban areas feel a keen sense of deprivation. Earlier the target of the insurgent groups were the new Bengali settlers who the tribals felt had taken away their land, forest, means of livelihood – today, however, the insurgent groups are targeting different groups of tribals as one insurgent faction takes on another in an endless round of attrition. A section of the extremist youth has completely lost faith in the mainstream political parties as well as in democratic methods of problem solving. Land alienation too is a major cause of the unrest in Tripura. Immigrant (Bangladeshi refugee) settlements in both the plains and tilla lands have created a great problem of non-availability of land for rehabilitation of jhumias and for distribution among landless tribal people. In a block level survey of indebtedness and land alienation conducted by the Directorate of Tribal Research, Agartala in 1974 it was found that indebtedness was directly and positively correlated with alienation of tribal lands.

Eight years of tribal insurgency was to come to an end in 1988 when a tripartite agreement was signed by the Indian government, the government of Tripura and the militant TNV. This peace accord was rudely shattered with the attack on the Tainani police outpost on 12, December 1991 by the NLFT. Since then a number of such insurgent groups have been operating in the area and attacks on common people as well as against security personnel are increasing daily. Armed with easily available country-made weapons these groups ravage the countryside. Kidnapping too has become a big business. The following incidents over just two months in early 1999 will give a fair idea of the violence that is rocking the state.

1. February 9, 1999—Jamini Devburma, 80, a senior social worker who belonged to CPI (M) was shot dead by NLFT militants. Seven persons including 2 children were kidnapped.
2. February 12, 1999—NLFT gunmen set fire to several houses of non tribals in the Garbadi area. These houses had been deserted earlier because of ongoing violence over the last week.
3. February 18, 1999—Rabinder Dev, a Bengali trader along with four others were kidnapped in West Tripura. On the same day NLFT militants fired at a bus killing 3 passengers. Four people were kidnapped.
4. February 22, 1999 – four students were abducted from Bandwar in Udaipur, south Tripura. They were released after paying ransom.
5. February 27, 1999 12 year old Purnima Ghosh was kidnapped on her way to school at Dataram in Udaipur.
6. March 3, 1999, 2 persons killed and 3 kidnapped at Tulsikhar in South Tripura.
7. March 11, 1999—Assam Rifles killed nine militants in Kolachera in North Tripura.

### **Violence against Women**

Statistics on militancy-related deaths and casualties are difficult to come by in Tripura because of inadequate dissemination of official information and total lack of a viable information-gathering network in the rebel-infested rural and hilly areas. This leaves one with no other alternative but to rely on official data tabled in the State Assembly. According to figures furnished by Chief Minister Manik Sarkar who also holds the Home portfolio as well a total of 1,718 persons including women, children and members of security forces lost their lives in militancy related violence from April 10, 1993 to February 28, 2001. Apart from this, 1,961 persons were kidnapped by militants between April 10, 1993 and May 31, 2000. According to figures tabled by the chief minister, more than 47 of those kidnapped have not been traced even after two years.

### **Women and Conflict : Some Case Studies**

#### **Rape in Ujanmaidan**

Ujanmaidan, a hill top hamlet stands in splendid isolation, a steep mud track winding through the hills connects it to Khowai subdivision about nine kms away. Forty-two Debbarma (tribal) families inhabit the village and live on jhum cultivation. During the off-season the villagers travel everyday to Khowai town in search of a livelihood. The poor, illiterate villagers have to travel 18 kms to purchase daily necessities from Champawar market on the fringes of Khowai town.

Recounting the incidents between May 31 and June 2, 1988 in her village Hiramala Debbarma, 28 said that at about 9am on June 1 a group of 3 Assam Rifles jawans entered her hut and "ill treated" her as a result of which she fell unconscious. She was alone in the hut at the time as her



husband, Kamala Kanta Debbarma had not returned home from the jhum hut the previous night. Her two children watched helpless. When asked if by "ill treated" she meant raped, she nodded her head in agreement. At this point a young man standing there said, "How can you expect a backward tribal woman to say that she has been raped in the presence of so many people? It is not part of our culture especially among women to use such words."

This was also what the other women who were similarly raped in the little hamlet had to say when they were asked to describe the violation that they suffered. While the Assam Rifles firmly denied the charges it is apparent that incidents like these increase tensions and women especially are even more marginalized. They are forced to stay indoors and forgo their normal daily activities. They cannot work or walk around alone. Violence is experienced by women of all ages ranging from minor girls to old women. Sexual violence and rape continue to be used as a weapon of dominance or subjugation. Rape is perceived as a crime against honour often resulting in the victim not reporting the incident for fear of being viewed as "dirty" or "spoiled".

As this incident reveals clearly, women are hesitant to talk about rape and abuse and will often couch the act in other words that are not perceived to be as offensive. It is not just the honour of the women victim that is in question here but the perceived honour of their men that is the target in sexually violating women. It is seen as an act of revenge, of a war that men fight and the scars that they leave on the bodies of their women.

Besides the fact that women as a whole are specifically targeted it is seen that women from the more marginalized communities and disadvantaged groups are more vulnerable to violence for the violence is then coupled with parochialism.

The documentation process is often very difficult and has many limitations. Researchers felt that while it was comparatively easy to get people to talk when the violations were by the armed forces, it was not so when the violators were non-state actors. These violations remain largely hidden and nobody is willing to come forward with details. There is an atmosphere of intense fear and a feeling of betraying the "cause" or the "struggle".

### **Case of Dalia Halam**

Kalucherra is a sleepy tribal hamlet about 15 kms from Salema market. Since there is no motorable road the only way to get there is on foot through hills and forests and across the Dhalai river on a fragile bamboo bridge. The villagers appeared visible scared and apprehensive. Sejuti Halam, a 65 year old woman said, "You people come here from the town once a year for your own purpose but the extremists might attack us or beat us to extract why you have come here." The villagers are mainly agricultural labourers, a few subsist on gathering forest produce.

On 15 July, 2002 a group of young insurgents belonging to the banned NFLT raided a nursery school in the village in broad daylight and started firing indiscriminately. Dahlia Halam, 20, who

worked as a helper in the school, was shot and killed as she tried to flee. The incident was apparently in retaliation because the villagers and the school- teachers had been objecting to insurgent movement in the area. Villagers said that after the incident her family left the village.

Tapan Das a villager said that insurgents often came to the village to extort money, collect taxes or to eat chicken and pork at the expense of the villagers. The villagers do not support insurgency but they do not report these incidents to the police either because they are afraid.

The conflict in the state has no frontiers, entering every home, every neighbourhood and disrupting community life processes. Normal economic life is seriously compromised. The stress associated with the constant threat and anxiety of living in an atmosphere of relentless violence is extreme but much as in Nagaland there are no facilities for medical help and no trauma centres for these women and no psychiatrists either.

### **Study of Raiyabari**

*Raiyabari village, South Tripura District, December 1999*

Raiyabari is a picturesque village with a mixed population. Muslims and people of the Jamatiya tribe live here and their main occupation is agriculture. At least six women, including a 13 year old Muslim girl were gang raped by a group of insurgents belonging to the banned National Liberation Front of Tripura in a period spanning the month of December. Their homes and belongings were looted and their food and livestock taken. All the 124 families residing in this area left from there and only 20 have returned this year (2003). The others are still in Udaipur, the district headquarters of South Tripura district. The displaced women are working as maids in other people's homes to earn a living. The men who were earlier settled cultivators have become day labourers or rickshaw pullers.

When the incident was published in a local daily the Tripura Assembly witnessed uproarious scenes. Tripura's Marxist government appointed a commission of inquiry to probe the incident and submit a report within three months of appointment. The commission which was appointed in April 2000, consisting of one member, has recently submitted a report the findings of which are yet to be made public.

The stress and trauma associated with rape and sexual violation lasts long after the incident and there are no counseling centres or trauma centres or even adequate medical help available to these poor rural women to enable them to cope with their harrowing experiences.

In many areas this has led to forced migrations and displacements where women and men have moved to urban centres in search of shelter and livelihood. This often leaves them even more vulnerable to exploitation.

Further, women are often forced to contribute to the 'cause' on a regular basis by providing food and shelter to insurgents. Their poultry and livestock and other food items are looted or extorted by

both insurgents and security forces. There is no alternate means of livelihoods for these rural women thus making them even more vulnerable and dependent.

In many areas the breaking up of family and community support systems has led to disastrous consequences like starvation and prostitution. Continued violence in rural areas has affected livelihoods, properties are lost, occupied or looted and burnt. Food security is increasingly under threat.

### **Kidnapping and sexual abuse by insurgent groups**

*Gayapara village, West Tripura District*

Padmabati Debbarma was kidnapped from her father's house in village Gayapara in West Tripura District in April 2001 by Rabicharan Debbarma, belonging to the banned insurgent outfit, NLFT. Forced to live with him as his wife Padmabati found herself completely stranded when Rabicharan was killed by security forces in an encounter. Her parents were reluctant to take back their daughter fearing for their own lives. The village they lived in was in the grip of another rebel faction, the ATTF. Taking advantage of the situation, Prasanjit Debbarma a middle-ranking leader of the INPT, gave her shelter. But under the guise of being her custodian and protector he allegedly raped her repeatedly. She has been unable to escape despite many futile attempts.

### **Effect of Conflict on Education and Health**

The militancy-related casualties also include near total collapse of the education system and health services in the interior areas. The teachers, most of whom are non-tribal Bengalis, cannot visit schools for fear of being killed or abducted by militant groups operating in the area. The severe terror and intimidation that they work under can be realized from fact that between April 1, 1993 and February 15, 2000, twenty teachers and non-teaching employees of schools were killed by the militants, as per statistics given in the state assembly by education minister, Anil Sarkar last year. During the same period 58 teachers and non-teaching employees were kidnapped by the militants and of these six are still missing.

