



TOWARDS LIBERATING DEMOCRACY: DEVOLUTION OF POWER MATTERS

Report of the Regional Workshop
Bangkok, 16–17 January 2007

DEMOCRACY, CONFLICT AND HUMAN SECURITY PROJECT

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Foreword

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) enters its second decade of work as an intergovernmental body dedicated to building sustainable democracy. Democracy is a contested concept. Different definitions and theories emphasize different aspects of democracy. International IDEA's understanding of democracy is that of a system of political governance whose decision-making power is subject to the controlling influence of citizens who are considered political equals. A democratic political system is inclusive, participatory, representative, accountable, transparent and responsive to citizens' aspirations and expectations. Democracy is not an all-or-nothing affair. It is a question of the degree to which citizens exercise control over political decision-making and are treated as equals.

However, for many across the world, democracy, such as practised, is facing a crisis of legitimacy and credibility. The idea of democracy based on the political equality of citizens has not translated effectively and the reality in many countries is characterized by rising economic inequality, unresolved conflicts and the marginalization of many groups of people who remain powerless minorities. In recent years promotion of democracy has gained prominence in foreign policy debates, but at the same time, democracy building is viewed with suspicion by an increasing number of people.

Regular electoral contests, while indispensable, do not suffice to establish and maintain democratic practice. If democracy is to remain relevant it must be reclaimed and revitalized. Ensuring that citizens can make informed choices, that local participation is genuine, and that democratic governments are committed to improving delivery on human security are keys to such a positive outcome. In societies emerging from war, these processes are essential for preventing reversal to violence and securing peace.

The key messages of IDEA's founding mandate—support for sustainable democracy based on local ownership of structures and processes, promoting dialogue processes among national stakeholders, ensuring that institutional design relates to the specific context of a society—remain increasingly relevant. International IDEA undertook the project Democracy, Conflict and Human Security to interrogate the challenges facing democracy-building in the 21st century and to use the ensuing publications as a dialogue tool to assist discussions among national actors and policy development in support of democracy in the international community.

This report is based on the discussion that took place at the regional workshop 'Towards Liberating Democracy: Devolution of Power Matters', held in Bangkok, Thailand, 16-17 February 2007. The workshop drew on experiences from Aceh, Mindanao, West Papua and southern Thailand and addressed the nexus between democracy, conflict and human security in these contexts. It recognized the highly political nature of the terrain including the politics underlying developmental and other nation-building strategies and underscored the need for democracies to help create a positive peace in conflict prone societies through power sharing as a measure to stabilize areas facing violence and

reduce tensions between different groups in society. Through such workshops, International IDEA is contributing to the ongoing global and regional debates on strengthening democratic practices and responding to the quests for human dignity and development in the South-East Asia region.

International IDEA would like to express particular appreciation to the Human Security Program of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Canada, for its generous support of the publication *Democracy, Conflict and Human Security: Pursuing Peace in the 21st Century*, which served as a basis for discussion at the workshop.

We also express our thanks to Mahidol University Research Center for Peace Building in Thailand for their cooperation in hosting the workshop and King Prajadhipok's Institute and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) regional centre for their shared interest and contributions.

Many have contributed to the workshop in their individual capacities and through their organizations by presenting papers and chairing sessions. They include Gothom Arya, Chantana Banpasirichote, Afridal Darmi, Judith Large, Willy Mandowen, Arifah Rahmawati, Sakuntala Kadirgamar-Rajasingham, Irene M. Santiago, Henrik Fredborg Larsen, Abhoud Syed M. Lingga, Ichsa Malik and Prawase Wasi.

Our thanks go to Judith Large, former Senior Advisor to the Democracy Building and Conflict Management Programme and one of the lead authors of *Democracy, Conflict and Human Security: Pursuing Peace in the 21st Century*; and also to Cecilia Bylesjö, Project Officer, and Kalpalata Dutta, Director of the Asian Institute for Human Rights in Thailand, who were rapporteurs at the regional workshop and co-authors of the workshop report.

Within International IDEA, Goran Fejic, Head of the Democracy Building and Conflict Management programme and Sakuntala Kadirgamar-Rajasingham, Head of the South Asia Program, made substantial contributions to the project, and Rosinah Ismail-Clarke and Zoe Mills provided administrative support. Our thanks go also to Publication Manager Florencia Enghel, to Lisa Hagman for her assistance during the production process and to Gill Dwyer for editing the text.

Finally we would like to express our gratitude to all the participants who actively contributed to the discussions by sharing their experiences of their particular regions and by being open to discussing the challenges to democracy building. We hope that this report makes a contribution to strengthening democracy in the region, and that democracy can thus be the lever to manage conflict by addressing the underlying human security concerns that undermine peace in South-East Asia.

Vidar Helgesen
Secretary-General, International IDEA

1. Overview: project concept

In the aftermath of the Cold War and the so-called Third Wave of democratization, confidence in democracy as the only path and as panacea for all challenges to governance was high. However, this confidence has been shaken. Many countries have veered towards authoritarianism in their tolerance of ‘strong leaders’ who promise better delivery in the economic realm and promise to stamp out social instability and resolve conflicts. In many parts of the world, there is increasing awareness of the gap between democratic precepts, promises and delivery, especially in the social and economic sector. Democracy, with elections leading to representative government, has given voice to citizens but has not necessarily ensured delivery or addressed collective needs. The limitation of democratic governance to the electoral process has, in many cases, given rise to further marginalization and exclusion of some communities. Thus the adherence to democracy as an article of faith and exclusive focus on the institutional and procedural dimensions of democracy may obscure some of the challenges emerging from the democratic process itself.

Today, democracy is challenged to do more than provide for the structures of representation. It is tasked to provide the basis by which collective needs for human security are met. Human insecurity is caused by violent conflict and social threats such as disease and crime, and unmet development and social needs such as public education and health care. Democracy, conflict and human security are areas which have close linkages. In this paradigm, the focus shifts from national security and economic growth to human security and human development. What is prioritized is individual and collective well-being that enhances both the freedoms and capabilities of people.

International IDEA’s Democracy, Conflict and Human Security Project argues that effective democracy building must move beyond elections and technical assistance and address democratic practices and their impact on human security. Government may hold free elections but fall short in delivering on other ‘democratic goods’—such as giving voice to the marginalized. Democracy building has to be a process that engenders respect for the dignity of citizens and provides space for public participation through effective dialogues on public policy. Devolution of power is increasingly presented as a way of expanding space for public participation, but for it to be effective, it must be legitimate in the eyes of those whom it is designed to empower. Real local ownership will exist only if the stakeholders are part of the design and implementation of the governance structures to be devolved.

