

# Female Roles in Peace Building of Aceh, Indonesia for Acclimating in Deep South of Thailand\*



Apinya Tissamana

King Prajadhipok Institute, Thailand.

Corresponding Author's Email: [apinya@kpi.ac.th](mailto:apinya@kpi.ac.th)

## Abstract

This study aims at analyze the roles of women in Asia in the resolving violence and conflicts through the peace process. This qualitative research aims to raise awareness and provide policy proposals to the government and related organizations. The empirical data is utilized to gain insights into the operations and collaborations among women's organizations and peace networks in addressing political and gender-based violence. In order to access the peace process, the researcher includes a case study that involves gathering information through document analysis and interviews in the field, focusing on the experiences, knowledge, and capabilities of women from 7-8 organizations who serve as leaders in the peace process in Indonesia. The case study specifically examines women's involvement in peace operations in Aceh Province between October 2016 and May 2017. The study revealed that women are significantly affected by violence as victims of war and insurgency involving weapons. As a result of these losses, there is a unification among women who have lost family members or have been otherwise affected by the violence. These women also consider the broader consequences of violence, such as its prevalence in conflict areas where women bear the burden of managing both household and social responsibilities.

Therefore, this research has made a suggestion to establish a female group aimed at resolving conflicts within families in conflict areas, both on a large scale and at the societal level. These activities can be conducted within social groups that collectively acknowledge the problems, taking into account various social factors such as politics, environment, culture, belief systems, religions, and interpretations of ethnicity. The types of conflicts explored in this study highlight the roles and participation of women in the peace process within Aceh Province, Indonesia. In this article, a comparison is made between the roles of women in Aceh and those in the Deep South of Thailand in order to identify similarities and differences.

**Keywords:** Peace Building; Female Roles; Violence; Aceh; Indonesia

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## Introduction

A case study of the peace-building process through female roles in the midst of the conflict and unrest in Aceh Province, Indonesia lasted for 30 years between 1976 and 2005. This case study in Aceh shows three important periods in peace movement through female roles: 1) before the peace agreement, 2) during the process of peace agreement, and 3) after the peace agreement to the current status where women are working for peace in Aceh Province. All the three periods illustrate the roles of women in the groups and their characteristics. Although the political conflict and violence with the use of weapons has ended, the gender-based violence still exists such as the interpretation of Islamic principles and some certain religious restrictions on women's participation in political activities.

The three ongoing phases of the peace negotiation were in the form of formal and informal dialogues. The armed conflicts ended through a peace negotiation with the Indonesian government in 2005 through representatives from the Aceh independence movement or Gerakan Aceh Merdeka: GAM, founded in 1976. In the negotiation, Shadia Marhaban was the only woman as a peace negotiator in GAM. Before and after the negotiation, there are many organizations in the workforce for peace founded by women in Aceh proposing peace to the military system and armed operation and bringing new perspectives in raising the value of human beings with race and gender equality as the main direction of women's peace movement in Aceh.

Driving peace by women in Aceh is a very interesting case study. In addition to the outstanding roles of women participating at the peace negotiation and the impact on the process of driving peace after the peace agreement, various groups of Aceh women for peace still continue their work to end violence and proactively create expansive change. During the gradual withdrawal from the area after the peace negotiations, the focuses are on education and research such as providing training in the peace process as well as roles in the political system such as representatives in the Human Rights Commission and a volunteer network. Their work especially women's activities financially supported by International NGOs and related organizations.

## Objectives of the research

To analyzing the female roles in Asia in the resolutions of the violence and conflicts through the peace process.

## Research methodology

In the first six to eight months of conducting the study, the researcher gathered relevant information both from documents and field work. Knowledge from academic textbooks, articles, reports and other documents of the peace-making organizations were collected to learn on conflict management and the roles of women in peace building in Aceh

Province, Indonesia and Pakistan. Basic understandings of the violence in the social context, culture, politics, economy, belief and history are included in the study.

The researcher has collected data through in-depth interviews. The main respondents were women who played a role in peace-making processes in both countries. The method to select the respondents was through the academic networks and those who are working in the field of women's rights. The respondents provided the information according to their work goals. For educational tools, the research team designed topic-oriented questions for informal discussions. The unstructured interviews with the respondents consisted of the scope of their roles, experiences, concepts, strategies, obstacles, and working models for peace-building as well as how to empower women through the state policy in Aceh, Indonesia, and that of Pakistan. A total of 12 respondents from Aceh, Indonesia, and key points were also included in the following interviews.