The education minister informed the State Assembly on February 23, 2001 that only 15 schools of which 14 are under the Tripura Tribal Autonomous District Council (TTAPC) area for tribals are totally closed because of insurgency. No student could pass the Madhyamik examination conducted by Tripura Board Secondary Education (TBSE) in the year 1999-2000 from as many as 40 schools while no student could pass the 10+2 examination of TBSE in the same year from seven schools.

However, Mr. Sarkar's figures were strongly challenged by TUJS MLA and general secretary Rabindra Debbarma, who asserted that more than 80 per cent of the 1, 284 schools located within ADC areas have been lying closed for more than five years. The ADC area dominated by tribals is the worst affected by tribal militancy. The pathetic state of education is reflected in the dropout rate among students studying between classes I to X. According to statistics given in the *Economic Review-1999-2000 of Tripura Government* dropout rate among students from class I to X was 78.62 per cent

as against the national average rate of 69.2 per cent in the year 1997-98. It may be mentioned that the drop out rate among only tribal students was higher

### **Recommendations from Tripura**

1. Political will to resolve the present situation of unease and tension and a sincere effort to find a political solution, which appears to have begun with two smaller groups of the All Tripura Tigers Force agreeing to a ceasefire and to negotiate a peace settlement with the Centre (April 2004).
2. Improve legal system to be more accessible and gender sensitive, especially in cases of sexual abuse
3. Protect children, especially girl children, from rape and sexual exploitation
4. Collect and provide information on the different dimensions of violence against women in conflict areas
5. Address the mental and physical health needs of women in these situations by providing counseling and rehabilitation centres for affected women
6. Involve women in peace building efforts and post conflict reconstruction
7. Rehabilitation for the displaced
8. Suitable resource allocation for loss of livelihoods and property
9. Ensure education to young women and girls who have been displaced from their villages and who are even more vulnerable and insecure due to conflict situation
10. Work out economic packages and special schemes for women

## **CHAPTER - 7**

# **CONCLUSIONS**

The study of the impact of armed conflict on women in Nagaland and Tripura is an extremely difficult task demanding sensitive handling because of the nature of the issue. It is however necessary and important to draw attention to the plight of women in such situations and to bring these cases to the attention of the outside world. Documentation of these experiences is in itself a political intervention.

Violations against women must be viewed as violations of fundamental human rights for which there can be no justification.

War and civil conflict can be devastating to social and cultural forms because they impinge at the level of the whole society according to analysts (Summerfield,1991). Every person who has lived through this period of conflict and experienced at first hand the effect of the armed conflict is aware of the wide-ranging ramifications that the atmosphere of violence has had (and in some cases) is still having on them. The severity of the damage is often not easy to quantify but there are deep psychological, physical and social scars. The economic scars too are very visible in terms of the low development paradigms.

In a climate fraught with political violence people find it safer to adopt a new standard for normalcy than to look and identify the causes of their predicament it is just for this reason that a study of this nature is so important. It will indeed take a long time for society to absorb what has happened and is continuing to happen. But memories locked away must be enabled to find the words to express experiences that are almost unspeakable. As Summerfield who has worked in his native Zimbabwe in a war ravaged area near the Mozambique border says some of the old traditions and beliefs will not survive the trials that whole communities are undergoing. "For individuals, as for a society, things can never be the same and a new world view is needed."

Corruption is regarded as extensive in Nagaland where the Centre has poured in large amounts ostensibly for development projects but which have been misused by a powerful elite. There is increased crime, domestic violence, drug addiction, alcoholism and other effects of this inflow of funds on the youth. In addition, there is not a single family that has not faced violence directly or indirectly. In Nagaland the situation is somewhat improved after the ceasefire but in Tripura tension and violence continue, despite a decision by two smaller armed groups to conclude a ceasefire with New Delhi. The big militant factions are still out of the loop of discussions and peacemaking.

Much more research needs to be done on both states in order to get statistics and figures because there has been so little work done in this area especially in Tripura. This study is the basis for more detailed and reflective studies over a longer period of time.

But as this report shows, it is important to mobilize groups to bring about change and to build partnerships with women and other groups to establish civil and political rights. Above all, it is critical to enabling healing to come about simply by listening to the stories of those who have suffered. The Coordinator was touched, when during a visit to Nagaland, she found victims of conflict opening up to her, even though she was a complete stranger and this was their first meeting. People retain a generosity of spirit and heart that is important to tap as a source of reconciliation and change.

While acknowledging the unique struggles of groups in the North East, it is also important for these groups to know that they are not alone and that other groups also have suffered in struggles elsewhere. In India alone, the stories coming out of Jammu and Kashmir, from Punjab and from neighboring Sri Lanka and Bangladesh (out of the Tamils and the Chakmas) underline the shared pain, desperation and justness of women's rights and the need to address them with courage, sensitivity and vision.

It is also important to stress that for any lasting solution and in any process of reconciliation, the voices of women must be heard, their anguish must be assuaged. The collective testimony of people who have been consistently kept voiceless is also a writing of the history of our time.

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## QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Are you aware of the rights of women?
2. Are people in your area aware of the rights of women?
3. Are you aware of any women being arrested by the police?
4. Or arrested by the Indian Army?
5. Or detained by the underground factions?
6. Are you aware of any one kidnapped or abducted by the police?
7. Abducted by the Indian army?
8. By underground factions?
9. Are you aware of women / girls serving as soldiers in underground factions?
10. Why have they joined? (Influence of friend, family too poor, looking for employment, want to take revenge, forcibly recruited, and patriotism, any other?).
11. What do they do?
12. Do you think economic development will solve Naga political problems?
13. Will political settlement stop conflicts?
14. Has there been displacement of population?
15. Has your own family been displaced as a result of conflict?
16. Under what circumstances were locals displaced?
17. What were the effects of displacement?
18. Have you experienced family separation?
19. Was anyone in your family killed or injured?
20. Are you a victim of armed conflict? (Trauma, torture, harassment, and property looted or destroyed, education disturbed.)

21. Have you been given any compensation?
22. If yes, what kind (cash, job, clothes, house, any other)?
23. Do you know any victim of armed conflict in your area?
24. Are there any rape victims in your area? do you know them?
25. Who is the bread runner in your family?
26. What is the source of income?
27. What according to you are the effects of armed conflicts on society (psycho-social trauma, slow economic development, harassment, disruption of normal life, scarcity and conflation education hampered, human rights violation, loss of faith and trust, frustration and anger, corruption extortion and killing, loss of identity / values)?
28. What do you think of the ceasefire period?
29. What were the effects of armed conflicts on state? (Corruption, law and order, fear, suspicion, economic crippled, psycho-social problems)
30. What role can the church play in ending conflict?
31. What role should the Hoho play?
32. What about the role of NGOs and others?
33. How has this conflict affected education, School drop-out rate (exams disrupted, can't attend schools, regularly)?
34. What effect on girls education? any threat from security forces, local groups?
35. As a result of the current situation has there been any destruction of property, looting of property, property occupied by security forces?
37. Broken families, single parent family, escalating violence in the home as a result of extreme tension and pressure?
38. Number of widows in your area that you know / in your family?
39. Reasons of widowhood, what it has meant in terms of livelihood, survival etc.
40. Number of orphans (incident, reasons, what effects)?
41. Is there any link between the situation of conflict and alcohol and drug abuse (Reasons, effect of abuse on children, youths, society)?
42. Common diseases in your area?

43. What are the health facilities in your area? Where do you go to in case of emergency?
44. What according to you is the govt. role in ensuring health & well being?
45. Awareness of govt. programmes and effectiveness of such in your area?.
46. Are there NGOs helping women and children (in what areas)?
47. How does your community regard women, what freedom do they enjoy, can they inherit landed property, what role do they play in decision-making?
48. Have you witnessed firing, torture, violence, and physical assault?
49. How has this affected you?
50. Do you know any one who is mentally ill due to traumatic experience?
51. Any specific cases of molestation / sexual abuse?.
52. Do you know of any case where there has been a judicial inquiry ordered?
53. Do you think there is an increase in cases of domestic violence due to the conflict situation?
54. Has the situation had adverse effects on trafficking and prostitution of women and children?

## NAGALAND

### 2.1 The situation today in Nagaland

The political turmoil that Nagaland has endured for over five decades have left deep impacts on society. Those who have lived through the turmoil and unrest between the periods 1950s and 1970s still carry the wounds – on their bodies, their minds and hearts.

While there is a good deal of change for the better in the towns after the cease fire, (checking and questioning by the army has dropped) there is always a palpable tension. Interestingly, most people seem to have gotten used to this feeling. They simply endure the feeling of insecurity, the constant killings among the different factions, and the arrogant behavior of some army personnel at check gates, within the towns and basically the abnormality of the situation, without any questions. Post ceasefire, the various factions are now surfacing in the open, and they can move about freer than ever before. This causes inconvenience for the public, especially when the cadres go to the villages and demand food and money.

Violation of human rights by both sides is still a part of life, by the armed forces newspapers carry reports of factional killings and extortion. Sometimes, young men posing as “national workers” as the underground is described locally try to extract money in the form of tax from the public.

In a recent case, a BSF jawan allegedly attempted to rape a woman from Chedema village, near a BSF camp, on Jan 17, 2004 (*Eastern Mirror*, Feb 14, 03). All these reports make people extremely insecure.

ASPFA which gives wide discretionary powers to the armed forces is a great nuisance for the general public. On the other hand, the Assam Rifles has adopted the slogan, ‘Friends of the Hills’ and they are making attempts to change the perception about the security forces in the minds of people. Either most Nagas, especially those in the rural areas, knew a India through its armed personnel. But now, with developmental work especially in rural areas, people seem to be slowly changing their attitudes. But it will definitely take time, because the wounds. Even local newspaper reporters complains that the army forces them to write about its ‘good works’ in their papers.

Many organizations have set up peace committees to initiate peace in the state; they include the NBCC (Peace Affairs), NPMHR, NMA and the Naga Hoho. These groups work together sometimes, and also independently.