The workshop

International IDEA, in partnership with Mahidol University Research Center for Peace Building, and with the support of King Prajadhipok Institute Center for Peace and Governance and UNDP Regional Centre, hosted a two day workshop: ‘Towards

Liberating Democracy: Devolution of Power Matters' 16–17 January 2007 in Bangkok, Thailand.

The workshop provided a forum for policy makers, researchers and civil society representatives from Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand, to reflect on key challenges for state and society in South-East Asia. The objective was to examine the nexus between democracy, conflict and human security in Aceh, West Papua, Mindanao and the southern provinces of Thailand. It aimed at initiating a dialogue on policy options for strengthening democracy and delineating some essential features for a roadmap towards devolution of power in the region as a means to increase stability and engender peace. Last but not the least, it sought to bring together participants from different conflict zones in the region and enable them to establish a network.

The workshop was timely given the developments in South-East Asia. While a peace agreement was recently signed in Aceh, followed by the first local elections in December 2006, West Papua is in the process of introducing legislation on decentralization, and Mindanao is paying increased attention to decentralization and autonomy measures as a way of addressing the conflict. In Thailand, the present government was appointed by the military following the military coup of September 2006, while the southern border provinces continue to face violence. A referendum on constitutional reforms is scheduled for August 2007.

This report is based on Chatham House rules and does not attribute presentations and responses to any given speaker. It does however summarize the proceedings and highlights some key findings under the following headings:

- Addressing structural strains and the ethnic and religious dimensions of conflict, focusing on experiences in Thailand and Mindanao;
- Prospects of devolution and decentralization of power to achieve 'positive peace' in conflict-prone societies;
- Strategies to prevent, alleviate and resolve conflicts;
- Concluding remarks: ways forward.

Our dream is peace for humankind all over the world. That is peaceful co-existence between man and man, men and women, and human beings with the environment. Reality is complex. In this difficult world there is irregular development...widening gaps, concentration of power and wealth leading to conflict, war and violence, poverty, injustice and environmental crisis. It is not acceptable but not unusual either for such a complex system as the one that exists today. It is not impossible to solve this, and our challenge is to find ways of bringing about peace. That is what this meeting is about...(T)he energy

that we use is muscles, guns and money but these energies cannot solve difficult problems. What would solve such a complex situation? Democracy might be the answer. But the question is what kind of democracy?

Opening speech by Dr Prawase Wasi

Vice Chair of the National Reconciliation Commission, Thailand

Defining the concepts—lessons learnt

Concepts such as decentralization, devolution and de-concentration of power are often used freely, even interchangeably without conceptual clarity and understanding. Furthermore, as they travel and take root in different contexts they acquire additional meanings through their associations. Therefore it was necessary to unbundle their meaning and identify the nuances of degrees of power and authority to which they relate.

Decentralization refers to the transfer of power to local government units to initiate, fund and implement programmes meant for local development. It is based on the principle that public decisions should be made when possible, at the level of authority closest to the people.

Devolution of power implies that local governments are given some discretionary authority in decision-making and in the management of local affairs and delivery of services to their communities. It refers to a form of administrative decentralization.

De-concentration of power, in turn, implies the transfer of more limited responsibilities, powers and resources from the central government (ministries and agencies) to field offices at the local and regional level; government becomes closer to the citizens, while remaining under the authority of the central powers and acting on its behalf and under their direction and control.

In Asia the terms ‘devolution’ and ‘de-concentration’ have come into usage in the governance discourse relatively recently and may be used in different countries to signify different arrangements. In some cases it may be difficult to classify an arrangement under either of the two terms, and different levels of central and local government often have their individual responsibilities for managing service delivery. But what is important to know is the form and content of the transfer of power. The critical questions to pose are:

- What are the institutional arrangements for the transfer of power?
- What is the relationship of the institutions at local level to those at central level?
- Is such transfer of power part of a uniform national policy or is it an asymmetric arrangement designed for a particular context?

- What kinds of power— political, fiscal or administrative—are transferred? When power is transferred to local government institutions, what is the relationship of these institutions to the traditional/indigenous systems of authority?

When focusing on devolution as a potential conflict resolution measure, it is necessary to: analyse whether the devolution policy and actual implementation allow for local decision-making in the areas of crucial importance to the target communities; and study the impact—positive and negative—in addressing conflict in non-violent ways.

In some countries, devolution is used as a conflict resolution measure by increasing the autonomy of conflict areas within the nation state. In such cases, there is assignment or transfer of autonomous governmental functions, usually by a national legislation, to elected (or otherwise representative) local governmental bodies. Examples of such arrangements for ‘asymmetric’ devolution may be found in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh and in Indonesia with the special autonomy law for Aceh.

There is a great need in Asia to contemplate particular arrangements for the transfer of power. These may include special representational arrangements for the local bodies to which power is devolved, and rules and regulations for power sharing so as to ensure that such arrangements meet the demands of greater autonomy and help to bring peaceful solutions to violent conflicts.

Lastly, there is a necessity to acknowledge that local governance is much more than installing local institutions. It involves the capability of people to decide on matters affecting their daily lives. One such issue which is very sensitive in the southern border provinces of Thailand is the right of the people to use their local language as a medium of primary education and as the language of communication with state authorities. There is also a need to understand the role of traditional authorities in this context as well as the relationship between government, civil society and the administration to visualize how local government can facilitate peace building processes.

In sum, there is need to discuss how decentralization—including the strategies for devolution and de-concentration of power and concrete arrangements to implement such strategies—could potentially be applied to bring stability in regions seeking greater autonomy.

De-concentration vs. devolution of power

The transfer of powers and functions from a central government authority to local institutions can be done in two ways:

- through the delegation of governmental power by a central authority (usually a ministry) to branch offices (or other agencies) that must act on its behalf and under its direction and control; or
- through the assignment or transfer of autonomous governmental functions (usually by national legislation) to elected local government bodies that act on their own behalf, subject to minimum direction and control.

