

*Role of Civil Society and Multi-Stakeholder Dialogues: Communities, Social Groups, NGOs, Researchers, National & Local Government, etc.
The Role of Civil Society in the Peace Process*

Monday 21, November 2005, 16:00 - 18:00

*Traditional
practices for
dialogue
procedure and
Indigenous
Women*


*Stella Tamang,
Coordinator,
South Asia Indigenous Women Forum,
SAIWF*

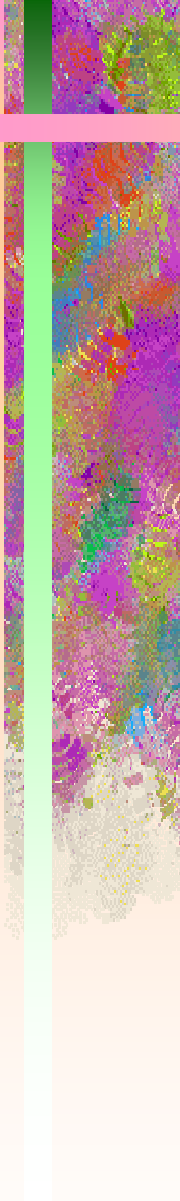


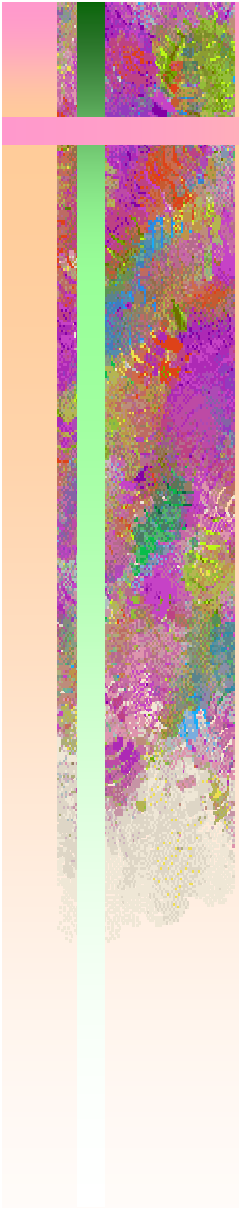


Indigenous Peoples and conflict

- *We have been sharing the stories of the situations of conflict in our lands and the struggles we are waging, the stories of how we are building peace among ourselves and with others and our definitions of conflict, peace, justice, and sustainable development and our visions of a future where justice and lasting peace will reign in our territories and our tasks of building this future.*

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- *We believe that everything in environment has life and, as such, it has a SACRED value: the earth, mountains, plains, caves, plants, animals, stones, water, air, the Moon, the Sun, the stars. Spirituality is born of this view and conception by which all beings that exist in and with Mother Nature possess life and are interrelated. Spirituality is linked to the sense of a COMMUNITY, where beings are interconnected and complemented in their existence.*

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- **To indigenous peoples, Spirituality is energy, essence, and action; the spirit is inside matter.**
 - **The cosmic view of life means being connected with the environment and the world around us.**

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- *The fundamental premise of spirituality is therefore the quest for equilibrium and harmony with ourselves and with others (Cosmos). The loss of these two important principles has caused great disasters at local, regional, and world levels.*
 - *Indigenous spirituality has various manifestations and means by which to achieve equilibrium. These include: ceremonies; festivals; hills; mountains; rivers; lakes; chants; songs; dances and offerings.*



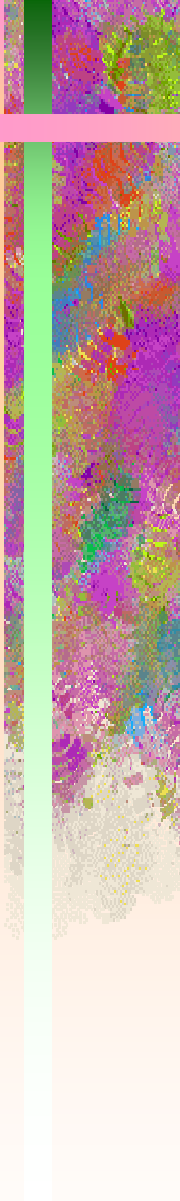
Traditional and Cultural practices for conflict resolution and Indigenous women

