

Historical Evolution of Civil Society in Conflict Resolution: the Initial Decade of Naga Hoho

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Introduction

The processes of conflict resolution are generally held as state driven exercises. These are mostly conducted between the state, rebels and mediators. Little consideration is given to the civil society in terms of processes of conflict resolution. Yet the civil society is usually a key actor in the contradictory processes and struggles of conflicts and dynamics of their resolution. Conflicts do not emerge in a vacuum; they are products of the structure and character of society of which the civil society is an integral part.

Civil Society: The concept

The term civil society is a broad concept and is hard to define. General Colin L. Powell, former U. S. Secretary of State, wrote in his “Recreating the Civil Society- One Child at a Time”: “Conceptions of what constitutes a ‘Civil Society’ may differ as to details, but at a minimum, a civil society is one whose members care about each other and about the well being of the community as a whole”. Civil Society is the avenue for group freedom of expression, political organization, and general social development [Article and Web Alert: 2002]. The term civil society embraces a wide range of actors including religious leaders, women’s organizations, NGOs, scholars and intellectuals. It includes organizations like trade unions, professional associations, chambers of commerce, ethnic associations and others. It also incorporates many other associations that exist for purposes other than advancing specific social or political agendas such as religious organizations, student groups, community development associations, the human rights associations, the press, cultural organizations, sports clubs, and other forms of organizations outside the state arena. The role of the civil society has been broadly identified as facilitating interaction between the political arena and society at large.

Civil Society and Conflict:

Conflicts of ethnic, religious, political and cultural nature continue to dominate the world's attention. Over the years the world has been witnessing many conflicts, most of which are recurrent, protracted and intrastate and there is little evidence that such conflicts will decrease significantly over the coming decades.

In recent years civil society organizations have begun to play a significant role in conflict resolution. Unofficial interventions can be initiated by advocacy and public interest organizations, the news media, humanitarian relief providers, academic or private actors and NGOs. A typical initiative by an NGO would be the convening of meetings between unofficial representatives of disputing parties to build confidence between two sides. Often only a civil society can convene such parties and create such a "space for dialogue" because of the politically sensitive nature of such a meeting. This approach has been quite fruitful in addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In South Africa the role of civil society was in opposition to the apartheid regime. South Africa's civic association played a vital role in the struggle against apartheid. In apartheid South Africa, the civil sector played a vital role in the provision of local health services.

In Angola, the Centre for Common Ground, established in 1996, played a great role in supporting the peace and national reconciliation process. With the onset of open hostilities in late 1998, the CGG was faced with an increased demand for its work due to the increased amount of conflict and violence in the society. The CGG's goal shifted from supporting the peace process to developing Angola's internal capacity to demand and create a basis for a long and lasting peace. With signing of the cease-fire in early 2002, the CGG returned to its original goal to support the peace and national reconciliation process by helping Angolans at the local and national levels to find ways to transform the culture of violence into one of co-operation and co-existence.

In the conflict of Sierra Leone, civil society organizations have played a very important role in the peace process, both at the level of mounting pressure on the rebels to accede to peace agreements and also participating, though informally, in the peace negotiation processes. Organizations like the Inter Religious Council, Campaign for Good Governance, and the Centre for Democracy and Development, have sought to intervene in the peace process. The Inter Religious Council was very instrumental in helping to secure children held hostage in

rebel controlled territories and encouraging parties to accede to negotiation. While the civil society groups were present in Lome during the peace negotiations, they were accorded only informal or observer status, yet they played a key role as mediators behind the scene in the negotiation process.

In Europe also, in Northern Ireland civil society groups played an important role in resolving the conflict situations there. When troubles began in Northern Ireland at the end of 1960s, one response from the British Government was the establishment of a Community Relations Commission to develop the strategies to improve relationship between the two communities. With the support of the Community Relations Commission, the early period of the troubles saw a flowering of local community activity and the development of community leadership. Besides this, throughout the period of conflicts a number of groups emerged calling for peace. The most notable of these was the Peace People, which in 1976 was able to organize huge rallies and demonstrate a strong desire for an end to violence. Its founders, Mairead Corrigan and Betty Williams, were awarded Nobel Peace Prize. It worked to help the people to relieve the stress of living in a violent society to bring together small groups of Protestants and Catholics to learn about each other and develop mutual respect. Cross community contact was promoted most vigorously among young people. Corrymeela, a Christian Community, with most consistent and innovative methods, tried to build links and enter into dialogue with political parties. A group of civil activists established a commission, which sat from 1992 to 1993, to take opinions from the community and political parties. It was composed of weighty individuals from Ireland and Britain. Its lasting contribution was its efforts to encourage community groups and individuals to think and discuss the options for the future. As a result, the wider community began to have greater confidence in putting forward its views and engaging with the political process and politicians from whom it had felt alienated for so long. In addition to the attempts to shift public opinion and influence decision makers and politicians, civil society groups tried throughout the troubled time to make a contribution to the search for a settlement by offering their good offices in the form of unofficial private diplomacy. They carried messages, facilitated meetings and helped political groups to evaluate their strategies and goals. [Mc cartney:1992]