2. Addressing structural strains and the ethnic and religious dimensions of conflict

A number of violent conflicts continue to smoulder in South-East Asia and they take place in democratic states or those that are committed to a transition to democracy. The conflict in the southern border provinces of Thailand has its roots in the last century but the violence began to spiral first in January 2004. The state responded to the increased violence by treating it as a 'security' concern, refusing to acknowledge the issues of underdevelopment, unemployment and identity-based deprivation. It imposed draconian laws ostensibly to preserve national security. There is a similar long-drawn conflict in the southern province of the Philippines, Mindanao, which has seen cycles of violence and numerous efforts at mediation with a view to addressing the root causes of the conflict. In the case of Indonesia, the regions of West Papua, Moluccas and Aceh have seen several decades of militancy and repression, but in the aftermath of the December 2004 tsunami there is movement towards resolving the conflict in Aceh through the recent peace accord mediated by Finland.

The causes of these and many other conflicts can be traced to structural and systemic problems of underdevelopment, marginalization and exclusion of the local population, and a denial of their rights to express and manifest their cultural identity. Politically, this is articulated through the claim of the local populations to exercise their right of self-determination and gain autonomy from the central state. Issues of religion and ethnicity are often thought to be determining factors and the root causes of such conflicts. But the question to be raised is to what extent have these concepts been used to fuel the conflict or explain it *post facto*?

Thailand

The three border provinces in the south of Thailand have distinct ethno-linguistic roots and religious identities (Malay/Islam). The provinces have simmered with tensions for some time, and there were early warning signs. Violence erupted in January 2004 with a major attack on a military camp in Narathiwat province by approximately 50 insurgents who were alleged to have robbed 403 machine guns from the camp and killed four soldiers manning it, while an unspecified number of insurgents set fire to 22 schools and patrol outposts in the province. The state responded by imposing martial law. However, martial law has not quelled the violence and since January 2004 there have been daily killings. Since then around 1900 persons have lost their lives, which is an alarming rise from the average of 74 incidents of violence a year during the decade of 1994–2003.

The origins of the conflict can be traced back through history. Under the Anglo-Siamese treaty of 1909, while Britain got control over the Malay Sultanates of Terengganu, Kelantan and Kedah, control over the Pattani Sultanate was handed over to Siam. Though the demarcation of these new boundaries set the stage for the establishment of the modern

Thai state, it also sowed seeds of discontent among the people of the Pattani Sultanate, who felt that their sovereignty had been taken away. This discontent fuelled a struggle against occupation and oppression when government policies tried to 'assimilate' them within the dominant Thai-Buddhist framework.

Thus the ideology behind the insurgency is reflected in the seven point demand issued in 1948 by Haji Sulong Bin Abdul Kadir, a religious leader of Pattani. These demands included: autonomy to administer the four southern provinces, Pattani, Narathiwat, Yala and Stun through a representative chosen by direct elections, full control over fiscal resources of the provinces, use of the local Melayu language together with the Thai language in government offices, teaching of the Melayu language in primary schools, power to issue regulations on Islam and Islamic tradition and the full and separate jurisdiction of Islamic religious courts from the provincial courts.

Since then the demands of the people have not changed much. The results of an opinion survey of 2730 persons in 2005 showed that the people in the border provinces would like to see local people in national and local governance institutions, respect for the values of justice and equality, acceptance of cultural diversity and respect for local identity by the Thai state.

West Papua

Indonesia became independent from the Netherlands shortly after World War II. However, the Dutch retained control over western New Guinea¹ until 1962. Upon the Dutch withdrawal from the region, an agreement sponsored by the United Nations, 'Act of Free Choice', called for the transfer of control from the Netherlands to Indonesia with the stipulation that a referendum on the transfer be conducted in the province by 1969. The referendum results showed great support for the integration of the province within Indonesia, but the referendum was, in fact, widely contested by the people of West Papua as rigged by the Indonesian government. The legitimacy of the transfer was not recognized by the majority of the people of the region, who opposed Indonesian rule, and aspired to self-government. The Indonesian government resorted to violence to eliminate the political opposition and so began the conflict that continues today.

Over the years, the demographic composition of West Papua has been altered significantly through internal migration of people from other parts of Indonesia. As a result, the ethnic Melanesians have been reduced to a minority in their own land. Many migrants are Muslims while the indigenous Papuans are largely Protestants or Catholics. Further, the migrant communities have a higher level of economic wealth than the indigenous people. All these differences have contributed to heightening the existing frictions in the community. It is also important to note that neither the Papuan nor the migrant communities are homogenous or monolithic. There are significant cultural differences between the more than 250 Papuan ethnic subgroups. Thus, issues of identity in West Papua are very complex and these ethnic/religious differences have been used by power holders to create tensions to serve vested political interests.

Nevertheless, the root causes of conflict are not to be sought in ethnic and religious differences, but in unequal access to and distribution of power. Power is concentrated at the centre and a few hand-picked people selected to represent West Papua. Lack of social and economic integration has created a vacuum between the government in Jakarta and the people of West Papua. Mediating democratic institutions and processes do not exist in the province, furthering alienation. Since 1963 the province has seen numerous military operations that have threatened the civil and political rights and human security of the people of West Papua. These operations have prevented their access to political power as well as economic resources.

In order to deal with the endemic unrest and escalating violence in the province, a special autonomy law was introduced in 2001 with the objective of lessening central government control over the region and increasing the region's share in the official revenues from natural resources of the province. However, these laws were not implemented and there were no significant improvements in the socioeconomic status of the local Papuan communities.

Mindanao

The conflict between the government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Bangsamoro people, specifically between the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), is based on issues of sovereignty. The Bangsamoro people are the traditional inhabitants of Mindanao and they are mainly Muslim. The Bangsamoro people have been struggling for autonomy and their right to determine their political status for decades, considering that their incorporation into the Philippine state was without their consent. They claim that under the unitary system of government that exists in the Philippines they experience bias and prejudice at the hands of the Christian majority. They were discriminated against in matters such as employment, adequate housing, and government resettlement and development policies, which reduced them to the status of minority. The government's failure to deliver basic services to these areas has left Muslim Mindanao with the highest incidence of poverty. Further massacres of Muslims in different areas and bombings of mosques, coupled with the fact that the perpetrators of these crimes were never brought before the justice system, have added to the tension.

The struggle for autonomy has gone through both peaceful and armed phases. At the time when the USA was preparing to grant independence to the Philippines, the Bangsamoro leaders submitted various petitions² to the US government that the Bangsamoro territories should not be included in the Philippine Republic. After these territories were made part of the Philippine Republic in 1946, the Bangsamoro people continued to assert their right to independence through peaceful means such as the Mindanao Independence Movement. The repressive reactions of the Philippine government to a peaceful independence movement and the emergence of anti-Muslim militias that harassed Bangsamoro

communities triggered the violent confrontations between the Bangsamoro and the government forces.