## Research results

The study of peace building processes by women in the midst of violence in Asia: a case study in Aceh Indonesia reveals that Aceh Province is diverse in people and cultures because the province is a port of trade, maritime allowing the people to adopt the cultures, religions, and beliefs from various groups. Islam as one of religions has been introduced in this area and Java since the 13th Buddhist Century. The religion has been playing an important role in laying the foundations in Aceh including the form of government. The regulations and requirements in Aceh are found by many scholars that Aceh is considered "Mecca's verandah / serembi Mekkah", a resting place for pilgrims, students of the religion, and religious scholars who wished to travel to Makkah, Saudi Arabia, an initial area of a center for Islamic studies, and a center of international trade in Southeast Asia (Andrew, 2013; Reid, 1969).

Aceh's history before and after the colonies was compiled. The status of Aceh in the pre-colonial era was tied to the monarchy. In other words, Aceh Dar al-Salam was the leader at that time. From the 16th to 17th century, Aceh fought against Portuguese domination. After 30 years of War (1873-1903), the Dutch troops occupied Aceh (Reid 1969). However, the Aceh nationalist group commented that the Dutch never completely occupied Aceh with the guerrilla warfare. In 1942, Japan took over Aceh, Indonesia, resulted in the return of Dutch to Indonesia to declare the colonial rules. Until the end of World War II in 1949, the era of Indonesian nationalism, there was a war for independence from the Dutch. Most fighting areas were in Java with a support from Aceh. At that time, the Aceh people saw the violence of the social revolution led by the religious ulama who expelled the ulee baling (Zeccola, 2007).

The fight between Aceh and the Indonesia government occurred twice during the time. Bowen (1989) explained through the historical view that Aceh was related to the expansion of the first wave of Islamization (1953-1959). When the Dutch signed Aceh to be part of Indonesia without considering people's needs, it led to the independence movement in 1953.

The history in this era was filled with struggles to establish the Darul al-Islam. The purpose was to protect the religious state from those who rejected to keep the precepts such as alcohol drinking and gambling, those with the belief in communism, and those with the belief in the Hindu-Javanese tradition. Followed by the 2nd battle (1976-2005), Hasan di Tiro was an important leader to pave the way for Islamic fighting to protect Aceh from multiple occupations and became an important stimulation of the spirit and prestige of the Aceh people (Tiro, 1984; Reid, 2007).

In addition to Aceh's religious identity as the elite of "Mecca's verandah / serambi Mekkah Makkah, Aceh is also known as the city of Tanah Rencong / Land of the Dagger, or the weapon of the Aceh people. According to Jacqueline Siapno's work (2002), the speech of Megawati Sukarmoputri on 30 July 1999 (The Jakarta Post 1999) and Prof. M. Hasbi Amiruddin on glorifying heroes and heroines pointed out the tradition of glorifying the fighters to pass on the ideas to the following generations in the form of storytelling and lullabies, Zeccolo (2007). The discussion of the Aceh cultural identity in the lullabies from mothers will keep pushing the young to have the spirit of fighters to protect their homeland.

According to the Islamic practices under the Shari'ah Law among the Aceh people, Thipphimol (2017) explained that the practices reflected strictness of the law. Islam has been firmly settled in Aceh considered the center of Islam and Islamic education to be expanded to other places In Southeast Asia. Due to the Shari'ah Law, Aceh was portrayed as a devout Muslim conceptually linking to the war between Aceh and the Dutch colony (1873-1914). During the colonial period, Aceh was one of the last areas successfully controlled by the Dutch in 1913. The *ulama* played the main roles in fighting against the Dutch who were considered as pagans.