## **2.2 The Oinam Case, July 1987**

On July 9, 1987, one of the seminal events with regard to human rights in the North-east took place. This happened in Manipur, which neighbours Nagaland, but became one of the most celebrated and challenging human rights cases involving the Nagas and security forces. On that day, the 29<sup>th</sup> battalion of the Assam Rifles post near Oinam village in Senapati district, Manipur, was attacked by members of the Naga underground in broad daylight. They walked away with large quantities of arms and ammunition. Nine jawans were killed and three seriously injured. The Assam Rifles launched 'Operation Bluebird' to recover the captured arms and ammunition. The operation lasted until October 1987 and was carried out in and around Oinam and its surrounding 30 villages. Within a few days of the operation being launched there were reports that the villagers were being subjected to all kinds of inhuman and degrading treatment by the Assam Rifles. Politicians of various local and national parties, journalists, student leaders and village elders voiced their concern in the shape of numerous memorandums and petitions both to the Manipur government and the government of India. However no official commission of inquiry or even an administrative investigation was forthcoming. Instead the then Chief Minister expressed his absolute helplessness in protecting the villagers

The Civil Liberties and Human Rights Organization, Imphal was the first to file petitions on behalf of the villagers and secured the immediate release of village leaders who had been imprisoned and also compensation for the families of those killed by the Assam Rifles. The Women's Union of the Manipur Baptist Convention also filed a petition on behalf of women who had been raped and sexually molested and those who had been forced to work as construction labourers or porters during the operation. In October 1987 NPMHR filed petition on behalf of all affected people at the Guwahati High Court.

They claimed that the Assam Rifles had shot dead 15 people after subjecting them to inhuman torture. Villagers were made to stand in torrential rains and scorching heat for weeks. Hundreds of villagers were severely beaten and subjected to third degree methods of torture. Men were hung upside down, buried alive and given electric shocks. Sexual abuse of women was widely reported. Two women were forced to give birth in the open in full view of the soldiers and villagers. Food grain and private property was looted and villagers were forced into Labour camps. Lakhs worth of agricultural crops were destroyed. The Assam Rifles destroyed homes, churches and school buildings. (NPMHR Commemorative Issue, 2002) Villagers from affected areas suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder for years afterwards as Nandita Haksar's report of the incidents makes clear.

## **2.3 Sample Interviews from Nagaland**

### **1. Interview with the Rev. Dr. V.K.Nuh, General Secretary, CNBC on 15 November 2003**

Q1. How would you describe the political situation during the 1950s?

Ans: Before the advent of the British and Christianity, every Naga village had its own government. There were hardly any incidents of any rape or murder or any other crimes. According to a statement by A.Z. Phizo, during the period 1879 to 1947, in 30 years, there was one case of

suicide; in 30 years, there was a case of rape. Before 1947, there was no political parties, no caste system and everyone was equal; no prisons; no records of extortion, etc.

1954 marked the beginning of the political struggle; resistance of Nagas against the Indian rule. There was no human rights organization to help the Nagas; no media to tell the world about our sufferings and the inhuman treatment meted out to us. From time to time, the Federal Government of Nagaland would collect incidents from various villages and write to the U.N.O., because they knew that there was an organization out there which settles disputes between countries. But they never knew whether the letter reached the U. N.O, as there was no response.

**Q2.** Have you witnessed any atrocities being committed towards women?

**Ans:** When the Indian Army began their operations in 1954, they burnt down villages; granaries and livestock. Men and women were separated, and they were tortured separately. While the men were beaten, some even to death, some women were raped, beaten and mentally tortured. Sometimes the whole villages would be made to gather in the local ground, and even women who were about to deliver babies were not spared. They had to deliver in the open, in front of the whole public. Some women were even raped in the churches. Even mentally deranged women and little girls were not spared from being molested.

**Q3.** How do you feel the conflict has affected women in general?

**Ans:** There is absolutely no sense of security for women. Even if girl wants to pursue further studies, she fears traveling alone. Before 40 years, when the underground was constituted, there were absolutely no cases of crimes against women. But in the last 10 years, more and more cases are being reported daily.

**Q4.** Do you feel that a particular tribe/tribes was targeted or do you feel that any particular tribe has been worse affected than the other tribes?

**Ans:** No. All the tribes suffered equally. Even though the army operations started from the Tuensang area, it spread to the whole of Nagaland.

**Q5.** How do you feel about the status of women in the Naga society?

**Ans:** Women are still not encouraged to participate in decision making activities whether relating to petty matters or matters relating to the State. There is discrimination when it comes to inheritance, and education. Parents still prefer to send their sons out to study to girls, if they cannot afford to send both to school. The feeling that one day the girl will belong to someone else still persists.

**Q6.** Did you come across any women who joined the underground? Why?

**Ans:** Women have joined underground factions. Cases that I have seen are mostly those who have been ill-treated by the army, and they have joined out of anger.

## **2. Interview with Daisy Mezbur, Secretary, Social Welfare Advisory Board**

**Q1.** Are there any schemes from the government, specifically to help women who have been directly effected by the conflict, for instance, widows whose husbands have been killed by either the Indian army or the underground factions?

**Ans:** There are no special schemes/programmes or concrete plans from the government specifically for women in distress/to rehabilitate women in difficult circumstances. Two years ago, a programme called 'short stay home' was launched, but this is not to rehabilitate direct victims. There is another programme for destitute women, but I do not know how far this is effective. 'Destitute women' have not been defined; besides the government gives a mere Rs. 200/- per month.

Although we feel the need, there is no specific agency to come forward to help them out.

As concerned citizens, all of us in our own way act as support systems. We sympathize, listen and try to help whenever we hear of incidents committed against women, but we cannot act as professional counselors.

**Q2.** What according to you are the effects of the growing conflict in the society?

**Ans:** Our society is going through a transition period, which is much too fast for us. We are running before we can walk. Hence, there is so much chaos. In the whole process women are caught in the web. Atrocities against women are growing, and we wonder why. We live under extreme tension and pressure everyday. If we hear a bang, we crawl under the table. In the evenings, if any member of the family is still out, we are sick with worry and tension. In a way, we all need professional help. We live in constant fear. There is a kind of fear psychosis in every one of us. All of us are victims in one way or the other. I feel the need to talk to somebody before I go mad. Just because I feel the need that I need to talk to somebody is keeping me from going mad!

**Q3.** From your interactions with the sex workers, what are the main reasons for entering this profession?

**Ans:** There is absolutely no need to be hypocritical about this fact. There is flesh trade going on, there is prostitution. And about 99% of them are there not because of their will but because they are trapped in one way or the other. Some of them are because of the irresponsible behavior of their brothers, uncles and fathers. Because of poor economic status, some are pushed into this business by them.

**Q4.** Are there any counseling centers to rehabilitate sex-workers? Women who have been molested? Undergone traumatic experiences?

**Ans:** None. In fact, our state mental hospital is in a pathetic state. Also, there are no women cells in the police departments. (Even if there are, I am not aware of it). And when are girl wants to report a crime committed against her, she has to tell her story to a man. This becomes an even more harrowing experience for her.

Q5. Have you ever experienced any conflict situations directly?

Ans: I was caught in crossfire once. I underwent some kind of delusion

Q6. How did you deal with the trauma?

Ans: Well, nothing. Even if I wanted to see a psychiatrist, the general perception is that I have to be mad to see a psychiatrist. That worsens the situation. Besides, as I mentioned the condition of the mental hospital is terrible.

**3. Name: Mrs Aroni Khuvung (Victim)**

Age: 49

Place of interview: Her residence – Kohima

Details of incident

My father was the Head Dobasha, in Lotha Area appointed by the Britishers. Because of his position, the Naga Army used to suspect him of being an agent of the Indian Government and threaten him a lot. In Dec. 1970, three members of the Naga underground attacked him outside his office and he died in the hospital. He was around 45 years of age then. When he was about to die, he called my mother and eldest sister, and told them the names of those who shot him, but he also told them to forgive them just as Jesus forgave his oppressors. So we didn't file any case against them.

We are 8 children in all, 5 girls and 3 boys. I was studying in college in *Golaghat*, and my 2 sisters and brothers were in Shillong. My youngest brother was 6 months old. My siblings who were studying in Shillong had to come back to Wokha and continue their studies because of economic reasons. I continued my studies in Golaghat, because my college was not very expensive. I failed that year because I couldn't concentrate in my studies. My two brothers would not take up Government jobs even though they were offered officer's posts, because there were very few educated Nagas at that time. One of my brothers is a contractor now, but he doesn't deal with the Nagaland Government.

We were all in our growing stage at that time, and so our lives were very much affected. My youngest brother grew up rebellious. Because there is huge age gap between him and us, after we all got married, he fell into depression. He got involved in drug abuse, and died very early in life. And I can say that if my father were around, he would have been a different person. All my cousins who used to stay in our house and study are educated, and they hold important positions in the Government, but my brothers don't have an education. And those years of growing up without a father have had huge impact in our personality also. We all suffered from inferiority complex. Even now, I feel the pain. I have nightmares even today. (The last one was in January 2004). Even though I am a married woman now, and a mother of 5 children, I still miss my father very much. There is always a feeling of incompleteness. And till now I cannot forgive my fathers' murderers. Just last year, one of the relatives of one of my father's murderers got married to one of my relatives, but I couldn't bring myself to attend the wedding. I also telephoned all my sisters and instructed them not to attend the party!



Father had constructed a number of houses before his death, so with the rent that we got from those houses, mother paid for our education. Fortunately we weren't so badly off.

Q. How did you deal with the trauma?

Ans: I remember my mother would get up early in the morning and pray beside my father's grave. I think that it's only because of my mother's prayers that we managed to pull through

Q. What is the status of women in your community/

Ans: Women do not get ancestral property. But in my family we all got our shares, and my husband and I will divide our property equally among our four daughters and one son. Father had instructed mother that whoever wants to study should be allowed to do so even if they had to sell all their lands and properties, irrespective of whether it's a boy or girl. Likewise, there was no discrimination at all between my brothers and us sisters. Even when we got married, we all got our share of property.