Asia is also witnessing conflicts in its different parts, South Asia has remained a conflict prone area for many years. The civil society organizations here are trying to give a healing touch to the conflict affected areas. For instance, twenty eight participants from various civil society groups from Sri Lanka and India met in Bangkok on September 2, 2000 for Peace

Audit Exercise on the Sri Lanka Peace Process organized by the South Asia Forum for Human Rights(SAFHR)[Asian Human Rights Commission, Bangkok Statement of Understanding on Peace Process in Sri Lanka]. The South Asia Small Arms Initiative brought together civil society groups and governments from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Nepal to work towards a common approach to reduce the spread of small arms[Canada's Human Security Web site; Conflict Prevention, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade].

India, a member of the community of states in South Asia, is torn by community strife and blatant terrorism. Jammu and Kashmir and North East are the two most volatile regions of India. In North East India, five states of Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura and Nagaland, are suffering as a result of continuous strife and violence. The trouble started in Nagaland in 1953, then a district of Assam, now a state since 1964.

Compared to earlier years, Nagaland is now relatively peaceful. The credit for this goes to various civil society organizations existing in Nagaland. Civil society groups have taken the initiative in restoring peace to this strife torn region. There are eminent Naga organizations like Naga Students' Federation, an apex body of all the Naga students in India, Naga Mothers' Association and Naga Hoho, an apex body of all the Nagas. Of these organizations, Naga Hoho is observed to be the most forceful one till present day.

The Peace Mission headed by Jayprakash Narayan can be said to be the first major civil society intervention in the Naga issue. Since then, civil society involvement in bringing about a peaceful settlement of the Naga issue has been increasing at a steady rate. The Naga cause has been highlighted not only by civil rights organization within Nagaland such as the Naga People's Movement for Human Rights and the Naga Mothers' Association, but also by several other organizations in the rest of the country. Since the eighties of twentieth century, there has been a marked increase in civil society involvement in the Naga Peace Process and today the question for a permanent settlement of the Naga issue cannot be discussed without taking into consideration the voice of the civil society. In areas where state has perceptibly failed, civil society has moved in and obtained spectacular results. Over fifty years of insurgent violence and wide scale state repression in Nagaland have resulted in politicizing the entire civil society to such an extent that in recent years it has come to play an increasing role to help civil society involvement in Naga peace process. Civil society intervention has reached such a stage in Nagaland today that no insurgent organization in Nagaland has been

highlighting the cause of the common man in such a manner that it is now impossible for any insurgent organization not to consider the civil society's voice in arriving at a settlement. And since the overwhelming response of Naga civil society has been for a peaceful settlement of the issue, the Naga rebel groups cannot afford to underestimate it¹.

The Naga struggle for independence has now become more than half a century old. Ever since independence Nagaland has been affected by both militant and state violence. Following the Ceasefire Agreement between the Government of India and the Naga Rebel groups in 1997, peace talks have been going on between these two parties. While ultimately peace depends on agreement between the Government of India and the militants confronting the Government, the civil society's democratic and informed initiative is indispensable for creating a congenial environment for the success of the negotiations currently going on. In the post-conflict situations a well developed civil society is important for sustainable growth and stability. The absence of a vibrant civil society in Kashmir is one of the main reasons for still existing conflict situations. But Nagaland is blessed with the active participation of civil society organizations. To-day there are many civil society groups which keep an eye on violation of human rights by both the state as well as by the militants and have been working in close liaison with other groups in other parts of the country for the return of peace to this strife torn state. Civil society organizations like the Naga Hoho, the Naga Mothers' Association, and the Naga Peoples' Movement for Human rights have great contributions in resolving the conflict situation in Nagaland.

The present paper, therefore, aims to observe the role of the civil society in de-escalating conflict by taking Naga Hoho as a case study.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To throw some light on the socio-political history of Nagaland
2. To assess the role of Naga Hoho in resolving the conflict situations in Nagaland.