After the conclusion of the negotiations between the government and the MNLF, negotiations with the break-away faction of the MNLF, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, were established in 1997. Under the facilitation of Malaysia, agreements on ceasefire and the rehabilitation and development of conflict-affected areas were reached by the two parties. At present, the negotiations continue on issues relating to ‘ancestral domain’ which are subdivided into four strands—concept, territory, resources and governance. The ceasefire, which is being monitored by the Malaysia-led international monitoring team, is continuing.

3. Some common elements

Though each conflict area is unique, it is possible to identify some common elements with respect to history, causes and current stages of the conflicts.

The non-recognition of different cultures and unequal distribution of national wealth and resources have worked towards creating a conflict situation in all of these cases. The people from the conflict region feel alienated from the dominant majorities and have been struggling for greater control over decision-making with regard to matters affecting their communities and their lives.

Rather than addressing these issues of exclusion and inequality through dialogue, the state has largely responded through repressive strategies to suppress dissent. The conflict is usually cast as matters of 'national security' and threats to national unity and draconian laws have been passed to deal with it. These laws give immense powers to the police and armed forces and have resulted in human rights violations which have only increased the resistance and alienation of the community. The state has spent millions on its armed forces to curb the rebellion while the conflict-affected areas, though very rich in natural resources, have continued to suffer poverty and deprivation.

Furthermore, the state, through a mix of different policies, has also tried to assimilate the 'other' populations within dominant politics. Some vested interests, often economic in nature, have also fuelled the conflict. Finally, though religion has never been the basic cause of conflict, it has been used by the conflicting parties, especially their elite, to mobilize people for their cause.

To summarize, while ethnic and religious differences have been used by conflicting parties and powers with vested interests to fuel the conflict, the root causes of such conflicts can be traced to structural and systemic injustice, exclusion from power, lack of control over economic resources, and violation of civil, political and cultural rights of such groups. It was recognized that the notion of identity is linked to religion, language, culture, traditions and the right to express one's identity both as an individual and as a group. Identity must also be recognized in the political realm to achieve peace. In multicultural societies like those in South-East Asia, it is necessary to address these different issues in order to build a culture of peace.

4. Prospects of devolution and decentralization of power to achieve 'positive peace' in conflict-prone societies

The question is raised whether it is possible to address issues of justice and peace through non-violent means. Devolution and decentralization of power are often considered as ways of securing a positive peace, moving beyond notions that peace is mere absence of war. However, drawing from the experiences of Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines it is clear that devolution or decentralization has to be carried out with care and sincerity if it is to achieve its objectives of providing a foundation for positive peace.

The presentations on devolution of power and decentralization highlighted the different systems on which the distribution of power was based and the ways in which devolution of power is perceived in the different countries. The presentations reflected some commonalities such as existing struggles for power between the state/government and minority groups in the country and the fact that each of these struggles has its roots in specific social, political and economic injustices, real or perceived. Different regions have either anticipated the need for introducing decentralization or autonomy measures or ended up recognizing that it was inevitable. Others have begun implementing them to some extent with variable depth and scope.

The recurring violence in the south of Thailand has been exacerbated to a large extent by the relationship between the centralized state and the border communities. Experience shows that the region has been more peaceful when the local provinces were able to keep political and administrative practices and institutions of the local communities. Conflict transformation is more difficult in a context where there are large social and cultural gaps between the state and local communities, where power is concentrated in the hands of the elites and where there is no credible civil society or community-based organizations that can mediate new arrangement between the central state and local communities. Conflict transformation processes also require a new way of thinking about the recognition of minority rights in the democratic system, including sharing of power and economic resources, recognition of cultural symbols and broader and deeper forms of political representation.

Devolution of power and autonomy are increasingly seen as ways of achieving peace. However, these terms are too generic and may have different meanings for different groups and persons. Various research projects³ in Thailand have captured ideas and views on what the implications would be if the border provinces were recognized as an 'autonomous region'. Three distinct strands of opinion appear.

At one end of the spectrum local autonomy is seen as enabling the community to apply Shari'ah or Islamic law. This implies that the area should be governed by different laws so that the Malay-Muslim culture can be expressed in terms of language, legal system, public administration, social and economic development, and local politics.

According to liberal views supporting moderate autonomy, the conflict could be resolved in the long term by ensuring that people's aspirations are expressed through local politics regardless of their cultural identity. Such approaches emphasize the issue of political representation and would require local elections for provincial governors.

At the other end of the spectrum, the existing decentralization scheme is seen as adequate to address local needs. This view supports strengthening the existing local government mechanisms and claims that, if any changes are to be made, it should be within the existing system. Such changes may include changes in the attitude of civil servants, reform of the security and justice systems, establishing effective mediating and coordinating institutions, and social and economic development programmes.

However, the question remains whether the existing scheme of decentralization in the form of local government can accommodate different ways of life of the local people, protect human security, restore the justice system and enhance co-existence.

Some participants considered that decentralization of power in Thailand may not have achieved the desired results in the southern border provinces as the established local governments operate under the authority of the central government and its overarching state ideology of Thai Buddhism. It was claimed that local people were under-represented in the institutions of public administration and that civilian affairs remained largely in the hands of the Ministry of Interior and militarized. Based on such considerations, it was claimed that the practice of decentralization under the close supervision of provincial and central government was not genuine; and was unlikely to facilitate the expression of cultural diversity.

The Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao in the Philippines was created in 1989. However, local activists pointed out that, in spite of the wide-ranging powers 'on paper', the implementation of the Local Government Code has come to be seen as conflicting with other central laws and policies. The local governments have been plagued by lack of capacity and insufficient, poorly managed financial resources; and they are not integrated with historical, traditional and Islamic governance practices. Thus the Autonomous Regional Government in effect has added an extra layer of public administration rather than addressing the issues which it was created to address.

Similarly, with regard to Papua, it was highlighted that in the year 2001 the province was given limited autonomy, but the provisions of the law were never implemented. Moreover, a number of central laws allegedly overlap with the law that guarantees autonomy.