Q. Are you involved in any women's organization or group?

Ans: I am the president of Eloë Hoho. Also I am involved in the church, and Naga Mother's Association (Vice president).

Q. Are you aware of any Govt. facilities/schemes for women?

Ans: There are Self-Help Groups. Other than that, I don't think so. Though there may be other schemes from the government departments but I am not aware of them.

Q. Do you feel that there is some link between social problems like alcoholism, drug abuse etc. and the atmosphere of tension and pressure that we live with today?

Ans: Could be. In my brother's case, I am sure that if father were alive, he would not have become a drug addict.

#### **4. Mrs. Khrieleno Terhuja (NMA Secretary) and Ms. Savino**

Place of interview : Kohima

Details of incident:

I appeared for my Matriculation examination in 1951. At that time, we were very few girls in our batch. There were two government schools at that time. I wanted to study theology after I passed my matriculation, but I could not find any theological colleges that accepted women at that time. So I went to Shillong in 1952 and did my P.D. In 1953, I joined Jorhat, Eastern Theological College to do my Bachelor in Divinity. Around 1956, trouble started in Kohima. Schools were closed, and many had to discontinue their studies. There was total disruption of normal life. Houses were burnt down. Our house in Kohima as well as our house in our village (Khonomā) was burnt to ashes. Our family was targeted in particular because our uncle (A.Z. Phizo) and some relatives were involved in the Naga Movement.

I was engaged to be married at that time, but the Indian Army captured my fiance, and his body was never recovered. He was captured along with two others, one of whom was working for the Indian Government. In 1956, we had to flee to the forests because the tension was building up. At that point of time, 18 of my family members both men and women were arrested and jailed by the Indian Army.

We were 14 of us, all women, two little 5 year-old girls and one male servant. We went to the Zeliang area because we had some relatives there, and also because the area has thick forests. Life in the forest was tough. We never knew what our next meal would be. I remember, one Christmas morning, we caught crabs from the stream, and roasted it as our Christmas meal. Sometimes we would work for the villagers in the fields, and in exchange we were given food. We had to shift our camp 14 times to avoid being caught by the Indian army.

1. How did it affect your life? How did you deal with the mental trauma you underwent?

We were not too shaken by the experience. We had a clear conscience, and we do not have any bitter feelings against anyone. We accepted the situation as if it were meant to be. When we came back, we lived in someone else's house, as our house was burnt down. We had to start everything afresh. Our father was a Medical officer. With the money he got from treating patients, we bought provisions. We constructed our own house with bamboos and mud.

2. Did you get any compensation?

None.

3. Did you seek any professional help to deal with the trauma?

No.

4. Do you know of any women who joined the underground?

There were plenty of women who were involved in the cause

5. What do you feel is the role of the church, the Naga Hoho, the government in the context of the present situation?

The role of the NGOs is not to give political solution. Our role is for social activity and advocacy of what is good. It should stand on neutral grounds.

6. What do you think about the status of women at present?

Our lives are so much easier now.

7. What is the impact of conflict in Nagaland? Also what are your suggestions to bring peace?

We are not willing to talk to one another. There will always be differences in political ideologies, but our attitude is that, 'if you do not agree with me, I will shoot you'. This is the cause of different factions. In the name of factions, just anybody can come up to you and demand money. And the Government is unable to do anything to stop this problem. We should appreciate each other's values

and respect one another. We should educate ourselves that no two persons are alike, and understand that we can benefit from the diversities of life. There should be freedom of expression.

8. What do you feel about the period of cease fire, the changes in the last seven years?

The 1964 cease fire was a failure. Cease fire between the Govt. and NSCN (IM) and NCSN (K) is still going on. But I feel that without really understanding the genesis of the problems after all these years, peace talks will not work.

The Church was willing to negotiate for peace, but now, some factions are becoming somewhat hostile towards the church. But the church has its own methods of finding a way towards a peaceful atmosphere. The Government is very eager to bring about a peaceful solution, but I cannot help questioning some of their policies. The state government is unable to run smoothly. At gunpoint, they are made to contribute a portion of the state money to different factions.

#### **GROUP INTERVIEWS AT PHEK DISTRICT FROM 5- 7 DECEMBER, 2003**

A trip to Phek District was made on the 5 December. Phek is around six hours away from Kohima. Individual interviews were conducted at Phek town and Losami village, while a group interview was conducted at Phek village in the Church premises. About a 100 people, comprising of both men and women were present at the time.

It was noticed that in all the individual interviews, most had similar answers to certain question.

Impact of conflict: The village was under army operation right from 1956 to late 1960s. The burning down of villages has very badly affected the economy of the village. Trees, domestic animals, paddy and other properties were burnt to ashes. Rebuilding the village took a lot of time and effort.

Women suffered as much as men. Those whose husbands were either killed or beaten / tortured and could no longer do manual work, had to take over the entire burden of feeding the family and bringing up the children. Since the main source of livelihood is agriculture, women sometimes had to do double their share of work. Thus physically, they were under tremendous strain. The men, those who are still alive, suffer from the aftereffects of the beatings received. Those who have died have mostly died bearing the scars of the beatings.

The situation of the dispensaries and primary health centers are in a sad state. There are no proper medical staff, no basic facilities, and no proper medical supplies. There are no health centers to take care of mental health. Level of education would be much better had the schools not been shut down during those times. Many had to give up their studies when the schools were shut down.

Awareness of Government aids/schemes for women: none. Apart from the scheme from NEPED, an NGO, women do not receive any government aids.

Government Health facilities: There is a primary health center, but no doctors or medical staff. There are no medicines or any other amenities. All the interviewees said that they are not at all satisfied with the medical facilities in their area.

Has there been an increase in domestic violence as a result of the conflict? : Cannot be ruled out, but may not have any direct impact.

Has there been an increase in drug abuse prostitution etc: There are some cases of drug abuse, but it may not be a direct impact of the conflict.

**1. Mrs. Atsole Suvie / Age 59 years Phek town**

Details of incident: In 1957, her village Lekromi was burnt down. The houses were all thatch houses and all were completely destroyed. The entire village had to flee to the forest to hide from the Indian army, except few of the villagers, who were taken to concentration camp at Pfutsero. Everything was burnt down, even the paddy in the fields were all thrown to the ground. They had nothing to eat except grass and roots. The Indian Army shot and killed many; some people died of starvation and sickness. Children were particularly affected.

In a nearby village, Zhamai, about 350 people died in a span of two years due to the starvation and sickness in jungles after the village was burnt to ashes.

**2. Mrs. Vevosillii. Age 55 years. Phek town.**

Details of incident: In 1999, her son aged 17 yrs was taken away by a splinter group and shot. She suffers from trauma. Had he been alive, he would have helped the family in the fields, or maybe even get a government job and help take care of the siblings. She says that apart from the physical loss, the mental agony is beyond expression.

**3. Mrs. Sevohillii . Age 60 years. Phek town.**

When she was a young girl, she was arrested by the Indian Army and forced to carry their ration.

**4. Mrs. HiiDasalii. Age 50yrs. Losami Village.**

Her husband was arrested by the Indian Armies and tortured by hanging upside down on a tree with a fire burning below. He was beaten badly and made to inhale the smoke of burnt chilly. He was not allowed to spit. When he became unconscious, water was poured over his whole body to revive him. As her husband was badly tortured he became sickly after the incident. Since her husband could not work in the field, she had to do all the work to feed the family. Her family is in great trouble. There was no helps from the government nor any other organizations.

**5. Mrs. Vesotalii. Age. 55yrs. Phek Village.**

After Phek Village was burnt down for the 13th time, the perimeter of the village was fenced with rods, bamboo and spikes in two layers, constructed by the villagers with forced labour by both males and females. (The Village had about 350 houses at that time.)

The villagers were allowed to go to fields in small groups. The whole village was under curfew for most of the time from 1956 till 1996. The people were starving and many died of starvation and illnesses.

**6. Dusanii. Age.65yrs. LosamiVillage.**

On 20th July, 1973, Mr. Dusanii was shot by a gun. Though survived, he and the Head GB, of the village were badly beaten and tortured by the Indian Army. Even today, because of the beatings, he is sickly and cannot work in the fields. Hence his wife and family have to bear the burden of taking care of the family.

**7. Mrs. Miihiisavi. Age 70yrs. Losami Village.**

Her husband, along with nine others, was arrested by the Indian Army. They were all tortured badly. All of them were hanged upside down on trees and chilly were burnt below them to inhale the chilly smoke. They became half dead. Then they were given electric shocks. Since the men were unable to tend to their fields due to physical disabilities the women and children had to take over these tasks. Many men died as a result of the severe torture.

All the domestic animals and property were destroyed when the army burnt down the village causing great damage to the village economy. The whole population of the village was hiding in jungles for one full year out of fear. They survived on grass and roots in the jungle.

**8. Niekhuhiilii. Age. 65 yrs. Losami village.**

During the army operation, the whole village was made to line up in the local ground. Even though Neikhuhiilii had just delivered a baby girl, she too was forced to do the same, even during bad weather. The baby died on the 10th day. Even today, she remembers the child very vividly, and she is haunted by memories of the child

**9. Vervi, Losami village.**

The Villagers were not allowed to fetch water from wells outside the village, (there was no water supply those days). Many people were put into underground jails. There was forced labour. People were forced to carry loads for the Indian Army. They did not spare even sick people. Several of them had to be carried back home on bamboo stretchers by their colleagues.

Many men were beaten—even the sick and the aged were not spared. Most of the old people who have already died, have all suffered from the hands of the army. Many of their lives were shortened because of beating and torture, while others who are still alive bear the scars and after effects of the torture.