Methodology:

The method adopted in this study is historical and qualitative and analysis is on the basis of content analysis. Data relevant to the study have been collected from secondary sources like

¹ Misra :2002

books, journals, paper clippings, and magazines. To verify the secondary sources, personal interviews were conducted with some of the members of the Naga Hoho.

Socio-political History of the Nagas:

The Nagas belong to Mongolian racial groups and the areas they inhabit are India's North Eastern states of Nagaland, the hilly regions of Manipur, North Cachar and the Mikir Hills as well as Lakhimpur, Sibsagar and Nagaon districts of Assam, north-eastern parts of Arunachal Pradesh, the Somrah Tracts and its contiguous areas of North-Western Myanmar. The area is about 1,00,000 sq. kilometers and lies between the parallels of 93 and 97 degrees longitude.

However, the present state of Nagaland, the sixteenth state of the Indian Union, is situated at the eastern frontier of India. The state covers an area of 16,488 sq. kilometers. It is bounded by Assam in the west and north, and in the north-east by the Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh. The southern boundary is shared with the state of Manipur, while the eastern limits of the state are on the international boundary between India and Myanmar.

The Nagas comprise not less than 39 tribes such as Ao, Anal, Angami, Chakesang, Chang, Chiru, Chethe, Kabui, Kharam, Khimniunjam, Kaireng, Konyak, Lainung, Lankang, Liangmai, Lotha, Makhori, Mao, Maram, Maring, Mensang, Meyen, Nocte, Pangmi, Phan, Pochury, Poumai, Rengma, Rengmei, Sangtam, Sema, Saira, Tangkhul, Tangsa, Tarao, Thangal, Wancho, Yimchunger, Zemi. All these tribes had their own distinct languages and dialects which vary widely from one another. All the dialects, however, belong to the Tibeto-Burman group of languages. Besides their own language or dialect, in order to exchange ideas amongst different tribes they speak 'Nagamese', a lingua franca. English is the official language of Nagaland and used as the medium of instruction and examination in schools and colleges. The Nagas do not have their own original script. There is a popular story that the written script recorded on animal skin was devoured by a dog due to their carelessness, while some say that they had cooked, by mistake, the piece of animal skin on which their script was written.

Origin and migration:

It is difficult to give a coherent account of the origin and migrational pattern of the Nagas due to dearth of written records and materials. It is said that the Nagas migrated towards their present home from different directions through the route exclusively used by the Chinese

traders and embassies between China and India. It is also said that the Nagas migrated to South East Asia and South Asia from China, Korea and Mongolia following the southern direction passing through the Yunnan province of China. It is also probable from Yunnan the Nagas took two directions, westerly and south westerly. The group which went south west reached Myanmar, and then Bay of Bengal and moved north ward again to reach the Indo-Myanmar frontier. Another group took westerly direction from Yunnan province and on reaching Irrawady and Chindwin rivers bifurcated in several directions, leading to Tibet and to the hill ranges between Assam and Burma². Several writers have also believed that the Nagas may have come from somewhere in north-west China between the Huang Ho and the Yangtse-Kiang rivers because the Tibeto-Burman language is supposed to have sprung from this region. However, each Naga tribe has its own legend of origin and migration pattern. Most of the Naga tribes trace their origin from Makhel or its adjacent area. Makhel is located in Mao area of Manipur state which is about ten miles from Kohima. The legends of the Angamis, Chakhsengs, Rengmas, Sumas, Lothas, Tangkhuls, Maos, Marams, Thangals, Marings and even Meities point to Makhel or its adjacent areas as their original place. But the origin of the Nagas is still obscure.

Origin of the word Naga:

Before the arrival of the British into the Naga Hills, the inhabitants of these hills knew themselves by the designation of their respective tribes only. There are various theories about the origin of the word 'Naga' and there is no unanimous opinion on that score. There are some theories propounded by Naga scholars. One is that the word 'Naga' was derived from the Burmese word 'naka' meaning pierced ears as the Nagas had the tradition of making holes in the ears for ear decorations. Gangumai Kabui, an eminent Naga scholar traces the derivation from 'nok' or 'nokhar'. In his opinion the term 'Naga' was derived from the cachari word 'Nak' or 'Nakhar' meaning warrior or fighters as the Cacharis came into conflict with Naga tribes like the Angamis and Zeliangrong.