Reportedly, a similar scenario had long characterized the developments in Aceh. After 29 years of conflict, the Peace agreement was signed in 2005 and a new regulation Undang Undang No. 11/2006 was promulgated. The laws recognized local autonomy for Aceh and provided for local elections of officials. Local institutions needed to be rebuilt and their capacities enhanced. People needed to be empowered to tackle issues of governance and to meet the double challenges of post-conflict and post-tsunami

reconstruction. This is an ongoing process and the local elections held in December 2006 were only one of the milestones in the long journey ahead.

It was underlined that the ultimate aim of devolution of power moved beyond formal representation in elected bodies and positions of authority in society. It involved empowering the people to take and maintain control over issues relating to their welfare. Meaningful devolution of power should empower people to set their own priorities, and decide what mechanisms and actions will best meet their human security needs. Such devolution reflects the best democratic practices whereby elected governments are truly accountable for delivering services to the people while guaranteeing equality, justice, respect for diversity and a broad participation of all citizens in public affairs.

The challenge, it was said, is to create *another form of devolution of power guaranteeing higher levels of autonomy in the political, cultural, educational, religious and linguistic fields*. This, according to participants, would, in fact, require more than devolution of power in the sense of transformation of power itself so as to be fully consonant with the notions of justice, human rights and gender equality. This, it was also stressed, would lead towards a genuinely liberating form of democracy. Real devolution of power should be understood as reclaiming power by the community rather than 'receiving' it from the centre.

5. Strategies to prevent, alleviate and resolve conflicts

The causes of conflict are attributed to the unequal distribution or lack of power and resources among different groups of society. Thus, it is reasonable to pose the question, what has then been done so far in terms of designing strategies for addressing the structural causes of conflict and for preventing the emergence of new conflicts? What key approaches have been used and which tools were missing when developing these types of stabilizing strategies?

Devolution of power through decentralization or de-concentration is often regarded as a mechanism which may help to mitigate the conflict. Many of the participants presented their own views, based on their understanding and experience of what they deemed to be important in the success of conflict resolution strategies.

The workshop discussions emphasized the need for dialogue as a tool to reach a greater understanding of the causes of the conflict and to rebuild trust, enabling movement forward along the path of conflict resolution to reach a positive peace.

Although the conflict in Mindanao has been violent, there is a long history of the protagonists' engagement in negotiations. Ceasefire agreements have been renewed after every burst of violence. Involvement of a third party has also been valuable in bringing together the conflicting parties to the negotiating table; and when negotiations have reached a stalemate, third party intervention has been useful to break the deadlock.

Even before the tsunami in Aceh, the conflicting parties came together for negotiations at different points in time. In May 2000, the Henry Durant Center facilitated an initiative whereby the parties were encouraged to focus their attention on the immediate problems of the people of Aceh, namely the problems faced by internally displaced persons and victims of the armed conflict. It was hoped that such an initiative would help to build trust. However, the initiative collapsed when the central government withdrew from it. The parties were brought back to the negotiating table in 2002 and the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement was signed. Both parties agreed on devolution of power, holding of elections and an 'all inclusive dialogue' involving as many representatives of the population as possible. The agreement collapsed when Aceh was brought under Martial Law again in May 2003.

The devastation caused by the tsunami in December 2004 brought the parties together again and the Helsinki Peace Accord was signed with the facilitation of the Crisis Management Initiative. Under the peace agreement the parties agreed to focus on the humanitarian problems caused by the tsunami. An Aceh Monitoring Mission was established to monitor the implementation of the agreement. Under the agreement a Law on Governing of Aceh was framed which provided for devolution of power, distribution of wealth, democratization through local elections and the recognition of the cultural and emotional symbols of Aceh. Civil society organizations played an active and significant role in peace advocacy and in encouraging the people to participate in the framing of the

law. More than 1000 meetings, public discussions, hearings, seminars and rallies were held by civil society organizations. They played a critical role in strengthening trust among parties and building the confidence of the population that peace might have a chance and that peace could be used as an instrument to achieve their objectives.

As negotiations are not a zero sum equation they must be seen as attempts to find some common space between two extreme positions. In West Papua a National Council of Tribal Communities has been created. The Council will be deliberating on issues of basic rights, security and other issues of importance to the people of West Papua. However, the challenge is to ensure that the 14 member panel constituted to represent the 253 different ethnic groups is able to give a voice to the interests of all the different groups. The Council has been able to get over the first hurdle by adopting Bahasa Indonesia as the language of communication among the 253 diverse groups.

Thailand faces a different situation as no group has identified itself and taken responsibility for the insurgency. In this case, there is no group to hold a dialogue with. Even in a context where there is no established dialogue partner, dialoguing among the different stakeholders can help create a sense of trust and confidence among the people that there are alternatives to violence for achieving their ends. This could contribute to creating a positive atmosphere, which could eventually help in resolving the conflict. Civil society organizations and the government had adopted such an approach in Aceh and there had been many informal meetings that helped identify the needs and aspirations of the people. 'Human welfare and security' became the common ground for the stakeholders to start their discussions.

The road to peace is not easy and there are different challenges at different points of the process. Today in Aceh a former GAM (Free Aceh Movement) combatant has been elected to the post of Governor. The challenge before the central and local government is to ensure that former GAM combatants are successfully reintegrated into the community, that wealth is being distributed in a way that respects and promotes the rights of the people of Aceh and that the newly elected government is able to perform in an effective manner. It is also crucial to ensure that past human rights violations are dealt with and that victims of the conflict get justice without endangering peace.

(T)he process in Aceh is only in the honeymoon stage...there are at least four years ahead of challenges before we can think of this as a more stable political system. It all depends on how clean and effective the government will be. There is a bureaucracy and people that have built their career in that institution — then an outsider comes in as a leader — the people there might not be ready for this. The inner circle of former GAM might want to repay the former leaders by giving them official positions, but the question is— are such people capable of meeting the responsibilities of such positions?

Afridel Darmi from the Legal Aid Institution (LBH) Aceh

While the conflict prevention and conflict resolution approaches in South-East Asia varied, they all included one form or another of power sharing to deal with local grievances of injustice and inequality. Participants stressed the need for dialogue and sincere approaches. These were thought to be the most powerful ways of reaching an understanding about the different aspects of the conflict and to find ways of jointly identifying and advancing the strategies towards a peaceful solution.

The participants also emphasized that peace processes should be initiated with the genuine and sincere will of each of the parties involved in a conflict to create opportunities for peace and stability. Motivation strategies may differ and it was recognized that third party intervention might be necessary at some stage of the process. However, each of the conflicting parties should also share responsibilities to create windows of opportunity and open up for dialogue by trying to understand the needs, demands and constraints of the opposite side. In such processes, civil society could play an important part by acting as educator, communicator and bridge-builder between the parties and the general public.