**PHEK. VILLAGE. PHEK DISTRICT**

Impact of Conflict in PHEK District. from 1955 to 2003

About 100 people comprising of church elders, Village council members, women church workers, etc., gathered at the Phek village Church. The Indian Army burned down all the villages except few villages nearby main road. Some villages were burnt down up to 10 times. The whole houses including

all their belongings, paddies and all eatables were burnt into ashes. There was nothing to eat and the people were hiding in deep jungle. The huts in the fields were also all burnt down. The people were eating forest vegetables and herbs, roots of plants for their survival. Many people particularly the children died of starvation and of illnesses. Many innocent people were shot died by the Indian Army.

When they came back to their villages for a short while during general amnesty, they were herded like animals to concentration camps and were inhumanly treated. The males were separated and were beaten with sticks, gun butts and many died of such beatings.

Out of poverty, the mothers would collect food grains from the grounds, which fell out of air droppings of the Army rations to feed their sickly children, but many people died of their starvation and sickness. The people were scorched in the sunshine, in the rain and in cold weather for hours together with little or no food and drinks. The sick people were not spared. The cattle were also not allowed to go for grazing.

The males were tortured in front of their wives and children in the open ground. Some women who were in labour were made to deliver their children in front of the whole village. There were cases of molestation and rapes, though these are not disclosed to the public.

Q. Whether the schools and churches were spared?

The schools were either burnt or occupied by security forces. School books were all burnt when houses were burnt and all the schools were closed for two years 1956 to 1957. The churches were also either burnt or occupied by Indian Army. Some women were even raped inside the church.

Q. Whether the people were chased to jungles by the Indian Armies or the people ran away of fear?

Since all the houses were burnt town, they had no place to stay. Also for fear of the Indian army as they would either kill or torture any suspected Naga Army, or the relatives of a Naga army. Women and children were not safe either.

In 1958, general amnesty was declared and the people came back to villages. They rebuilt their houses but normal life was thoroughly disrupted. They were again subjected to harassment and beatings in the hands of the Indian Army in concentration camps. Many people were hanged upside down on the trees and burnt strong chilly to let them inhale the chilly smoke to death. Chilly powders were pushed inside their anus and electric shocks were given to their bodies, even to genitals. They were beaten black and blue with sticks and gun butts. They were made to stand and raise hands for hours together and if they let down their hands out of weariness they were badly beaten again. The males were sometimes made to lie up side down on the grounds for hours together and their soles beaten with rods. The beatings and tortures were so harsh and difficult to explain all; which make women to weep without any consolations. Since the males were too sickly and not able to go to fields to work, women have to bear the load of the entire family, besides being mentally tortured themselves

Q. Do you notice any difference after peace process after 1997 ?

Though Indian army operation is not carried out to village anymore, the fights among the underground factions are continuing and owing to political unrest in Nagaland, the tension persists. And memories of past events of harsh Indian army operations still haunts the minds of people here. There is no peace of mind because of this.

Q. What was the worst operation in your area?

The mass killing of Matikhrii village in Phek district was the worst. One ration airplane was shot down by Naga underground near Matikhru village. In reaction to that the Indian armies from Phek head quarter went down to Matikhru village. The villagers were herded in one courtyard. They were made to starve the whole day. Children were crying of fear and hunger. All the males were locked inside a house and were beaten the whole day. In the evening all of them were chopped to death with daos by the Indian army. The next day there was no grown up male left in the village. Only one adult male escaped from that massacre, he was in college outside the village that day. The women had to bury their husbands by themselves. In a sense, they had to rebuild the village by themselves.

Q. What is the status of women in your community?

There is discrimination particularly in heredity and in education. The parent's properties are mainly for their male children. Female children are given some properties in marriage, but after the death of females their properties mainly the land use to go back to their brothers. When it comes to education, male children are given preference to study further and female children are made to work in the fields

Q. Do you know of any government schemes/aids particularly for victims of conflict?

No

Q. Do you know of any organizations working particularly for women?

No

Q. Is the health care to your satisfaction?

No, medicines are not available most of the time. The medical officer is not posted on regular basis to our Health unit. Therefore the health care delivery system requires lots of improvements.

Q. What do you think are the effects of the conflict in your community?

Since the villages were burnt down several times, rebuilding it took up lots of time, time that we could have invested in other activities. Materially we would be much better off, had our village not been razed down 13 times, and fines/taxes not imposed on us. So many able bodied villagers were killed for no reason; so many fathers/brothers were killed, leaving so many widowed or fatherless. They

had to bear the load of the men and work in the fields, and provide for their families. Owing to this, many women could not even study.

Education is one area which was seriously affected. Because schools were either shut down or occupied by the army, education came to a standstill for several years.

The conflict has left deep scars physically as well as mentally. Many have died after protracted sickness; many are still suffering due to the after effects of the physical and mental torture.



## SAMPLE LIST OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

S.N.	Names	Designation	Area of focus
1	Rev V.K. Nuh	General Secretary, NBCC	General perception of the conflict situation, personal analysis of the impact of conflict on women, references to victims, recommendation for post-incident fallouts and to better the situation, etc
2	Kaka Iralu	Social activist; author of 'Blood and tears'	-do-
3	Neingulo Krome	Convenor of NPMHR	Role of NPMHR, -do-
4	Sano Vamuzo	Social Worker	Naration of incident she experienced; -do-, Whetherany Forums, NGO's Counselling centres to treat victims,esp. mental health
5	Keshili	Naga Mothers President	-do-
6	Neidonuo	Ex president, NMA	-do-; on AIDS/HIV, Drug Abuse and their relationship with political and social conflict
7	Ms K Kapfo	Women Secretary, NBCC	Role of church in the Naga conflict, references to victims, etc
8	Melhupra	Naga Hoho	Gen. perception....., role of naga Hoho
9	Rev. Zhabu Terhuja	Gen. Secretary, NBCC	-do-, role of NBCC
10	Rev. Deo Vihienuo	State Chaplian	Role of church
11	Dr. P. Ngully	Psychiatrist, Naga Mental hospital	Check findings periodically; matters relating to mental health; how conflict affects the psychology of a normal woman... cases/references; etc...
12	Kewechu	DIG, Prison	Data relating to crime against women; how criminals are tried

S.N.	Names	Designation	Area of focus
13	Kewetso	Commanding officer, NAP	
14	Kikon	IGP, special crimes	As above
15	Deo Nukhu	Minister of state	Aids from the government for destitute women, children, etc, scholarships...
16	Daisy	Secretary, Social welfare advisory board and social worker	Gen. Perception...., On sex workers, rehabilitation, analysis, etc, etc
17	Dr Vizolie	Aids control society	Data, establish relationship between conflict and AIDS
18		President, Ao Watsu Mondang	Mokokchung incident, references to victims
19	Bendang	Ex-President, NPMHR	-do-
20	Timikha and Akhan	Lawyers	State judicial procedure, laws relating to crime (gainst women)
21		Underground Personnel	Underground laws relating to crimes against women
22	Ms Azenuo	DPO, District Rural Development Agency and social worker	Gen. person
23	Rev. Kari	Director, Peace Affairs	Gen. person
24	Yepthomi	Politician	-do-, incidents in Sema area
25	P. Lotha	Politician	-do- incidents in lotha area
26	Geoffrey Yaden	Publisher of 'Nagaland post'	Role of media
27		Mission centre, NBCC	Relocation of Kukis

## TRIPURA

### Background to conflicts over land in Tripura

Over two-thirds of Tripura is hilly and not suitable for plough cultivation. The tribals who lived in the hill areas were dependent on jhum cultivation to earn their livelihood. The jhum cycle generally takes a period of ten years which means a hill-slope once cultivated will be fit for jhum cultivation again only after a gap of ten years. And for this reason the jhumias were compelled to migrate from one area to another in search of new hill slopes for jhum cultivation. They had no permanent settlement. In view of their migratory character the government, as an easy method of collecting taxes, imposed a family tax on each of the jhumia family called 'Ghar Chukti Kar'. (J.B. Ganguly, *Problems of Tribal Landlessness in Tripura*).

Though the family tax was a good source of revenue for the state, its realization was irregular and not sustainable. Therefore, more emphasis was laid on settled cultivation in the plains and the reclamation of waste lands as a source of stable income for the state. The plains land in Tripura means the tract along the western border extending from north to south which differed in no material respect as regards soil, cultivation and population from the British-ruled districts on the other side of the boundary.

Until then the tribals of Tripura were not accustomed to plough cultivation. There was no inclination among them to adopt settled cultivation and give up jhuming. The rulers of Tripura, as a means to augment the land revenue, adopted a policy of attracting the Bengali cultivators of the adjacent districts to settle in these lands permanently and for this they offered various incentives. For reclamation of hilly lands and clearing of jungles they granted remission of rent for certain specified period. This system was called "Minaha Muddat". How much importance was given to the immigration of Bengali cultivators as a source of augmenting land revenue will be evident from the Resolution signed by B.K.Burman, the Private Secretary to the then Maharaja, on September 13, 1909. The resolution stated, "We should by all means encouraging immigration and discourage emigration. Systematic efforts may be made to establish colonies of cultivators in its interior". (*Tripuraya Samaj Sanskriti O Santrashbad*, Saroj and Satyabrata Chakraborty).

Prof. Mahadev Chakravarti made a significant comment on the way the Maharajas of Tripura invited Bengali settlers, "The rulers of Tripura, not only for cultural contact with Bengal, but for

genuine economic reasons openly invited Bengali settlers to develop settled cultivation and pay the much-needed revenue. In the famous, 'Jangal-abadi' system, as declared by the Tripura Darbar, a tenant who accepted a lease for reclamation of hilly lands by clearing jungles got remission of rent at least for three years from the date of lease. In a land abundant, skill-poor, labor-short and thinly populated state like Tripura, the Maharajas introduced a revenue-oriented tenancy system. The non-tribal settlers not only lifted the princely Tripura out of the swamp of subsistence agriculture, but broke the monotony of stagnation of the age-old jhum economy. (Mahadev Chakravarti, *Waste land and Immigration in Princely Tripura*)

There are no reliable records on the land system of Tripura prior to the later part of the nineteenth century. But from the *Statistical Account of Bengal* by W.W. Hunter published in 1876 it appears that the Maharajas of Tripura used to make grants of land in perpetuity in favor of upper class people on fixed rentals. Such grants were made to the tillers as well on nominal rentals against services rendered to the state.