Nagas' way of Life:

The structure of Naga society is basically rural in character. Nagas live in a matrilineal and patriarchal society. Their society is basically caste less and class less and egalitarian in structure. Age old customary laws seem to be still prevalent in the Naga country in a less

² Vashum:2000

vehement, more or less modified and refined form to cater to the needs of day-to-day situations.³

The Nagas and the Ahoms:

It is generally held that the first outsiders to come into contact with Nagas were the Ahoms. The ahoms speaking a language belonging to the Siamese-Chinese linguistic family were the Shans from the ancient kingdom of Mongmao or Pong lying in the upper portion of the Irrawady Valley and Yunnan. The Ahoms about 9,000 men, women, and children with eight nobles led by Sukapha on the way to the Brahmaputra valley through Patkai range attacked Naga villages for conquest, and in return the Nagas offered stiff resistance. Later when the Ahoms settled in the Brahmaputra Valley, the relations between the Nagas and the Ahoms followed a curious course of war and friendship following raids and counter raids after an interval. In summing up Ahom Naga relations one may say that while the Nagas submitted to the strength of the ahom rulers, the latter respected the Nagas' love of freedom and desisted from interfering in their internal matters.

The Nagas and the British:

After the Ahoms the Nagas came into contact with the British. The beginning of the 19th Century marked the struggle for supremacy between the British and the Burmese over Assam and the North East frontier which led to First Anglo Burmese War on 24th February, 1824. The war resulted in the expulsion of the Burmese from Assam. The British after signing the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826 with the Burmese annexed Assam. Initially the British did not want to conquer the Naga country. But the British had to come into contact with the Nagas mainly for two reasons. Firstly, they wanted control over the Naga Hills in order to have lines of communication between Assam and Manipur. Secondly, the Nagas had subsequently caused enough troubles by way of raids, etc. for the British subjects, and that it was obligatory for the British to intervene in the matter, in which process they started conquering the Naga territories. In order to put a stop to the Naga raids the British decided to extend political control over the Naga Hills. As a first step towards this "forward policy", the British established the Naga Hills District in 1866 with Samaguting as the headquarter. In 1876, a sub-division of the Naga Hills District was created at Wokha. Kohima was also occupied by

³ Youno:1984

the British in 1878 after heavy fighting and the district head quarters was shifted from Wokha to Kohima

The British rule brought certain changes in the life pattern of the Nagas. The most influential impact was on the field of education. With the impact of western education and Christianity, there was gradual change in the outlook of the Nagas. Western education created a new class, quite different in profession such as teachers, government officials, interpreters, clerks, pastors etc.

During the First World War, the British sent a considerable number of Nagas to serve as labour corps which went to the Western Front in Europe. These men during their stay in Europe came into contact with the advanced nations of the west and returned home with a new consciousness that their interest and outlook should go beyond the limits of their clan, village and tribe.

Formation of Naga Club and Memorandum to Simon Commission:

In 1918, an association called the 'Naga Club' was formed with the efforts of a few government officials, leading Naga chiefs, including those who returned from Europe. When the Simon Commission visited the Naga Hills in 1929, the Naga Club representing the various Naga tribes presented a memorandum demanding that their hills should be excluded from the proposed reforms scheme and kept under direct British rule in order to save them from being overwhelmed by the people of the plains. In the memorandum the Naga Club stated "you are the only people who have ever conquered us and when you go, we should be as we were".

Second World War and the birth of Naga National council:

The Second World War broke out in 1939. India was also dragged into it. Nagaland was one of the theatres of this war. The war affected the Nagas both physically and mentally. The Japanese invasion of Kohima led the allies to mobilize men and troops from different parts of India and abroad. The local people were faced with a critical situation as far as their loyalties and securities were concerned. They had to go to the forest and hide there with fear and anxiety⁴. After the war, at the initiative of Mr. C.R. Pawsey, the then Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills District, the Naga Hills District Tribal Council was formed in April 1945 to

⁴ Barpujari:1990

unite the Nagas and for repairing the damage done during the Second World War. But later on, in its Wokha session, it was renamed as Naga National Council with Mr. Mayang Nokscha as its president.

The birth of the Naga National Council was a major step towards the growth of Naga nationalism. It emerged as a common platform for all Naga tribes to voice their grievances. The most significant fact about the Council was that for the first time the term 'National' was used and the council comprised 29 members representing different tribes on the basis of proportional representation.

Coming of Angami Zapo Phizo: In November, 1949 Angami Zapo phizo was elected President of the Naga National Council. The coming Phizo transformed the NNC into a militant outfit. Soon after coming of Phizo, the NNC rejected the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution which provided for wide powers to the District Councils which would be elected bodies and would replace the tribal councils. The decision of Phizo to reject the District Councils in favour of the traditional tribal councils gave him a wide mass support. The mass support was witnessed during the 'plebiscite' for Naga independence which Phizo organized from May to August 1951. The plebiscite was held on the basic issue whether the Nagas wanted to remain in India or to be a separate independent state. The results of the plebiscite showed that 99% of the Nagas were in favour of independence.