Aceh Province has been the only province in Indonesia not completely under the Islamic law since 2001. The Shari'ah Law in Aceh is like the representative of Islam in the most common form. In particular, the entry into the world of women and alternative sex is clearly associated with penalties. Thipphimon (2017) suggested that for the Aceh people it is impossible to clearly go against the use of Shari'ah Laws in Aceh because for Muslims the Shari'ah Law is the law of God or a good and correct way of life. The Shari'ah Law has been in Aceh since 2001 consisting of 4 main areas as follows:

1. Dress Code under the Law No. 11, 2002, regarding the principles and symbols of Islam (Ibadah, Aqidahdan Syi'ar Islam).
2. Consumption of Alcoholic Beverages Under the Law No. 12, 2003 (Qanun Khamar)
3. Gambling Law Under the Law No. 13, 2003 (Qanun Maisir [Judi])
4. Sexual Misconduct Under the Law No. 14, 2003 (Qanun Khalwat [Mesum])

The Aceh Local Council passed the draft of the Islamic Penal Code in September, 2014, and became effective in October, 2015. In addition to the original law in the four mentioned areas, Islamic Criminal Law included the provisions of offenses against Islamic Law on

outlawed sexual relations (zina) such as having sexual relations with people who are not husbands and wives, rapes, accusation of others on committing sexual offenses (qadzaf), and same-sex sexual relations (liwath and musahaqah) (Thippimon, 2017). The information was derived from the field study and Yusni Saby, a religious scholar in Aceh working in the ulama network of women involving in the activities for the rights, gender equality and peace building. The conclusion is that people in society should understand Shari'ahh according to the religious principles of Muslim and integrate them to the opinions and rulings of thinkers and religious gurus (Fiqh). The integration to the legal and enforceable context in Aceh according to the religion was full of flaws caused by human's interpretation resulting in negative reflections from Shari'ah causing prejudice in the image of violence. The problems were from the limitations in accessing the context and understanding the root of Shari'ah's intent.

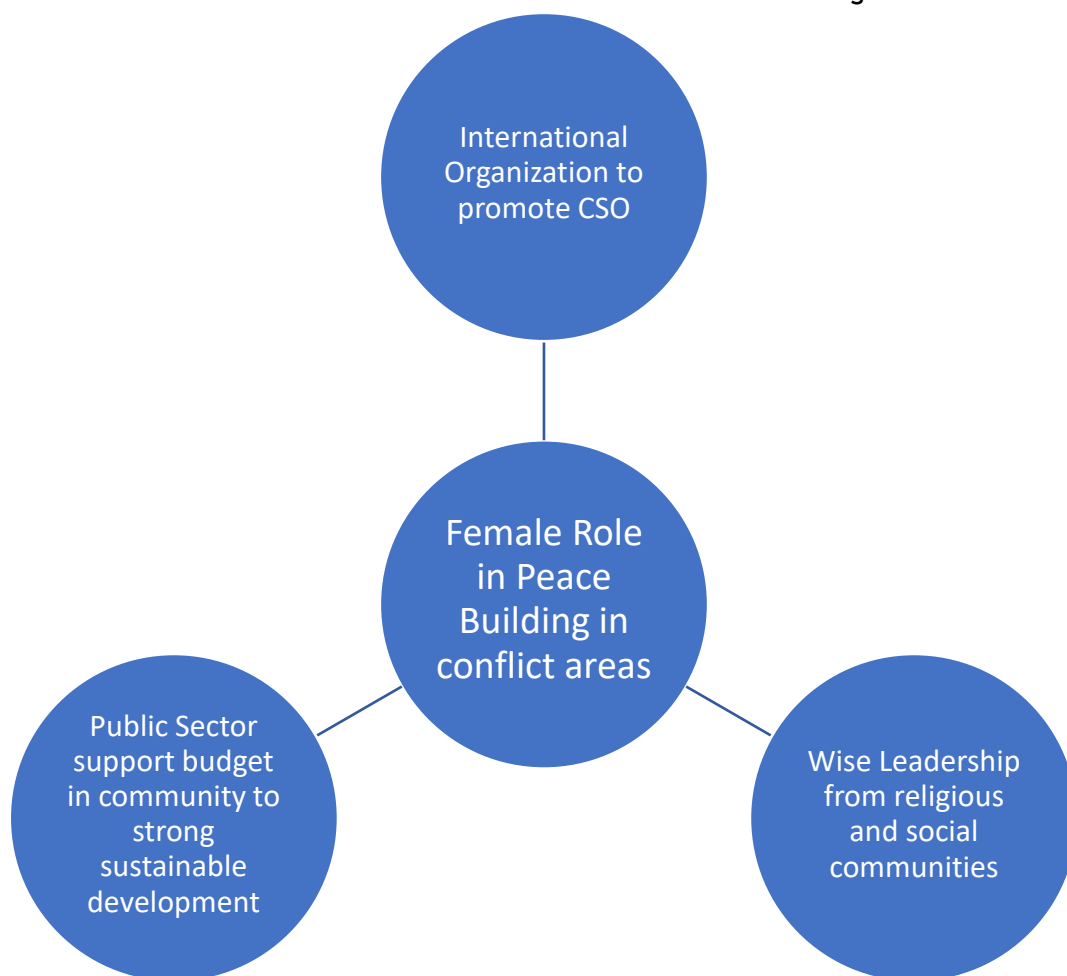
It can be said that the peace building process in the conflicts through women's roles in Aceh Province, Indonesia, included the struggles of equality and rights. Despite the end of the war, the inequality of rights and freedoms is still visible. Therefore, women in peace building must continue to unite the positive spirits of women for their rights and peace.