During the reign of Raja Birchandar Manikya an attempt was made to codify the customary laws relating to land. In 1880 the Rajaswa Sambandhiya Niyamadi (Rules relating to land revenue) were enacted. In 1886 another, and more, comprehensive Act the Praja-Bhumyadhikari Sambandha Bishyak Ain was enacted by the same ruler. This was an Act to regulate the relationship between the landlord and the tenant, the mode of recovery of arrear rent, and the manner of ejection of tenants.

In 1899 during the reign of Raja Radhakishore Manikya another important legislation the Jarip O Bandobasta Sambandhiya Niyamabali was enacted which provided for preparation of record-of-rights after survey and settlement. In 1919 Raja Birendra Kishore Manikya enacted a legislation relating to assessment of house-tax to be paid by the tribal jhumias called the Parbatya Prajaganer Gharchukti Kar Sambandhiya Air.

Raja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya, first in 1931 and then again in 1943, reserved certain areas of land for five tribal communities, Tripuri, Reangs, Jamatias, Noatias and Halams. The area so reserved was 110 sq. miles in 1931 and 1950 sq. miles in 1943. The two together formed about half the total area of the State's territory. The step was indeed a laudable one, but it could achieve very little to safeguard the interests of the tribals in the absence of political will to enforce the reservation orders.

### **Land Reforms and the Protection of Tribals**

The Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act (TLR & LR Act) was enacted in 1960 and with its enactment all the old land laws which continued to be in force even after the end of princely rule in October, 1949 were repealed and all the old land tenures were abolished.

With the partition of the country in 1947 there were successive waves of migration of Bengali Hindu refugees from erstwhile East Pakistan which completely changed the demographic profile of

Tripura. The tribals who constituted a majority of the population of the state were reduced to a minority. As there was no other source of gainful occupation, pressure on land increased immensely. The tribals were clearly at a disadvantage. They were no match against the advanced Bengali agricultural communities either in technical or in managerial skills. As a result there was large-scale alienation of plains lands from the tribals to the non-tribal Bengalis. The tribals, unable to hold their own, got pushed to the remote and less productive areas.

Realizing that the ownership of land would be important for the protection of tribal interests, unrestricted transfer of tribal land to the non-tribals was sought to be controlled by enacting Section 187 of the TLR & LR Act which barred transfer of land from a tribal (Raiyats) the owners of land. It would be no exaggeration to say that these basic objectives have been achieved, by and large.

The State Government needs to take immediate steps to ensure the implementation of the provisions of both Section 46A as well as Section III in order to safeguard the rights and interests of the Bargadars and to give them due protection of law. They should also make their stand clear about the Tripura Land Tax Act, 1978 and the Tripura Land Pass Book Act, 1982 which remained unimplemented for more than two decades. From the figures available from the decadal censuses since 1961 it is evident that a large majority of the workers in Tripura are dependent on agriculture for work and employment. In 1991 the primary sector workers constituted 61.57 per cent of the total main workers. But it is also significant that while there was phenomenal increase in the percentage of agricultural workers, the percentage of cultivators was continuously falling. In 1961 the percentage of agricultural workers was 7.53 only, but it rose to 23.53 per cent in 1991. Conversely, the percentage of cultivators dropped from 64.24 per cent in 1961 to 38.04 per cent in 1991. This fact only indicates alienation of land of the marginal and small farmers and a rising trend of pauperization in the rural areas.

Did the amending Act succeed to prevent further alienation of tribal lands? In answering this question it would be interesting to quote an extract from the letter written 12 September, 1995 by the former Chief Minister Dasaratha Deb, himself a tribal, to the then Union Home Minister S.B. Chavan. In that letter Deb stated, "It has been noticed that, notwithstanding this amendment, it has not been possible to protect tribal interest on land. This is because it is unrealistic to assume that the ownership of land can be seen in isolation from other economic aspects. One of the major reasons for the inability of the tribal to retain the land either owned by him or restored to him, has been that he has been unable to find the resources to put the land to productive use. Schemes formulated by the Government and implemented over last few years have proved ineffective to ensure the fundamental requirement of retention of land by tribals" (The letter was published by the Information, Cultural Affairs Tourism Dept., Govt of Tripura.

This observation made by a person holding the highest office in the administration speaks volume about the inadequacy of the measures undertaken by the government.

Another amendment of Section 187 became necessary after the signing of the "Memorandum of Settlement" between the representatives of the underground extremist outfit Tripura National Volunteers (TNV) and the representatives of the Union Government and the Government of Tripura on 12 August, 1988. The signing of the accord resulted in the wholesale surrender of underground TNV militants with arms. The government on its part promised, among other things, to undertake steps to further strengthen the law for restoration of alienated lands to tribals and for stringent measures to prevent fresh alienation.

Accordingly, a Bill (sixth amendment bill) was introduced in the Assembly in 1989 but as the Congress TUJS government holding office at that time failed to get the Bill passed by the Assembly within the period of its five years term, the Bill met its natural death. There was, however, a change of guard after 1993 Assembly poll, the Left Front having occupied the office replacing the Congress-TUJS government. Within a year of its assumption of power the L.F Government introduced in the Assembly a fresh (Sixth Amendment) Bill in 1994 which was passed by the Assembly in due course and having received the assent of the President of India on 11 February, 1996 became a law.

The main features of the Sixth Amendment Act may be summarized as follows :

- (i) the Act seeks to further strengthen the measures to prevent alienation of tribal land and also for effective implementation of the provisions for restoration.
- (ii) the Act bars transfer of tribal land by mortgage to a non-tribal.
- (iii) the Act prohibits not only transfer of the tribal land to non-tribal but also prohibits occupation of the tribal land by non-tribal and for this purpose, the definition of 'transfer' has been made very broad based;
- (iv) for violation of any of the provisions, a fine upto Rs 3000/- and imprisonment for a period upto two years has been visualized vide Section 187 (2). The offence will be cognizable and non-bailable vide Section 187(B)(4) has also been made;
- (v) the Act makes provision for prevention of re-transfer and also entrustment of management of the land to a committee for a period upto one year, if there is reason to believe that the tribal person concerned shall not be in a position to retain the land re-transferred and subsequently restored vide Section 187(D)(1).

#### **Transfer of land by non-tribals in scheduled villages**

The Third Amendment Act of 1975 added a new chapter (Chapter IX-A) to the parent Act whereby preferential right was given to the members of the schedule tribes to purchase land of any intending seller not belonging to schedule tribes in certain villages and tehsils specified in Schedule II of the Act.

As provided by chapter IX-A if a non-tribal in any of these villages or tehsils wants to transfer his land, he is to serve notice through the competent authority on all co-shares and also non tribals

owing adjacent lands, of his intention to sell his land. If they want to purchase the land, the co-shares shall have the priority. If they both fail to purchase, the competent authority may select a landless tribal who resides in the village or tehsil and is willing to purchase the land. On depositing the value of the land, the competent authority shall issue a certificate to the selected intending purchaser declaring him to be the transferee of the land which shall thereupon vest in him. If the selected tribal purchaser is not in a position to pay the price immediately, the state government may purchase it and subsequently transfer the same to him on payment of the price". (Quoted from A study of the Land system of Tripura, edited by Law Research Institute, Guwahati High Court, P29).

The preferential right of the members of scheduled tribes, as has been discussed above, was generally welcomed by different sections, of people. But the third Amendment Act also invited strong opposition as it sought to repeal the orders of the Ex-ruler Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya constituting a reserved area of 2,060 square miles for the settlement of five specified classes of tribals. The opposition, however, lost much of its edge after the formation of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council.

The Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960 has repealed all the land laws enacted during the days of princely rule and paved thereby the way for a new beginning. The basic objective of the Act was to abolish the intermediaries and to make the tillers (Raiyats) the owners of land. It would be no exaggeration to say that this basic objectives has been achieved by and large.

But in the new land system the multiplicity of tenures has not been fully obliterated as, besides the Raiyats, two others classes of tillers namely, the under Raiyats and Bargadars, still exist. Although they are actual tillers of land, they are not recognized as Raiyats.

Section 105 of the TLR & LR Act allows a Raiyat to lease out his land to another person, which is inconsistent with the basic principle of the Act. This provision may help re-emergence of intermediaries in a new garb. The Raiyat by leasing out his land may become a new intermediary standing between the state and the actual tiller.

In defining under Raiyat it has been expressly mentioned in the Act and Urbar-Raiyat includes of Bargadar. But in practice the Bargadars are not recorded as Under-Raiyats in the normal records-of-right and remain unprotected by law. This loophole was sought to be plugged by adding a new Section (Section 46A) to the parent Act by the Fifth Amendment Act, 1979, making the registration of the Bargadars mandatory. But, strangely enough, no concrete step has so far been taken by the Government to implement this mandatory provision of the Act.

Exaction of the half share of gross produce from the Bargadars is the common practice although Section III of the TLR & LR Act fixed up as maximum rent one-fourth of the produce if plough cattle is supplied by the Raiyat and one-fifth of the produce if plough cattle is not supplied.

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Bargadars and to give them due protection of law. They should also make their stand clear about the Tripura Land Tax Act, 1978 and the Tripura land Pass Book Act, 1982 which remained unimplemented for more than two decades.

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In order to make the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council as vibrant institution of self-governance, delegation of more powers to it is an absolute necessity. This could be achieved only by suitable amendments to the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, which is the prerogative of the Central Government. While maintaining pressure on the Centre for the amendment of the sixth schedule the State Government, meanwhile, should take steps for the transfer of all the existing powers incorporated in the sixth schedule to the District Council without further delay. The State Government should also see that Governor's assent to the TTAADC (Land Allotment and Use) Rules, 1988 and the TTAADC (Land and Revenue) Bill, 1992 are not unnecessarily withheld.