There is still a long way to go before unrest and tensions can be limited in these conflict zones in South-East Asia. The difficult road to peace can be successfully traversed only by inclusive policies whereby traditionally excluded communities increasingly take part in the process and acquire a sense of ownership over the process. This can only be accomplished if the governments take the responsibility of inviting these groups to the negotiating table and respect their needs and aspirations.

6. Concluding remarks: ways forward

Devolution of power as a measure to reach peace may evoke different understandings in different contexts but it does call for deepening, broadening and expanding democracy. It calls for revitalizing democracy to look beyond electing governments to sharing power at different locations of the state. ‘Devolution of power’ is not a cliché where ‘one model fits all’, but invites the setting up of systems that must be carefully tailored to the specific historical backgrounds, the current needs and the future aspirations of the people to whom it seeks to devolve power. In South-East Asia the conflicts share some common characteristics in that the quest for self determination is a common element and stems from people claiming their rights to participate in decision-making processes affecting their social, economic and political lives. This includes their rights to practice their religion freely and their cultural and educational rights.

These struggles for self-determination suggest that there is a need to build societies that are able to celebrate and embrace diversity in a timely way, before communities start to see themselves as victims of exclusion. Peace, human rights and development are non-negotiable in any democratic system, and to be effective and legitimate, democratic processes need to work towards eliminating the structural impediments to freedom and human security or the ‘non freedoms’ that individuals and communities experience. Only a system that liberates the constructive energies of communities will help in transforming conflicts in society and in building durable states and sustainable peace.

Devolution of power has meaning only if it is accompanied by the empowerment of the communities to whom power is devolved. Many people in conflict areas have lost confidence in political processes. There is a need to both revitalize the political system and to regain their confidence in it. There is a need to bring about structural changes in units of governance at national, regional and local levels in ways that ensure that the spirit behind devolution of power is respected and there is actual transfer of power to local units of governance.

Justice is fundamental to a democratic system. In a conflict situation, priority has to be given to access to justice at all levels. The justice process must be in accordance with the rule of law and must treat everyone on the basis of principles of equality and non-discrimination. Furthermore, the justice system should function in a manner that inspires the confidence and trust of the people. This can be achieved by involving the people in the justice process and opening up spaces for greater public participation. Such initiatives would also help in strengthening local communities by bringing them into dispute settlement processes. It will build social capital and work towards making the communities stakeholders in sustaining peace in societies. Civil society organizations and the media also have an important role in promoting tolerance and acceptance of cultural diversity, fostering positive understanding between the government and the people, and creating a space for dialogue.. A genuine two-way dialogue is essential. Often a group or faction resorts to violence when it perceives that its voice is not being heard by the government. As a workshop participant said, ‘It is also important that we urge

government to conduct dialogues on national level as an instrument to resolve conflicts.’ Devolution of power should be negotiated so that it is adjusted to local needs. It is not for the government to decree what kind of power the locals should have.

The need for public participation and local ownership of processes was reiterated by one of the working groups at the workshop in their formulation of a roadmap for devolution, as follows:

- understanding what people want;
- all stakeholders setting the agenda treated as equal partners;
- establishing multi-level dialogues and consultation on various aspects—for example, on language, education, public service and legal system;
- ‘self decision’—choice or ratification by the public of the new governance formulations;
- willingness to transform structures of power so that local actors genuinely hold more power than before and are able to give effective consideration to local concerns and needs; and
- monitoring and oversight of the process.

Recommended areas to be further discussed and researched for devolution of power included:

- the role of media in creating social awareness, including: promoting social education; cultural diversity (as opposed to feelings of nationalism that are indifferent to or suspicious of the ‘other’); creating awareness about the roles and responsibilities of the institutions of governance and civil society; and in ensuring that such institutions deliver and work towards promoting human development;
- a system of education that includes human rights education, promotes values of pluralism, respect for the dignity of every human person, and civic awareness;
- multi-sectoral approaches to inclusive dialogues;
- proactive measures to identify and reach out to all stakeholders;
- bottom-up approaches, where people are active participants in all decision-making processes affecting their lives;
- laws that clearly define the authority, roles and responsibilities of the different levels of government, the separation of powers between them, and the mechanisms of checks and balances;

- new structures for power sharing (decentralization, de-concentration and devolution) to be reflected in the laws and regulations so that they can be implemented;
- real transformation of power, not simply a delegation of authority—this implies structural changes that enable political participation of all people in substance rather than simply in form and that allow control over fiscal resources in addition to political power;
- developing a realistic understanding about national contexts and their external relations to understand where the levers for change may lie.

Third party interventions in conflict situations, because of their neutral character, may help in negotiations on issues relating to the form and substance of devolution of power.

There is a need for learning from different cultures and experiences of conflict transformation. Though there are different conflict areas in the region, many countries share some features. In many cases people in the different areas are isolated from each other and the interaction of peace activists helps in the exchange of best practices and learning from the experiences of others. To facilitate such inter-cultural learning, the participants and speakers at the workshop formed an informal group with the objective of networking on different issues, exchanging information and experiences and extending solidarity. The participants felt that such learning and exchange across borders and cultures would be an important way of contributing towards building a culture of peace in the region.

Notes

¹ Western New Guinea is the Indonesian western half of the island of New Guinea and consists of two provinces, Papua and West Papua. This part of the island was previously known by various other names (New Guinea —1895 to 1 December 1961; West Papua —1 December 1961 to 1 October 1962; West New Guinea—1 October 1961 to 1 May 1963; West Irian—1 May 1963 to 1973; and Irian Jaya —1973 to 2000. Despite these name changes, many human rights NGOs refer to this region as West Papua. The independent sovereign state of Papua New Guinea (PNG) borders Papua Province to the East. (Available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_New_Guinea, accessed 22 May 2007).

In 2003, West Papua was created from the western portion of Papua province. The split was controversial and opposed in Papua as a violation of Papua's autonomy laws. An Indonesian court agreed but held that because the new province had been created it should remain separate from Papua but the ruling prevented the creation of another proposed province, Central Irian Jaya (accessed 22 May at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Papua).

² These petitions included the petition presented by the people of Sulu in June 1921, the Zamboanga Declaration in February 1921, and the Dansalan Declaration, 18 March 1935

³ Based on the ongoing research projects on Multi-ethnic Democracy and Local Government for the Southern Border Provinces of Thailand supported by the National Research Council, 2005–6, and a similar project supported carried out by Mahidol University, 2005–7.