The finding found that the female role will promote peace building in violence area and they support civil societies for creating peace actives an open space in political and economic conflict for creating peace in conflict area between in conflict and post –conflict situation.

### **The new body of knowledge**

The new body of knowledge of research is the model of women and peace building from comparative 2 countries Thailand and Indonesia (Aceh Province). This model of women and peace building are collaboration of women's power from many organizations such as public sectors, civil societies and individual human rights defenders. From Aceh and Deep south model, we found that the role of CSO to promote peace building to be strong in varieties of dimension such as economical dimension, political dimension, social and environmental dimensions and religious dimension.

## Model of Female Roles in Peace building



## Discussion of research results

The study of peace building process in Aceh Province, Indonesia, suggested the following drives to solve problems of violence and build peace in the southern border provinces in comparison with the process of peace building and supporting factors for women in peace building in Aceh Province.

Peace building through Women's Roles in Aceh and the Southern Border Provinces of Thailand	Aceh	Southern Border Provinces of Thailand
1. Current Network of Peace Building (2017)	Civil Society Organizations	Civil Society Organizations

Peace building through Women's Roles in Aceh and the Southern Border Provinces of Thailand	Aceh	Southern Border Provinces of Thailand
<b>2. Current Conflicts (2017)</b>	<p>The insurgency between the GAM group and the Indonesian government did not occur any more after the Helsinki Peace Agreement in 2005. However, women are still facing social crimes such as domestic violence, political violence, enforcement of Shari'ah Law, and even violence caused by economic problems.</p>	<p>The unrest is continuing while the women in the midst of conflicts are affected both physically and mentally. The violence women are facing may be caused by social and economic problems at a structural level.</p>
<b>3. Women's Movement for Peace</b>	<p>Initially, women in Aceh were strengthened by the founding of Balai Syura Ureung Inong Aceh: BSUIA with a focus on gender equality in Aceh with the support from international organizations, attracting more members in various cities to involve in as volunteers, academics, activists, influencers, and religious specialists.</p> <p>-BSUIA formed the Acehnese Women's Conference called "Acehnese Women's Conference/ Duek Pakat Inong".</p> <p>In 2005, the drive to call for women's involvement in the peace and security policy and law were victims of violence such as those without a marriage license resulting the unrecognized status by law during the unrest.</p> <p>- BSUIA focuses on building peace and security and drives women to</p>	<p>Initiatives of women's civil society groups in the southern border provinces to work collaboratively allow women to free themselves from being victims of violence caused by the unrest or social and cultural events. The actions of these women cause joint activities in reducing violence such as "With Heart Group" who is driving safety for inmates and their family members especially women and children in Songkla Province, and "We Peace Group" who is working to help women and children affected by violations of rights, physical and mental</p>