### **Impact predicted**

The Union Government had foreseen even in the late fifties what the influx of refugees from East Pakistan would mean for the ingenious tribals languishing in utter backwardness. The then Union Home Minister Mr. Gobind Ballav Pant had made a suo moto statement on the floor of the Lok Sabha in 1957 saying 'Tripura has reached saturation point' in accommodating refugees. But the influx continued unabated. In 1960 the union government passed the Tripura Land Reforms and Land Revenue (TLRLR) Act for protecting tribal interests on land and included this in 9<sup>th</sup> schedule of the constitution to preclude judicial invalidation. The centre had to pass the act because Tripura in 1960 will still a 'C' category state directly ruled by centre. But in 1974 when Tripura was full-fledged state the ruling congress government amended the TLRLR Act and legalized transfer of all tribal lands till 31<sup>st</sup> December 1968. The cut-off date for restoration of land was made 21<sup>st</sup> January 1969. This also caused resentment. It may be mentioned that centre had earlier identified tribal-compact areas as 'tribal Development (TD) blocks for special development programmes but precious little done at the grass root level to implement the well-intentioned schemes.

But both the state government and the centre were jolted out of slumber as the militant agitation launched by TUJS for Autonomous District Council (ADC) and supported later by left front gained momentum. In the aftermath of June 1980 riots the central government led by Ms Indira



Gandhi constituted a commission headed by former external affairs minister Mr. Dinesh Singh to go into the problems of Tripura. The final report submitted by Dinesh Singh committee laid stress on economic development of the tribals, constitutional safeguards for their rights on land and autonomy. Unfortunately, the second Left Front government headed by Mr. Nripen Chakraborty did not accept the report only because it had made mildly critical comments on the failure of the state government to prevent the ethnic riots in 1979 and 1980. However, the formation of ADC in January 1982 and its subsequent conversion to one based on the Sixth Schedule of the constitution fulfilled the basic political demands of the tribals. The kind of power with which an ADC based on 6<sup>th</sup> schedule is endowed by the constitution should be enough to work for the real benefit of the tribals.

But despite having the structure the quality of the leaders and representatives who man it continues to hamper effective functioning of the ADC. Still there is scope for increasing the power of ADC by providing for easier flow of funds and transferring to its administrative wings from the state government.

The tribal based political parties of the state including the TUJS continue to demand upgrading of the ADC to an Autonomous State under the provision of article 244-A of the constitution, specially created for Meghalaya before its emergence as a full-fledged state on and from January 21<sup>st</sup> 1972. There are also stray voices for conversion of ADC to a full-fledged state but such voices are still muted and half-hearted. However, a document entitled 'Towards Greater Autonomy' authored by senior Indigenous Peoples Front of Tripura (IPFT) party leader Mr. N.C. Debbarma makes out a strong case for greater autonomy within the existing framework of the ADC by a constitutional amendment.

**POPULATION IN TRIPURA 1881-1991**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>Percent variation</b>	<b>Percent increase</b>	<b>Tribal population</b>	<b>% of tribal population</b>
1881	95639	—	—	49915	52.19
1891	137575	43.85	43.85	70292	51.09
1901	173325	25.99	81.23	91679	52.89
1911	229613	32.48	140.08	111303	48.47
1921	304347	32.59	218.22	171610	56.37
1931	382450	25.63	299.89	203327	52.00
1941	513010	34.14	436.40	246991	50.09
1951	639028	24.56	568.17	237953	37.23
1961	1142005	78.71	1094.08	360070	31.50
1971	1556342	36.28	1527.31	450544	28.95
1981	2053058	31.92	2046.67	583920	28.44
1991	2757205	34.30	2782.93	853345	30.95

Census Report - 2001

**CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN—TRIPURA (1994-2002)**

YEAR	TOTAL	Bride Killing	Rape	Kidnapping	Bigamy	Family Dispute	Illicit Relation	Other Atrocities on Women
1994	185	25	3	Nil	12	120	3	22
1995	410	15	3	2	22	252	4	112
1996	338	24	13	3	15	236	5	42
1997	401	20	5	2	27	318	7	22
1998	449	29	18	11	25	238	16	112
1999	717	42	23	11	50	403	47	141
2000	745	38	19	14	46	460	41	125
2001	545	31	13	8	20	405	25	43
2002	657	32	28	11	51	401	29	102

**TRIPURA COMMISSION OF WOMEN  
CASE REPORTS, APRIL 2002 – MARCH 2003**

<b>District</b>	<b>West Tripura</b>	<b>North Tripura</b>	<b>South Tripura</b>	<b>Dhalai</b>	<b>Total</b>
Total	466	38	74	18	596
Bride killing	22	2	4	1	29
Rape	20	2	7	1	30
Kidnapping	6	1	2	—	9
Second Marriage	41	3	2	3	49
Family problems	299	19	44	8	370
Illicit Relation	12	4	5	4	25
Others	66	7	10	1	84
Reported to Police	106	15	36	11	168
Reffer to Deptt	3	9	2	1	15
Refer to Court	13	—	—	—	13
Reffer to Panchayat	7	1	—	—	8
For discussion with TCW	338	14	29	6	387
Settle by Commission	117	2	8	4	131
Settle by court	11	-	-	-	11
Chargeshetted	31	5	13	6	55
Settle by Deptt.	—	—	—	—	—
Settle by Panchayat	1	—	—	—	1

**RAPE CASES REGISTERED IN POLICE STATIONS IN TRIPURA  
1998-02 (PER POLICE STATION)**

Sl.No	Name of P.S.	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
1.	Radhakishorepur	04	08	11	12	12
2.	Killa	—	01	—	—	01
3.	Belonia	05	06	10	03	07
4.	P.R. Bari	03	01	03	—	01
5.	Santirbazar	01	—	02	01	—
6.	Baikhora	02	04	03	03	04
7.	Sabroom	02	03	02	02	—
8.	Manubazar	02	03	05	02	01
9.	Birganja	—	01	—	04	04
10.	Natunbazar	02	—	—	01	—
11.	Ampi	—	—	—	—	—
12.	Taidu	01	—	—	01	—
13.	Kailasahar	07	06	04	05	09
14.	Kumarghat	02	03	—	04	06
15.	Dharmanagar	01	03	03	05	06
16.	Churaibari	03	02	02	05	04
17.	Panisagar	02	02	03	03	02
18.	Kanchanpur	03	03	—	01	03
19.	Pacharthal	02	03	—	04	06
20.	Damcherra	03	—	—	—	—
21.	Khedacherra	—	—	—	—	—
22.	Vhangmum	—	—	—	—	—

<b>Sl.No</b>	<b>Name of P.S.</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>
23.	Kamalpur	05	02	03	03	01
24.	Salema	01	01	03	03	—
25.	Ambassa	—	01	01	03	02
26.	Manu	01	01	03	02	—
27.	Chaumanu	01	—	—	—	—
28.	Ganganagar	—	—	—	—	—
29.	Raishyabari	01	—	—	—	—
30.	Gandacherra	—	01	—	01	02
31.	Kachucherra	—	—	—	—	—
32.	Longtharai Vally	—	—	—	—	—
33.	West Agartala	03	01	02	03	05
34.	East Agartala	03	02	06	10	06
35.	Airport	02	02	02	01	01
36.	Sidhai	01	03	03	02	02
37.	Jirania	—	01	—	02	03
38.	Ranirbazar	—	—	—	—	—
39.	Srinagar	—	—	—	—	—
40.	Bishalghar	03	01	—	04	03
41.	Takarjala	—	—	01	—	—
42.	Amtali	01	03	02	01	04
43.	Sonamura	03	01	04	03	01
44.	Melaghar	—	—	01	02	03
45.	Jatrapur	—	01	—	—	01
46.	Kalamchura	—	01	01	—	—
47.	Khowai	—	01	03	01	03
48.	Kalyanpur	01	—	02	04	01
49.	Champahour	—	—	—	—	01
50.	Teliamura	03	—	02	01	01
51.	Women's P.S.	—	—	—	—	02
	<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>108</b>

## SOME CASE STUDIES

### 1. NIYATI SARKAR

Date of visit : **08. 03.2004**  
 Name of the victim : **Niyati Sarkar (38)**  
 W/O : **Late Kumud Sarkar**  
 Village : **Simna Kalibari.**  
 Date of occurrence : **06.05.2003**  
 District : **West**

**Interview with the victim (Incident) :** 38 -year old Niyati Sarkar suffered serious bullet injury along with five others on the night of May 6, 2003. Altogether 21 villagers including seven children and six women were gunned down when ATTF militants stormed the village at around 12 am.

Niyati said a group of about ten heavily armed ATTF militants helped by about 60 local tribals attacked the village. They stormed the house of Mr. Pramod Sarkar at the entry point of the village. Extremists opened fire on sleeping innocence villagers – two members out of five members of the Sarkar family lost lives during indiscriminate firing but Pramod narrowly escaped though Niyati's husband died on spot.

Two bullets hit her right arm during the firing. The militants left after killing her husband and a son and setting the houses on fire. The militants attacked near by houses and killed 19 others of the village.

Niyati and her son Amit Sarkar (21) are now dependent on Pramod Sarkar, elder brother of Kumud as she became handicapped. She is not even able to do domestic work. Pramod had been forced to marry at the age of 45 in October 2003 following the incident. Niyati received a sum of Rs. 15000/- as compensation and government bore her medical expenses. Despite several requests they have received nothing and the government has failed to keep its word that a family member would be provided with a government job.

Fall out of the incident: Displacement had taken place immediately after the incident and the situation was quite abnormal even after a year of the incident. Out of 18 families 4 families shifted at nearby Simna area, about 10 kilometers from Kalibari.

Meanwhile, Mangal Sarkar left the country out of fear and took shelter across the border (Bangladesh), Mangal was a small trader and had no alternative as for him normal life is deeply affected as a result and he is now totally poverty stricken. Fear still prevails in the area. They are unable to sleep at night though a BSF camp has been set up in the area but the strength is not sufficient. The villagers are unable to cultivate the agricultural land and production has fallen.