On 11th March 1952, three leaders led by NNC President A.Z. Phizo met the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in New Delhi. It turned out to be a stormy meeting. According to the Naga delegation, Nehru told them, "whether heaven falls or India goes into pieces and blood runs red in the country, whether I am here or anyone else comes, Nagas will not be allowed to be independent". The Nagas boycotted the first general election of India in 1952. In March 1953, Nehru along with the then Burmese Prime Minister visited Kohima. The Nagas boycotted the visit of Nehru.

Beginning of Armed Conflict:

At the beginning armed confrontation was not the NNC policy for the attainment of their aspiration. But when not being able to solve the Naga problem through a political dialogue the Government of India decided to use force on the NNC towards the middle of 1953, the situation deteriorated. Police action against the NNC resulted in most of the NNC leadership going underground in order to mobilize the people. The Government of Assam promulgated

the Assam Maintenance of Public Order act, 1953 and applied it to the entire Naga Hills District. Naga Tribal Councils and tribal courts were dissolved. The Assam Disturbed Areas Act was enforced in January 1956 and law and order was finally handed over to the armed forces. These steps taken by the government made matters worse and thousands of Naga men and women joined the Naga Home Guard and Naga women's Society. Angami Phizo, the President of NNC escaped from Nagaland. In June 1960 he reached London to internationalize the cause of the Nagas.

Naga People's Convention and the Creation of the state of Nagaland:

The moderate Nagas form All Tribes Naga people's Convention was held at Kohima from August 22nd to 26, 1958. With their initiative a separate state of Nagaland was created in 1960. The creation of Nagaland state was not the desire of the majority of Nagas. It was a great setback to the Naga National Movement, while for the Government of India it was a great success. The dissatisfaction continued among the Nagas.

Shillong Accord:

At this juncture an accord called the Shillong Accord was signed on November 11, 1975 at Raj Bhawan, Shillong, between the Naga underground six member delegation led by Kevi Yalley, brother of Angami Zapo Phizo, and government of India represented by L. P Singh, then Governor of Nagaland.

The Accord essentially meant that the Naga underground outfit on their own volition accepted the constitution of India without condition, while the underground representatives had reasonable time to formulate other issues for discussion for final settlement. The Shillong Accord ultimately led to the split within the NNC. Both ISAK Chishi Swu as the NNC Vice President and Thuingaleng Muivah as the NNC General Secretary condemned and denounce the Shillong Accord. Muivah's group broke off from the parent NNC and formed the National Socialist Council of Nagaland under the leadership of Isak Chishi Swu as Chairman, S.S Khaplang as Vice President.

But soon dissension appeared in the NSCN as well On 30th April, 1988, the Muivah camp was attacked by the S.S. Khaplang group killing about 140 men mostly Tangkhuls, while 230 others, women and children were killed. But Muivah with 33 others managed to escape and join up with Isak Swu. After that incident the NSCN was split into two factions, one led by

Isak Swu and Thuingaleng Muivah called NSCN (I-M) and the other led by S. S. Khaplang, NSCN (K).

Since the 1990s several efforts have been made by both the Government of India and Naga revolutionary groups to arrive at an understanding on the Indo-Naga Conflict. Since the 1980s the Government of India started to send mediators to the most powerful underground group of the NSCN. But nothing came out of such initiatives because the Government of India had set the precondition that any solution to the Indo-Naga problem should be within the 'Constitution of India' where as for the NSCN there could not be any dialogue with India without discussion on the sovereignty of Nagaland. The Government of India in a goodwill gesture unilaterally declared ceasefire for three months with effect from August 1, 1997. From August 1, 1998, it was extended on annual basis and still being continued without any lapse.

The Role of the Naga Hoho in resolving the Conflict Situation in Nagaland:

The Naga Hoho is a federation of all Naga tribes and is the third institution of the Nagas, the first two being the Naga Village and the Tribe Hoho. IT was born on 25th June 1994 at Wokha and its constitution was adopted after official formation of the Naga Hoho on the 11th and 12th March during the 1998 session at Zunhebuto. The Naga Hoho is not a political or a Government body, nor is it like other NGOs and social organizations. But it is a tribe based apex body of the Nagas under the traditional system of the Naga people.

Most political and social organizations begin first with the formation of the apex body and only subsequently the structures at the regional, district and block levels are organized and formed. But the Naga Hoho was formed in an almost unique and indigenous manner unlike other organizations. It was built upon the Naga traditional institutions which evolved naturally. The sequences are as under-

- A. The Village: The first among Naga institutions at the grassroot level.
- B. The Tribe Hoho: The second among Naga institutions at the Tribe level
- C. The Naga Hoho: The third and apex institutions of the Nagas.