Annex 1: Asian regional workshop programme 16–17 January 2007

Siam City Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand
Meeting room: Duang Kamol

Day 1: Tuesday, 16 January 2007

- 08:30–09:00 **Registration**
Coffee, tea and pastries available
- 09:00–09:15 **Opening speech**
Dr Prawase Wasi, Vice Chair, National Reconciliation Commission, Thailand
- 09:15–09:30 **Welcome and opening remarks:**
International IDEA
Sakuntala Kadirgamar-Rajasingham, Head of Asia Programme
- 09:30–09:45 **King Prajadhipok’s Institute (KPI), Centre for Peace and Governance**
Dr Vanchai Vatanasapt, Director
- 09:45–10:00 **Mahidol University, Research Centre for Peace Building**
Gothom Arya, Director
- 10:00–10:30 **The Democracy, Conflict and Human Security Nexus—an Emerging 21st Century Challenge**
Presenter: Judith Large, Senior Advisor of Democracy Building and Conflict Management Programme, International IDEA
- 10:30–10:45 **Defining the concepts—lessons learnt**
Presenter: Henrik Fredborg Larsen, Policy Advisor, Democratic Governance—Decentralization and Local Governance, UNDP Regional Centre in Bangkok
- 10:45–11:00 *Coffee Break*
- 11:00–13:00 **Session 1: Ethnic and religious dimensions of conflict and structural strains**
Moderator: Sakuntala Kadirgamar-Rajasingham, IDEA
- Speakers:
- *Gothom Arya—Mahidol University—The root causes of conflict in the southern border provinces of Thailand and the ongoing political debate*
 - *Welly Esau Mandowen—Mediator of Presidium of Papua Council and Facilitator of National Council of Tribal Leaders*

of West Papua—The ongoing conflict in West Papua: root causes and the current status

- *Abhoud Syed M. Lingga—Institute of Bangsamoro Studies—The ongoing conflict in Mindanao: root causes and the current status*

13:00–14:00

Lunch

14:00–15:45

Session 2: Strategies for preventing and resolving conflicts

Moderator: Judith Large

Speakers:

- *Dr Vanchai Vatanasapt—KPI —Strategies to prevent a violent outbreak: dialogue as a tool to reach consensus*
- *Afridel Darmi—LBH Banda Aceh—The steps toward peace in Aceh*

15:45–16:00

Coffee Break

16:00–18:00

Session 3: Devolution of power and decentralization as a measure to reach ‘positive peace’ in a conflict prone society

Moderator: Henrik Fredborg Larsen, UNDP Regional Centre in Bangkok, Policy Advisor

Speakers:

- *Chantana Banpasirichote—Chulalongkorn University—Democratic and local governance in Thailand*
- *Ischan Malik—Institute Titan Perdamaian—Devolution of power in Maluku and Aceh*
- *Irene Santiago—Mindanao Commission on Women—Devolution of power as a measure to reach stabilization and peace in Mindanao*

19:00

Dinner at Siam City Hotel. Room: Kamolporn

Day 2: Wednesday, 17 January 2007

09:00–09:30

Summary of Day 1

Dr Vanchai Vatanasapt

09:30–09:45

Coffee Break

09:45–12:00

Session 4: The division of responsibility between government, policy makers and civil society: Setting the agenda devolution of power as an effective conflict preventive measure (3 breakout groups)

Moderators:

Group 1: Abhoud Syed M. Lingga

Group 2: Dr Vanchai Vatanasapt

Group 3: Arifah Rahmawati

12:00–13:00

Lunch

13:00–15:00

**Session 5: Summary of breakout sessions—recommendations—
blueprint**

Moderator: Sakuntala Kadirgamar-Rajasingham

Group presentation

15:00–15:15

Coffee Break

15:15–16:30

Closing remarks and recommendations

- *Irene Santiago—Mindanao Commission on Women*
- *Replacement—Bunnag*

Annex 2: Biographical details

The authors

Cecilia Bylesjö—Project Officer for the Democracy, Conflict and Human Security Project at the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance in Stockholm. Prior to this position she has worked as a Project Officer for the Women in Politics Programme at International IDEA Indonesia and International IDEA headquarters. She has written extensively on democracy building, gender and politics and human rights issues and has worked as an observer and analyst for the Carter Center in Indonesia and Ethiopia. Ms Bylesjö holds a Master of Political Science and a Master of Democracy and Development studies from Stockholm University.

Kalpalata Dutta—Director of the Asian Institute for Human Rights based in Thailand. She has been part of human rights education programmes organized by Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok and has also done research work on the human rights approach to economic social cultural issues. She was part of the ANFREL election monitoring mission to Afghanistan in 2005. She has worked with a legal resource organization in India that worked in partnership with development and women’s organizations with the objective of integrating law into their programmes. She holds a Master’s Degree in Law and Human Rights from the Central European University in Budapest.

The speakers

Gothom Arya—Director of Mahidol University Center for Peace and Governance, Chairman of the National Economic and Social Advisory Council, and Member of the National Legislative Council. He was a member of the Electoral commission 1998–2001 and has been the chairman of several organizations focusing on democracy, conflict and conflict management. Dr Arya has extensive experience from work with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and has published extensively in regard to electoral processes. He holds an Honorary Doctorate Degree in Social Sciences from Prince of Songkla University.

Chantana Banpasirichote—Associate Professor at the Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, currently serving as the Director of the M.A. in International Development Studies Program. She has taught a number of courses on, for example, politics of development, democracy and conflict resolution. Her research interest covers civil society, social movements, public participation, democracy and conflict resolution. Her ongoing research is on democracy and local government models in multi-cultural areas, the survey on tolerance, globalization and democracy movements, and Thai political culture. Apart from academic work, she has been engaged in civic action as a board member of the Foundation of Child Development. In recent years, she has served

as a member of the Strategic Non-violence Committee under the auspices of the National Security Council.

Afridal Darmi—Director of the Legal Aid Institution Banda Aceh. He is a trained lawyer with comprehensive experience from the peace process in Aceh. Mr Darmi has worked extensively with non-governmental organizations and advised in the mediation prior to the peace agreement for the province of Aceh.