Large tracts of cultivable land lie unutilized because the villagers are too afraid to go and work on their lands. And due to exodus of labourers and the lack of basic infrastructure life is very hard for them.

The local administration has done nothing. Government officials do not discharge their duties properly. No doctors, school teachers and other government officials have visited the village..

## **2. RAJLAKSHMI DEBBARMA**

Date of visit : **29.02.2004**  
Name of the victim : **Rajlakshmi Debbarma (18)**  
S/O : **Mukunda Debbarma**  
Village : **Hridaypara Colony**  
Date of occurrence : **24.03.2003**  
District : **Dhalai**  
State : **Tripura**

**Interview with the victim (Incident) :** 18-year old Rajlaxmi Debbarma of Hridaypara of Tripura's Dhalai district is a completely broken woman today. Injured by the insurgents of the banned National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) on the night of 29th March, 2003 today she lives a life of uncertainty, traumatized and afraid.

Her father, Mukundu Debbarma, a rikshaw puller left the village after the attack by the ultras and now lives in a distant village. Mukunda's wife died about ten years back and after the insurgent attack he left the village and married another woman leaving his three daughters and one son in the house of his elder brother.

Rajlaxmi recalling that terror filled night says, "A group of about 35 insurgents clad in olive green fatigue and armed with sophisticated weapons raided the village at about 10 o'clock in the night and took position in different parts of the village and opened indiscriminate firing from automatic weapons. The villagers started running helter-skelter and I also started running for cover. Suddenly a bullet hit on my abdomen and I started bleeding. Still I kept running and managed to hide in a nearby jungle. I was bleeding the whole night and after some time I lost consciousness. When I awoke it was morning. I started crawling back to the village. I could not stand erect or walk and after about one hour I managed to reach the village. There I saw that the village had been cordoned off by paramilitary forces and police but the ultras had left the village much before they arrived.



The villagers took me to a hospital at Ambassa, the district headquarters of Dhalai from where after first aid I was rushed to Gobind Vallabh hospital in the capital, Agartala where I was treated for about one month. But I am not fully cured. The injury still bleeds and secretes pus. I am a dependent woman, semi-literate and injured and have got no compensation. When the dark descends it is a frightening time for us. We do not know what to do and how to live."

### **3. PRANATI DAS**

Date of visit : **22.03.2004**  
Name of the victim : **Pranati Das (31)**  
W/O : **Paresh Das.**  
Village : **Chhailangta**  
P.S. : **Chhamanu**  
Date of occurrence : **12. 12. 1999**  
District : **Dhalai**  
State : **Tripura**

**Interview with the victim (Incident) :** Paresh Das (36) left his village on 12-12-1999 in fear, and sorrow and never returned. His 2.5 kani (1 acres) of land and his burnt homestead are looked after by his neighbours. Paresh, a peasant turned labourer is now working in a brick kiln at Manu, the sub-divisional headquarters of Longtarai valley in Dhalai district.

Villagers say, Paresh and his wife were good neighbours. They had about one acre of land for cultivation, a thatched hut to live and many cattle and chicken. They were the only Bengali family in the village, Chhailangta.

The insurgents of banned National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) used the house many times to stay the night. They also collected 'taxes' from the villagers and took away their chicken, rice and other food stuff. The villagers were forced to give the ultras shelter because they had no alternative. A single shot from Kalashnikov could silence their voice of dissent.

Suniti Debbarma (60), the next door neighbour of Paresh said, on that ill-fated night they saw, Pranati's house burning and she was calling for help. Suddenly, her husband came out of the house in half burnt condition. Both of them were rushed to hospital where the doctors declared Pranati as brought dead. Paresh was rushed to G.B. hospital at the state capital, Agartala, about 100 km from his house. After about one and half month, he was released from hospital but did not return to his own house. He is now a labourer.

Villagers said the ultras set their house on fire presuming that the non-tribal family might inform police about their movement. Police said the ultras belonged to the banned outfit - National Liberation Front of Tripura.

#### 4. **Kalyani**

Date of visit : **28.11.2003**  
Name of the victim : **Kalyani Debbarma.**  
W/O : **Sachin Debbarma.**  
Village : **Durai Charra.**  
Date of occurrence : **2002**  
District : **Dhalai**  
State : **Tripura**

**Interview with the victim (Incident) :** Duraicharra is a picturesque tribal hamlet. Kalyani Debbarma is a 35-year old tribal woman living in the village with her husband, Sachin and daughter, Anita. She is an agricultural labourer.

She said armed insurgents of NLFT often raid their village. "They come at night in a group and force us to cook for them. Even if there is no grains or vegetable or pork at our houses we collect from our neighbours and cook for them. They drink heavily and torture us and our girls. We cannot report it to police because police cannot give us full time protection. The ultras also threaten us of dire consequences if we divulge it to others". She said many woman and girls were raped in the village by ultras and they keep it secret. When asked if she was raped, Kalyani expressed her anguish over this and said. " We cannot reply so many queries but you can guess yourself".

#### 5. **BAIJANTI**

Date of visit : **29.10.2003**  
Name of the victim : **Baijyanti Tangla (23)**  
D/O : **Dinesh Tangla.**  
Village : **Bishnupur**  
Date of occurrence : **No specific date. It still continues.**  
District : **Dhalai**  
State : **Tripura**

**Interview with the victim (Incident):** Baijayanti is a 23-year old woman who belong to a tea-tribe. Her house is situated just near the Indo-Bangla border in Kamalpur Subdivision of Dhalai District. The place is so inaccessible that one has to walk for about 10 kms to get there. There is no road.

Her house falls right on the transit route of the insurgents (NLFT) who use the route for sneaking into the Indian territory from their base camps in Moulabibazar District of neighbouring Bangladesh.

Recounting her story Baijoyanti said, " They often come to our house, in day or night and take me to another room. Even if my parents are at home they do not care and force me to stay with them. I am helpless. Even if we inform the police they cannot do anything because the place is remote and close to the border. The day we call the police the next day the ultras will come and wipe out my entire family. I too may be killed or kidnapped by them."

Her mother says, "The ultras even threatened to kill us if we arrange her marriage. We are now planning to migrate from here. But we will do so only after we get alternative jobs.

Baijoyanti and her parents work at Mintoko tea estate in Dhalai District.

**6. Soma Begum, 13**

Village : **Raiyabari**  
Police Station : **Radhakishorpur**  
District : **South Tripura**  
Date of visit : **23/12/2003**  
Name of the Victim : **Soma Begum (16)**  
W/O, D/O : **Grand Daughter of Sabuj Mian**

Haflong Janatiya and two of his accomplices came to the house of Sabuj Mian, a 77 year old man at night in the month of December (8<sup>th</sup> day of roza) 1999. Sabuj Mian received them cordially because they are known to them as collaborators of the banned outfit, NLFT. But the armed collaborators charged that Mian had spoken against the activities of Haflong and his accomplices in a peace meeting arranged by the Government when the relationship between the two communities deteriorated. They started beating the old man injuring him severely. They then took out their pistols and holding it to his head, Haflong raped his 13 year-old grand daughter, Soma Begum, in front of him.

Young Soma Begum was living with Sabuj Mian because her father had remarried after the death of her mother who was Sabuj Mian's daughter. She is illiterate.

**THE IMPACT OF ARMED CONFLICT ON  
WOMEN IN THE NORTH EAST**

**CASE STUDIES FROM NAGALAND & TRIPURA**



**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR WOMEN**  
New Delhi

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## FOREWORD

The North Eastern Region (NER) of India, comprising the Seven Sisters and Sikkim, has been virtually on a slow burner, now Simmering and now boiling over. The inchoate national consolidation of the region, evident in the persistence of sub-national identities, accompanied by terrorism and insurgencies, has taken a heavy toll on the national psyche on the one hand and local development on the other. The persistent feeling of distance and 'alienation' from both sides, the so called main land and the periphery, has been a dominal theme of the national intercourse on the problems and prospects of the region.

It was in this daunting context that the National Commission for Women decided to conduct a study on the Impact of Conflict on Women in the North East through case studies from Nagaland and Tripura carried out by the Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research (C-NES). The report based on the findings from the field as well as on readings and research from secondary sources including exhaustive interviews across the states, is now available in this document.



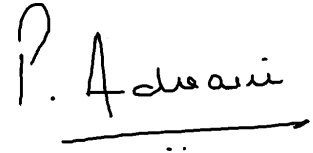
I have personally found the report to be both moving and thought-provoking. It contextualizes the dilemma faced by the nation and the region in the larger picture of conflict and strife around the globe. Problems, economic, social, emotional and psychological, are largely similar and so are their special scars on women and children who have to bear the burnt of violence, physical and sexual, and deprivation, economic and social.

The study is focused, as already mentioned, on the states of Nagaland and Tripura, through their conflict barometers and differently calibrated today, with Nagaland in a quiescent peace mode while Tripura still in the militant mode. The study doubts the efficacy of the Special Powers Act enforced in the area which focuses on integrating the territories but end up alienating the minds.

The report recommends a more humane and development oriented approach with greater voice to the women who need protection, solace, rehabilitation and empowerment. The mental health problems of a population traumatized by long periods of low-to-high intensity conflict need careful handling through counselling with the help of professionals as well as church and people's organizations. The study also recommends a fresh look into tradition and customary

laws, which are discriminatory against women. It also calls for justice corresponding to severity of the crime committed, particularly crimes against women, so that basic human rights are not allowed to be glossed over in the name of interest of the state expressed through repressive laws.

It is hoped that this document will help to enlighten policy makers and development administrators on what remains largely an area of darkness in the national consciousness.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "P. Advani". The signature is written in a cursive style. Below the signature is a horizontal line with an arrowhead pointing to the right.

Place : New Delhi  
Date : January, 2005

**POORNIMA ADVANI**  
Chairperson  
National Commission for Women