As seen above the Naga Hoho did not organize and form its units. The first among the Naga institutions, that is, the villages had existed for generations before the Naga Hoho came into being. Likewise the Tribal Hohos of the Naga tribes such as the Ao Senden, The Sumi Hoho,

The Angami Public Organization, The Konyak Union, The Lotha Hoho etc. were already in existence before the formation of the Naga Hoho. The formation of this apex Naga body was through a process that was intrinsic to the Naga ethos and way of life. The tribe Hohos are the foundation on which the Naga Hoho now stands. Thus the Naga Hoho was formed by the Naga people with the following objectives:

1. To uphold the solidarity of the Nagas.
2. To rebuild the Naga family.
3. To facilitate early settlement of the Naga issue.
4. To safeguard and protect the Naga system and tradition.
5. To promote the social, cultural, economic and political heritage.

Members:

Other organizations belong to some individuals or group of people. But the Naga Hoho belongs to all Nagas irrespective of tribe or whether they are underground or overground, young or old, man or woman. The members of the Naga Hoho include twenty nine tribes with associate memberships from rest of the Naga tribes which have not been officially affiliated.

Constitution:

Other organizations have independent constitutions framed as per the desires and designs of the founding members. which are also amended to suit the situations. But, the Naga Hoho cannot have a constitution that is totally independent of the customary laws, traditions, conventions that are totally independent of the customary laws, traditions, conventions and common practices of the Nagas. Its functioning is governed by the Naga world view from which it derives its objectives and goals.

Efforts of Naga Hoho to unite the rebel groups:

From the very beginning the first priority of the Naga Hoho has been to resolve the conflict situation in Nagaland. The Naga Hoho is playing a key role in the efforts to unite the different Naga rebel groups under a common platform so that a broad based solution to the more than fifty year old insurrection could be worked out, a move that has been generally welcomed in the state. The Hoho has been trying to get the four Naga underground groups together and the response has been good. Among the four Naga insurgent groups the NNC factions have been

maintaining a low profile, but the two NSCN groups have not only been active, but have been engaged in bitter fratricidal feuds. Naga Hoho President M. Vero met NSCN (K) General Secretary Kitovi Zhimami in the early months of 2002. Zhimami said his group would have no problem if the current peace exercise succeeds in working out a solution that is honorable and acceptable to all the Nagas. On the initiative of Naga hoho the NSCN (I-M) sent feelers to the NSCN (K) and the NNC factions. However, it is not easy for armed organizations to come together unlike the overground groups. The NSCN (I-M) maintains that it has the authority to talk peace with the Government of India as it has the mandate of the people. The Naga Hoho holds that talk with one faction will seldom yield any tangible results. It is because of this that the Hoho tried to bring almost all sections of Nagas on one platform. The organization has quite aptly pinpointed the need for inclusion of all warring groups in the Naga peace talks.

The Naga hoho met the different camps of militant groups from time to time. The main issue of discussion has been the cessation of hostilities among the various camps of national workers and exploration of the possibility of evolving a common approach to the peace process for final settlement of the Naga Issue. All camps have the same desire for a solution. All the camps expect the Naga Hoho to endorse their point of view and the Naga Hoho is trying to build up on the areas of commonality to pave the way for meeting points.

The Naga Hoho is not a party on the peace process that has been going on between the Central Government and the NSCN(I-M). But the Naga Hoho has been playing the role of a facilitator by adopting various measures.

Formation of Co-ordination Committee:

Under the aegis of the Naga Hoho, a co-ordination Committee was constituted on August 18, 2001 in a meeting held at Kohima. The meeting was attended by Naga representatives from Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Nagaland. The committee was supposed to co ordinate programmes and policies on various aspects of the ceasefire fallout. The policies would include facilitating the peace process, bringing out a white paper on Naga unification, resettlement of displaced Nagas in Manipur and working out a plan for Naga national reconciliation. The formation of the Co-ordination Committee and its decision to reach out to the people, both within the state and outside, can be said to be an important development in Naga History. The Co-ordination committee stressed the need for a concerted effort to bring unity and understanding among different Naga tribes to facilitate the political talks between

the centre and the Naga underground groups. The Co-ordination Committee comprising representatives from NGOs, church organizations, different tribal bodies, intellectuals, university teachers, government officials, political parties, and underground groups met from time to time trying to dispel the mistrust and suspicion among the Naga tribes and create an atmosphere of unity and understanding.