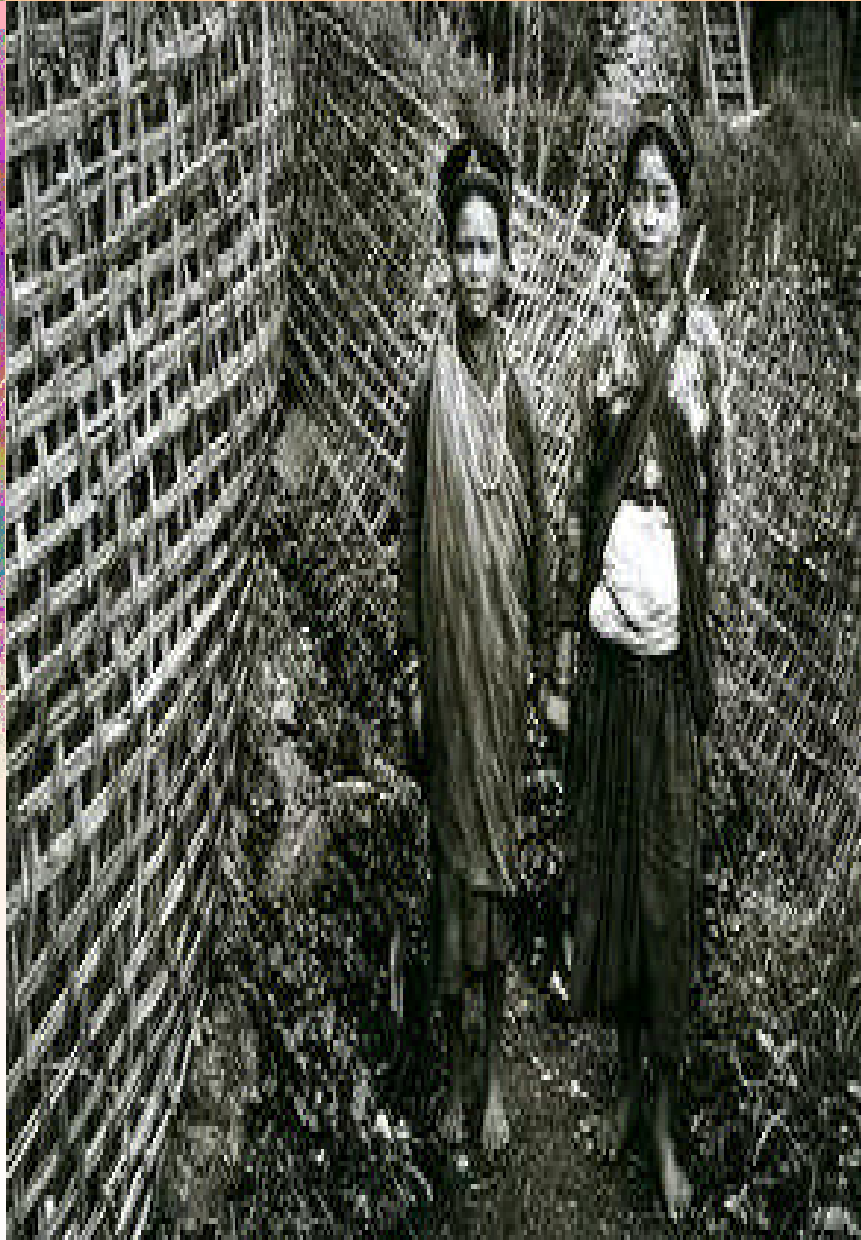
- *Tamang women, Nepal*
- *Maranao women, Phillipines*
- *Naga women, North East India*
- *Masai women, Kenya*
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Tamang women

- From the time of birth, Tamang women are taught and are encouraged to mediate and resolve conflict between the family members and between families. The women with good mediation skills are considered to be good wives and mothers.

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- Tamang women do not consider themselves oppressed or exploited within their community. Whenever there are conflicts in the family members, they know how to mediate and resolve.



- They will do everything in resolving conflict from cooking special food to performing rituals to provoke positive energy to drive away the devil or evil spirits from the family and the community.

- Family conflict resolution and peace depends on women. The conflict is not limited with human only. The conflict with nature too are taken care a lot by the women. That is the reason for having this popular Nepali saying:

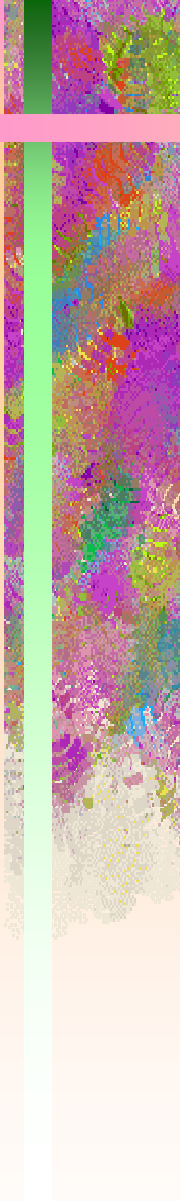
- **“Women are the homes and men are the fences.”**

- **If there is conflict between two families, the highest valued and respected process for conflict resolution would be women taking “Shyalgar” which would contain chicken or goat limb, local rice or millet wine, fruits and breads covered with “Khata”, an auspicious scarf. This gesture is taken as request or wish to stop the conflict by the most respectful family member, the women.**