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	<p>receive their political rights. BSUIA supports women who are victims of war and violence to get justice while ensuring the use of Shari'ahh to empower women rather than destroying their status and dignity especially the Criminal Code / Qanun Jinayat in the Rape Act for Women. In summary, driving the work model of the Aceh Women Civil Society Organizations and Network such as Flower Aceh is to help heal and enhance women's capabilities in various areas. Another group is LINA (Liga Inong Aceh / Women's League) with the aim to empower women in creating peace and restoring women's rights after the conflict or unrest.</p>	<p>issues, and the judicial process with no regards to people's perspectives and understandings in gender differences. Some members are friends and volunteers working to end violence towards women and children in the three southern border provinces by focusing on the participation among women, children, and those affected by violence in the three southern border provinces. Nowadays, a group of women is established as a civil society organization in the southern border provinces where two religions, Buddhism and Muslim, harmoniously exist. Peace Agenda of Women (PAOW) currently drives peace and solves issues in the area with the campaigns on "Public Areas with Safety" targeting 4 main locations: markets, religious sanctuary, roads, and schools.</p>



Peace building through Women's Roles in Aceh and the Southern Border Provinces of Thailand	Aceh	Southern Border Provinces of Thailand
		<p>However, the network of PAOW in the southern border provinces is unconsolidated to be flexible in dealing with the urgent issues in that context. The operation may not truly reflect the voice of women in the community.</p>
<b>4. Support for Women's Peace Building Process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Foreign Fund</li> <li>- Domestic Fund</li> <li>- State and City Financial Support</li> <li>- Women's Capacity of Peace Building</li> <li>- International and Local Networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Foreign Fund</li> <li>- Domestic Fund</li> <li>- State and City Financial Support</li> <li>- Women's Capacity of Peace Building</li> <li>- International and Local Networks</li> </ul>
<b>5. Open Political Platform</b>	<p><b><u>Before the Peace Agreement in Aceh</u></b></p> <p>President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono acted as a key contributor to the peace-building initiatives in Aceh. He is not only a representative of the "Dove" military in the Indonesian army, but he is also the representative of the "Dove" politics with the purpose to end the unrest through the negotiations.</p>	<p>The political platform of the southern border provinces is not open yet because of the military control in the area. The start of the negotiation for peace is still far-fetched (2018). The government is concentrating on the national administration. The problems in the southern border provinces seem to be resolved</p>

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	<p><u><b>After the Peace Agreement</b></u></p> <p>Aceh Province consists of the local political party, and the local people can participate in the local governance. When Aceh announced the Shari'ah Law as always demanded by the people in Aceh Province. Although the administration is under the Indonesia government, the agreement is accepted on details such as local political parties in the electoral process and the governor selected through the Independent Selecting Commission established specially for Aceh Province.</p> <p>On the other hand, the current politicians with ruling power in Aceh are in the GAM formerly fighting the Indonesian government. Their images in the war are abandoned and changed to the roles of local government administrators. The access to power through elections allows them to be assessed. Currently, the public is allowed to assess the government operations. The civil society organizations in Aceh are monitoring the work of local governments with transparency in various areas.</p>	<p>simultaneously, but there is no real capacity to drive peace. The central government is prudent to make decisions or start any movement. If the political platform is reluctant to be established, the solutions in the southern border provinces may not be as effective as they should be.</p>

Peace building through Women's Roles in Aceh and the Southern Border Provinces of Thailand	Aceh	Southern Border Provinces of Thailand
6. Public Decision	<p>Before the peace agreement, no decision was made by the people in Aceh at all. One thing attracting all parties to participate in the peace negotiations more quickly was the tsunami on December 26, 2004. All the parties were aware of the need to accelerate the rehabilitation of Aceh with the assistance from many international organizations, driving the conflicts in Aceh to open to the negotiation platform easily.</p>	<p>In the southern border provinces, there have been "Public Decision-Making and Public Surveys" or "Peace Survey" to examine the proposals and concerns of the local people. Peace Survey is considered an effort to form collaborations in the area. Peace Survey in the southern border provinces and Patani is derived from the experience in Northern Ireland in trying to involve all the parties or sectors of the conflict. However, in the survey questions, there is only one question related to genders: "Do you think a man or a woman does a better job as a political, economic, and peace leader?" (Peace Survey 2: 74)</p> <p>The survey found that most opinions toward male or female leaders of peace-building had no difference (43.6%). However, the opinions</p>