Judith Large—Co-author of the International IDEA publication, *Democracy, Conflict and Human Security: Pursuing Peace in the 21st Century*. In 2001–2006 she served as the Senior Advisor, Democracy Building and Conflict Management Programme at International IDEA. Ms Large headed the Democracy, Conflict and Human Security Project. In 2007 she was appointed Director of Program for Conflict Resolution at Crisis Management Initiative (CMI). In her previous work she has combined lecturing in international relations, political economy, and conflict theory/analysis with being an independent consultant/practitioner in conflict analysis and strategic planning for UN agencies, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and many international non-governmental organizations.

Henrik Fredborg Larsen—UNDP Policy Advisor on Decentralization and Local Governance for Asia. He provides support to governments, national partners and UNDP country offices in the Asia-Pacific region on political, fiscal and administrative decentralization and strengthening of local democratic governance. A large part of his policy advisory and programme support focuses on countries in crisis or recovering from conflicts or natural disasters and relates to the wider development of democratic governance. Working closely with colleagues in country offices, the regional centre and beyond, he spearheads a series on regional and global initiatives on decentralized governance and localization of the Millennium Development Goals.

Abhoud Syed M. Lingga—Executive director of the Institute of Bangsamoro Studies in Cotabato City, Philippines. He holds two master's degrees in Islamic Studies and Education. He participated in a number of trainings, among which are: conflict prevention and peace building conducted by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research; human rights and people's diplomacy by the Diplomacy Training Program of the University of New South Wales, local government and civil society by Friedrich Naumann Stiftung, and various trainings in leadership and management. He has been an Associate Professor at the Mindanao State University in Maguindanao and lecturer at Cotabato City State Polytechnic College and Sultan Kudarat Islamic Academy Foundation College. His research interests are on Bangsamoro right of self-determination, conflict management, human rights, sustainable development, and Islamic education. As accomplished author and writer, he has published numerous articles in local and international journals. At present, he is doing a study on designing Bangsamoro political institutions for post-conflict reconstruction of Mindanao. He is an active member of various non-governmental organizations, and has served in management capacities in various public and private sector organizations.

Ichsah Malik—Executive Director, Institut Titian Perdamaian/ITP (Peace Building Institute), Resolution Conflict Research Advisor at Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia/LIPI (The Indonesian Institute of Sciences) and lecturer at the Faculty of Psychology, Post Graduate Program, University of Indonesia, responsible for conducting lectures on issues relating to strategic planning for social intervention and conflict resolution. He has extensive experience from work in the whole of Indonesia facilitating processes related to peace negotiation and conflict management, and has been deeply involved in the reintegration process.

Welly Esau Mandowen—Lecturer at the University of Cenderawasih in West Papua. He is mediator of the Presidium of Papua Council (PDP) and facilitator of the National Council of Tribal Leaders of West Papua. He is the secretary of the Forum for Reconciliation of Papuan Society, facilitated in the dialogue between Papuan people and former President Habibie and Cabinet in 1999, mediated several meetings with the concerned parties of the members of Cabinet of former President Gusdur and Megawati. Mr Mandowen has helped initiate and consolidate the Council of West Papuan Peoples Grand Conference in 2000 (currently known as Dewan Adat Papua, a concept of traditional politics and democracy adopted and modified into the work of Majelis Rakyat Papua in the Special Autonomy Law for the Province of Papua), and the Peoples Congress Meeting May–June 2000 in which the PDP was announced. He was the initiator and first promoter of the concept of ‘Papuan Land of Peace’, an initiative that started in 1997.

Surachai Nira—Senior Expert at the National Security Council (NSC) Office Counter-Terrorism division. He has previously been the Director of the National Security Council (NSC) Office and is responsible for international defence and internal security in Thailand. Prior to that assignment Mr Nira held a position as Director of the Special Affairs Security Division focusing on counter-transnational crime and counter-terrorism. He has written extensively on the issue of security and is a special lecturer at the Army War College, Air Force War College, Staff Colleague, Royal Thai Air Force Special Branch, Royal Thai Police and Metropolitan Police Bureau. Mr Nira holds a Bachelor degree in Political Science and an MPA in Finance from the National Institute of Development Administration in Bangkok.

Arifah Rahmawati—Deputy Director for Planning and Development and lecturer at the Master’s Program in Peace and Conflict Resolution, Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia. She is also a researcher at the Center for Security and Peace Studies (CSPS) of the Gadjah Mada University. Ms Rahmawati holds an MA in Security Studies from the Naval Post Graduate School, California, USA. Her thesis is titled *Papua Ethno-political Conflict: Causes, Contexts, and Policy Implication*.

Sakuntala Kadirgamar Rajasingham—Head of Programme (South Asia), Asia. Joined International IDEA in May 1998. She has previously worked as Programme Officer, Law and Development Studies Division at the Marga Institute for Research and Development in Sri Lanka. Consultant to the Law and Society Trust, Sri Lanka, on the development of human rights training manuals. Consultant to the World Bank, on the legal status of

women in several African countries and on labour standards. Former Board Member, Women, Law and Development, an international NGO based in Washington, promoting women's legal rights. She has published extensively on legal literacy for women, domestic violence, and democratization. Dr Kadirgamar-Rajasingham holds degrees in Law (University of Colombo, Sri Lanka), in Social Sciences (University of Reading, UK) and a PhD in Law (University of Sydney, Australia). Her doctoral dissertation addresses the problems of democracy in plural societies with special reference to Malaysia and Sri Lanka.

Irene Morada Santiago—Chair and Chief Executive Officer of the Mindanao Commission on Women, an NGO engaged in advocacy. She is at the forefront of efforts to ensure that gender issues are taken seriously throughout the entire peace process. Dr Santiago is the co-founder of Mothers for Peace, a grassroots movement working on conflict prevention and resolution. In 1995 she was assigned the executive director of the NGO Forum on Women in China, the parallel NGO event to the Fourth World Conference on Women. She has been deeply involved in the women's movement nationally and internationally as well as in the peace process in Mindanao. She was a member of the Philippine Government peace panel negotiating with the MILF for three years, and brought to bear on the negotiations her three decades of experience in working with Muslims, with a special focus on women, in Mindanao as well as internationally with the UN system and NGOs. After resigning from the panel in 2004 she continues to be engaged in the peace process.

Prawase Wasi—Professor emeritus at the Division of Haematology, Department of Medicine, Siriraja Hospital. Apart from academic work he has been engaged in civil action as a chairman of the Foundation for Children, a chairman of the National Health Foundation. He was the Vice Chair of the National Reconciliation Commission of Thailand.

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