Maranao women

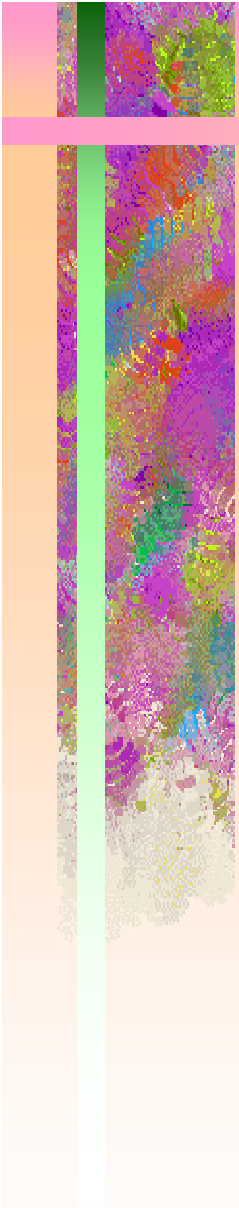
- Maranao women from the Bangsamoro peoples in Philippines view themselves as “tiglimpyo sa mga hugaw sa katilingban” (cleaners of the dirt of the community). They usually play the role of mediators in conflict situations. Whenever there is family conflict, it is always a woman who addresses critical issues and brings the parties to settlement. Within Maranao culture, women do not consider themselves oppressed or exploited because they know their specific roles and place within the community. Women are well respected and influential in the community.

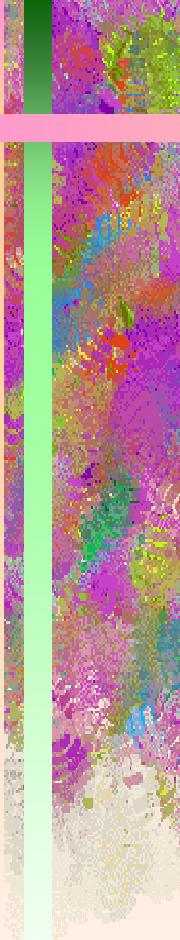
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- **In the Arumanen Manobo tribe, women are sent to the enemy to settle conflicts. Arumanen Manobo women see this as a crucial role in their community life- mediating and resolving conflict even at the risk of sacrificing their own lives. More often than not, the women are successful in the negotiation process and are able to prevent the conflict from escalating.**

Naga women

- “It is a fact that conflict or difference is a natural and unavoidable part of life but which, instead of taking otherwise, can be used as an opportunity for growth and learning. We do not always create the conflicts that come our way but we can always choose our response to those conflicts. Our focus in conflict situation should be to learn how to creatively deal with conflict rather than to avoid it or to allow it to destroy us.” (Naga Women Magazine:)



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- The decade-long campaign of “Stop All Bloodshed” of the Naga women has produced a social expectation of their peace role. The story is— NMA President Neidonuo Angami bursts forth in the midst of a battle between warring factions in Phek township and appeals — “Listen to your mother, before you kill your brother”. It has become part of folklore, socially reinforced by the traditions of *pukrelia* or *demi*.

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- **Another Naga tribal tradition has an elderly woman drop her *mekla* and shame the men into stopping the war.**

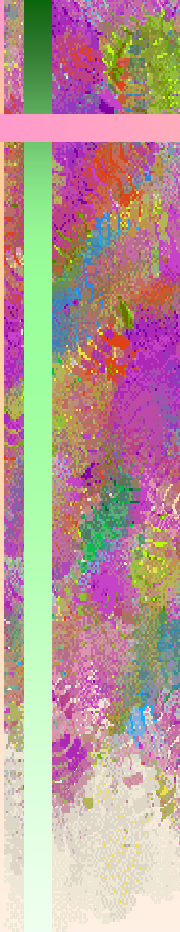


Masai Women

- **In the Samburu pastoral community in the Northern Kenya and Maasai community women and children and the aged are never attacked during armed conflicts. The gesture of cutting the grass and holding up means request to stop violence and request for peace. (Sekuda, 1997-80). Grass is very important in the Maasai environment because their livelihood depends mainly on its availability for their livestock.**