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		<p>were different when referring to political and economic leadership where men were considered better in the role. The peace survey was initiated by 15 networks and organizations at both local and international level.</p>
<p><b>7. Mediator</b></p>	<p>-The former Finnish president, Martin Ahasari, was a supporter or a "mediator" of peace negotiations. He was equipped with the skills in negotiation and accepted in society. He played a very important role in many negotiations including disputes in Africa and Europe. His roles as a mediator in the negotiations followed the principle that "the final agreement must be unanimous." This meant that no party was allowed to declare its own victory while negotiations were in progress. In addition, all the parties were forbidden to release any information to the media in order to avoid any political issue in Indonesia before reaching the agreement. That was the reason why the negotiation took place in Helsinki, Finland.</p>	<p>The formal and actual negotiations have not happened yet. At this time, the government led by General Prayut Chan-o-cha is not comfortable to run any operation in addition to the lack of sufficient power to drive peace negotiation. Therefore, it is impossible to hold a peace negotiation at the national level now. However, the peace process in the area has been driven for more than 10 years by the local civil society and organizations with support of international organizations. It is still unclear that</p>



Peace building through Women's Roles in Aceh and the Southern Border Provinces of Thailand	Aceh	Southern Border Provinces of Thailand
		mediators in peace negotiations come from the local or international sector, but there are efforts by ASEAN countries such as Malaysia to reach and facilitate the negotiation.
<b>8. Building a positive peace in the area</b>	- The area is in the process of creating a positive peace after the unrest.	- The area is in the midst of conflicts simultaneously driven with negative peace and positive peace.

## Conclusion

The conclusion of this research tries to examine the female role for peacebuilding in conflict areas. The effective adaptation from women is “from victim to victor” impact to strong communities in Aceh and Deep South of Thailand. Women's groups and Deep South civil society organizations have been studying the peace process in neighboring countries, such as in Mindanao, the Philippines, and in Aceh, Indonesia. The women in Deep South of Thailand exempt to push gender equality in public policy and create female peace dialogue facilitators for peace process in deep south of Thailand insurgency. The power of women participation on peace process is crucial for drive gender, peace and security policy in deep south areas and drive policy form high level in national level however, in the grassroot communities we found the gaps and misinterpretation in peace process.

## Suggestions

From the result of research, the researcher has the suggestions as follow:

### 1. The suggestions from the research

From the research result of the objective, it was found that the government must prioritize the operations to support the peace building processes with budgets, personnel, and knowledge. Moreover, the connected ideas among conservative communities and universal

mechanisms will help empower women. Experience in the conflict areas and developed countries as well as success of an implementation with women's participation in the peace building process will be emphasized by the civil society organizations and non-government organizations with the relevant skills and understanding of the operations because they efficiently work closely with the community.

Therefore, the related institute should apply as follow:

(1) The government should establish a working system and set up a joint operating area with the private and public sectors to create learning, knowledge sharing, and analysis of issues in order to find directions for solving the unrest along with collaboration. The review shows the significant obstacles to change the structure of the culture, belief, tradition, and the justice process in the country to drive women for peace building and security progress.

(2) The government should establish a forum to consistently promote the presentation and expression among the networks of private organizations and people in the area to drive the actions continuously. The government should involve extensive organizations in the discussion to share their views during the drafting process of the policy. The agencies considered as the civil networks, academics, and activists for a woman's rights such as Insan Foundation Trust Pakistan and Flower Aceh group in Aceh Province use the concept of religious interpretation to support the practices of enhancing gender equality and encouraging people of all genders. All races should have access to education, and they should be allowed organize activities to support a woman's roles at the community level in the process of peace building. These groups of women believe that the interpretation of the religious principles must not only be conducive to the power of men or religious leaders, but it must lead to the roles of women, children, and people with different beliefs and ethnic groups as well.

## **2. The suggestions for the future research**

The future research should involve the following issue:

Next research will be focused on implementation with women's participation in the peace building process in Deep south of Thailand. Moreover, the many sectors should establish a forum to consistently promote the presentation and expression among the networks of private organizations and people in the area to drive the actions continuously. The government must examine if the national action plans and policies are consistent with the UN's mechanisms and the resolutions developed by the community. The combination between the community level and the international level can help women gain access to relevant political power, services, and rights. For example, the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR 1325) on women, peace, and security (WPS) prioritizes the female roles in a war, conflict, and violence, which can be applied in the context of Southern Thailand.

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