The Naga Hoho Co-ordination Committee held a “mass Naga peace rally” in order to affirm the basic stand of the Nagas on urgent issues of common concern and ways to deal with the challenges confronting them.

Two major works of Co-ordination Committee are:

- A. Goodwill Mission to Assam
- B. Reconciliation Process.

Goodwill Mission to Assam:

An eight member delegation of the Naga Hoho led by its President Mr. M. Vero paid a goodwill visit to Assam during September 6th to 8th, 2001 to renew the traditional ties with the Assamese people and to build understanding, friendship and brotherhood. The Naga hoho delegation had come at the invitation of the Asom Sahitya Sabha, the largest literary organization of Assam. During its visit the Naga Hoho expressed hope that the ongoing peace talks between Government of India and the Naga rebel organizations NSCN(I-M) would culminate in a settlement which would be widely acceptable among all in Nagaland as well as in North east. The Naga Hoho is more concerned with rebuilding the faction ridden Naga society and the wounds it has sustained over the years during the course of the long struggle. M. Vero the President of the Naga Hoho, in his speech said that they had been mandated by a conference of the Naga Hoho held in Kohima to undertake the mission to Assam and other neighbouring state to renew the traditional ties and help build understanding, friendship and brotherhood among them all. Vero said that Naga society had been engulfed in armed conflict for many decades now. There was now need to restore and rebuild their society. Part of the process of restoring and rebuilding was to reach out to to understand the difficulties others were also trying to face, as the Nagas had for long remained obsessed with themselves and their problems and they had become insulated. The Hoho therefore undertook the journey of healing and restoration.

The Naga Hoho described their visit to Assam As an important beginning in future relationship of the people of the North Eastern region. The Hoho again wished to undertake

such goodwill journeys to other parts of the country, including Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh, to build better bridges of understanding in the area.

Reconciliation Process:

The Naga Hoho launched a reconciliation campaign to resolve the decade long insurgency issue. The reconciliation process is an effort to bring together all sections of the Nagas, particularly underground groups, for the greater cause of rebuilding the Naga family and ending years of blood shedding. The Naga Hoho believes that the problem cannot be solved without unity among the Naga tribes. The church in Nagaland has for the last several years made efforts in this direction. But the situation has only worsened with almost irreconcilable differences emerging among the extremist underground organizations. Perhaps many more militant Nagas have died fighting among themselves than at the hands of the security forces. The Naga hoho's effort, as distinguished from the church's, constitutes a people's initiative.

The inaugural function of the Naga Reconciliation process initiated by Naga hoho, together with the various churches and other mass based NGOs, was held on December 20th at the Kohima local football ground. On this day, 28 Naga leaders, representatives of Naga tribes from all over Naga inhabited areas of Nagaland, Manipur, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, and Myanmar solemnly pledged to heal and rebuild the Naga family. Members of all nationalist groups and all state political parties were present at the meeting. However the outlawed NSCN led by K. K. Khaplang stayed away from the rally, while one of the two NNC factions sent a message supporting the Hoho's move. The representatives of the NSCN (I-M), the dominant underground group were present in the rally. The theme of the inaugural ceremony was to rebuild the Naga family with the Prince of Peace. The Naga political struggle has been going on for over a century. The Naga people have suffered enough atrocities and killings at the hands of the Government of India forces and their own "National workers". And the Naga people now resent continuing factional clashes and killings while longing for peace, justice, and achievement of common aspirations. After so many decades of fighting the people have become wounded and weary. But without including all the tribes all sections of Naga society, there will not be a workable settlement of the Naga issue. Therefore, the circumstances demand interaction, consultation and reconciliation.

Declaration adopted at the Inaugural Function of Naga National Reconciliation Process:

A Naga Declaration was adopted during the December 20, 2001 function. About 132 persons signed the declaration. The declaration re-states Naga history, but also humbly acknowledges the failures and mistakes of the past. In the declaration it is said that the Naga people cannot give up their struggle without an honorable settlement and an adequate acknowledgement of their history. It is also known that division, bitterness and armed confrontation will not solve the Naga political issue. Therefore, there is an imperative need for the Nagas to come together to share and discuss with grace, accept the past mistakes and realize that armed confrontation will not solve the Naga political issue. By this declaration the Nagas as a people commit themselves to take the first step of their journey towards healing as one nation by collectively expressing their sorrows to all victims of injustice and oppression.

Every Naga village will receive their declaration through the respective Tribe Hohos for discussion and fullest understanding. Each village council or competent authority is expected to return the Declaration with the village's support or otherwise with explanations, if the concerned village has some serious doubts. All such support as well as doubts and objectives will be published for the knowledge of the Naga public.