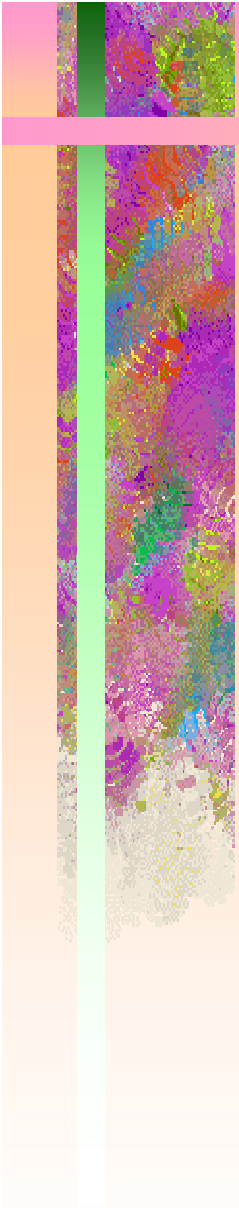
- The Maasai women and particularly mothers of warriors who are called Noongotonhe Ilmuran are so revered that no warrior would dare hurt them. Maasai women sometimes remove their Olokesena, (lower skirts, or belts), to show their request for peace for both parties. They are mothers of all and cannot afford loss of life. Apart from the women children especially girls, can help to restore peace in a conflict situation. Their influence by even word of mouth can bring calm in a conflict. (Sekuda; 1997-95)



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- *There are many advanced theories and formulas for conflict resolutions and reconciliations*

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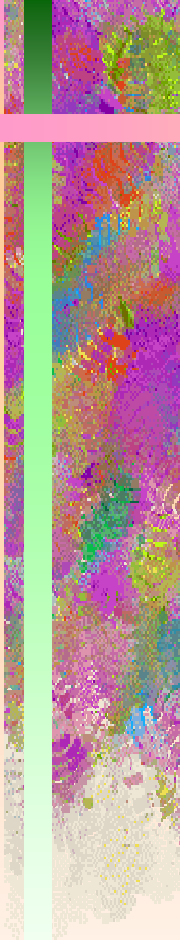
- *those are the practices and skills used by indigenous women.*

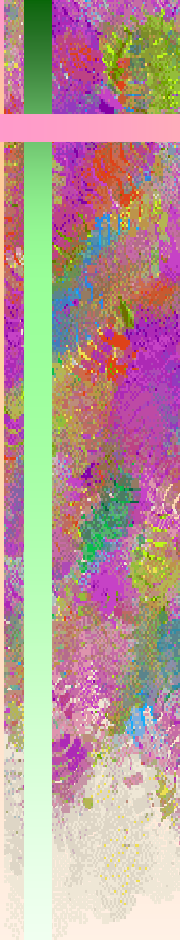
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- The tradition was revived in Imphal in July, 2004, when Meitei women protested in the nude outside the Assam Rifles headquarters. It reinforced the agitation against the Armed Forces Special Powers Act. Under pressure, New Delhi agreed to Assam Rifles's vacating their camp HQ at Kangla Fort and to withdrawing the AFSPA in some areas. However, the Meira Paibis, who had been in the forefront of the protest were derided and discredited in the local media.

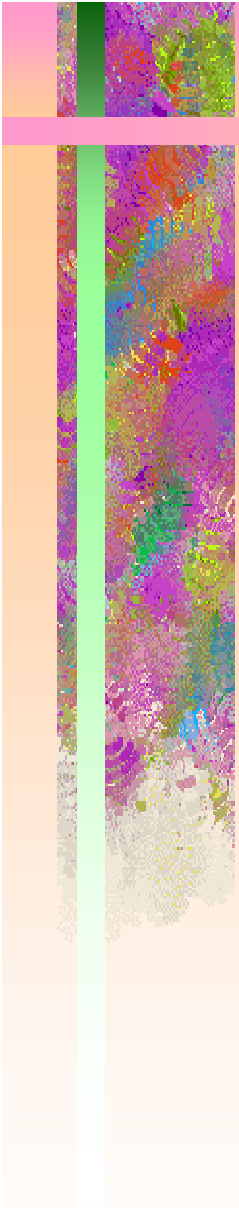
Worry Dolls



Worry dolls come from Guatemala. They were made as toys for children. Children would tell their problems to the doll which would make them feel better. Often the dolls were kept in elaborately decorated boxes. Children would often sleep with their dolls.

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- **Indigenous dialogue process starts not in the form of conversation in words or paper.**
 - **In most of the indigenous community, they will engage in dialogue in the form of rituals, feast, songs and dances.**
 - **The balanced relationship is the most important aspect.**

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- **Indigenous women have played key roles in peacebuilding in their communities. Yet they have not been given due recognition in the conflict resolution processes. Indigenous women are not adequately represented in peace negotiations in all levels. At best, they are seen as auxiliaries in conflict, and are portrayed as passive victims and silent spectators of conflict. When conflicts lead to violent confrontations, indigenous women, lacking support mechanisms face the brunt of repression and therefore become a vulnerable sector.**

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- ***Invisibility of women in the peace process***
 - **While existing customs and practices within our communities recognise the role of women as peace negotiators and mediators, the reality is that there are policies and systems that make these efforts and roles invisible. Our roles in the community as peace mediators seem to be but an extension of our role in the kitchen-that is, to keep the peace within the family and contain conflict among the children and family members. There is no recognition of the women as peace negotiators in the more “formal, public, and official sense.”**