The continuation of the Reconciliation Process has been entrusted to the various Naga churches and they worked out the modalities. The priority of the Reconciliation Process is the search for lasting "unity" and "peace" which can come only as a result of reconciliation. Therefore the Naga Hoho considers the churches as the right platform to carry out the next stage of the Reconciliation Process.

Reconciliation occupied a prominent place in the 7th General Assembly of the Naga Hoho that was held in the Senapati District in Manipur from May 20-22, 2002. The Naga Hoho was of the view that solution to the fifty year old Naga struggle has to be found soon and reconciliation should work towards the realization of this vision and objective. The Naga people must occupy the central theme in the reconciliation process and the reconciliation highway must be God's way and not self's. Therefore, the Hoho urges the Nagas to avoid the temptation of projecting the self above the people's interest.

Naga Hoho as a facilitator of the Peace Process:

The Naga hoho is not a party in the peace talks. But the organization is playing the role of facilitator. The Naga Hoho has been asking the rebel outfits to stop fratricidal killings which could jeopardize hopes for an end to the dragging insurgency in the region. The Naga Hoho

initiated the Reconciliation process to take the Nagas beyond the unacceptable tragedy of the Nagas killing fellow Nagas that could wreck peace talks with the Centre. About 40 representatives of the Naga Hoho, tribes, student organizations and church groups went to Bangkok in the first week of January 2002 to persuade the NSCN (I-M) to see reason and forge unity among various tribes warring Naga outfits. They also held a five day convention in Bangkok from January 7th, 2002 seeking unity ahead of the Centre-NSCN (I-M) talks. The Naga representatives felt that unity among the three different warring groups must precede the peace talks and the first step towards unity would to bring about a truce between the two NSCN factions.

Conclusion

Over fifty years of insurgent violence in Nagaland have resulted in division of Naga society. Fratricidal and Factional killings have become the order of the day. But due to intervention of civil society groups, the number of incidences of killing and violence has come down to a great extent. The Naga Hoho has been trying to free the Naga society from factional killings and differences by uniting the tribes under one roof. After the formation of the Naga Hoho with the motto “Nagas are one” the Naga people have since had the opportunity to meet together, think together, share together and work together. This has narrowed down gaps and differences among the Nagas and has enabled them to start moving forward together. Thus, in the midst of pervading fear of gun, the Nagas after a long time have a forum to frankly and courageously voice their minds and souls to each other and to the outside world. The Naga Hoho has been asking all Naga rebel groups to stop fratricidal killings and unite for the interest of the community. The Hoho calls upon the warring factions to sit together and sort out their differences in the greater interest of the Nagas, who have sacrificed and suffered for such a long time.

Besides securing Naga unity the Naga Hoho has been trying to facilitate the peace process. It will mediate between the Indian Government and the Naga rebel groups to arrive at a final solution to the Naga problem. It initiated the Reconciliation Process to unite the 39 different Naga tribes. It is to the credit of the Naga Hoho and other civil society groups that despite all the anger released during the ceasefire declaration, the peace process was not hampered. And the possible outbreak of inter-community violence was checked effectively. During the extremely difficult days following the violence in Manipur over the inclusion of the territorial clause in the extension of the Naga ceasefire, it was the intervention of the Naga Hoho, and

other civil society groups which prevented the outbreak of any violence in Nagaland. The Naga Hoho also took some very bold and meaningful steps such as sending a goodwill mission to Assam to prevent the outbreak of hostility between the peoples of Nagaland and its neighbouring states.

The Naga Hoho faces certain impediments in playing an active role in resolving the conflict situation in Nagaland. Naga Civil Society has forever remained divided on tribal lines. The Naga Hoho received a setback when the Tuensang and Mon People's Organization and Angami People's organization decided to withdraw from the Naga Hoho. But The Naga Hoho considers it as a blessing in disguise for certain reasons. It has brought out the best in the President of the Naga Hoho and his colleagues who have become more active, serious and concerned than before.

The strength of the Naga Hoho is derived from the strength of the Tribe Hohos. Therefore, the tribes should play a meaningful role in strengthening the Naga Hoho, particularly in its efforts towards reconciliation. The strength of a Tribe Hoho depends on the support of the villages, the first institution of the Nagas. Therefore, it is the responsibility of each and every village and Tribe Hoho to build and strengthen themselves and thereby contribute to the strength of the Naga Hoho. The Naga hoho has an indispensable role to play for which it requires unstinting support of all Nagas.

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