

Between Identity and Peacebuilding: A Case of Women's Participation in Thailand's Deep South Peace Process

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Abstract

This study examines women's participation in the peace process as efforts to resolve the long-standing conflict in Thailand's deep south. Despite the ongoing unrest between the Thai military and Malay resistance groups in the southern border provinces, women's participation at the formal decision-making level within peace processes has been largely overlooked. The study explores the factors contributing to the lack of recognition of women's involvement. It investigates the relationship between women's identity, ethnicity, religion, and their influence on peacebuilding. The research analyzes data from 142 women, comprising Malay-Muslim and Thai-Buddhist participants, and includes in-depth interviews with selected women leaders. The findings indicate that women who collaborate with government agencies and represent both religious and ethnic backgrounds are more likely to impact the peace process significantly. In contrast, those who emphasized exclusive identities had less influence. Thus, representing women's identities is crucial to their engagement and effectiveness in peacebuilding efforts.

Keywords: Women, Peace Negotiation, Identity, Thailand's Deep South

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Introduction

The architecture of conflict resolution in many parts of the world tends to be male-dominated arenas. So does in the context of Thailand's deep south case. Nearly zero women took part in the peace table. To women in the deep south of Thailand, their challenges to influence the peace (decision)making process become considerably more complex when they intersect with poverty, insecurity, and conflict. Like many conflict-affected areas, the deep southern women bear numerous difficulties due to horizontal development imbalances, religious misinterpretation, and conflict circumstances (Burke, 2012; Buranajaroenkij, 2018).

The deep south of Thailand is a predominantly Malay Muslim ethnic population residing in three southernmost border provinces of Thailand, including Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat. Unlike the rest of the majority of Thais in the country, religion and ethnicity have rendered them minorities compared to Thailand's 90% Thai Buddhist population (Jitpiromsri & Shobonvasu, 2007). The deep south of Thailand also has a long history of armed conflict between Malay resistance groups and the Royal Thai government's military and police forces, which began in the 1960s and has remained unresolved to this day (Askew, 2007). Apart from the conflict, the three provinces are regarded as the least developed in Thailand's northeast. Since the escalation of the conflict in 2004, the conflict has been victimizing around 20,985 casualties to this day (Deep South Watch, 2022).

It is essential to recognize that men and women experience conflict differently. Women struggle with double burdens of conflict, direct and indirect impacts. According to Anderlini (2007), despite being prone to conflict victims, women also played a crucial role in promoting peace in conflict zones. Women in the deep south collaborate to establish collective initiatives addressing women's issues in the conflict zone. Thus, their efforts become significantly important. The questions worth asking then, despite women's active roles at the community level in promoting peace, why are women absent from formal peace negotiations? What factors explain the lack of recognition of women's contribution to peacebuilding? Drawing from the lens of Feminism, this study attempt to address those queries by providing analyses based on the primary information from women in the Deep South of Thailand. The result of this study contributes to the debates on the need to enhance the inclusive participation of women in the peace process, particularly in the Southeast Asia context.

This study is grounded on the theoretical approach of Feminism to highlight the gender contestation within the society where patriarchy is rooted, and women have to face multiple layers to foster their participation in public spheres (including peace negotiation in this context).

Feminism

According to Feminism, women's experiences are essential in defining their sense of empowerment (Wylie, 2003; Isike, 2009). The empowerment aspect is crucial to ensure that women enhance their capacity to communicate their voices and needs to be accommodated at the (peace) decision-making level. In the rigidity of the peace negotiation body, institutions are heavily embedded. Thus, Feminist studies contend that including a gender perspective is critical to properly engaging women in the institutional structure (Krook, 2010; Krook & Mackay, 2010; Geha, 2019). Feminism claims that institutions are profoundly entangled with gendered relationships, impacting the development of masculinity and femininity in everyday

life, including political decisions, according to Kenny (1996). The notion that gender norms, regulations, and practices substantially impact political outcomes is substantial, incorporating gender analysis into institutionalism and exposing power dynamics within institutions (Mackay et al., 2010).

In a patriarchal society, male actors are not responsible for women's struggles. Gender equality and women's empowerment face challenges from the patriarchal system, male supremacy, and the prevailing status quo. According to Luyt & Starck (2020), the status quo encompasses a wide range of individual, political, social, and institutional processes that contribute to reproducing gender inequalities. Within this spectrum, various actors hinder efforts to empower women, and surprisingly, there are even groups of women on this spectrum. The status quo reinforces the patriarchal system, which exploits women through a narrow, gender-blind perspective. Consequently, women must exercise caution in identifying their allies and those who may not support their cause.

Feminism emphasizes the importance of women working together as a collective force to change the structures of gender relations. This collaboration is particularly relevant in peace negotiations, where women's involvement can lead to transformative institutional changes. In this sense, power relations are often taken for granted within institutions and become institutionalized due to deeply ingrained gender norms. These norms shape how masculinity and femininity are perceived, leading to unequal power dynamics within the system. Recognizing this, scholars like Cornell (2006) and Mackay & Waylen (2009) have highlighted the need to challenge and deconstruct gender norms to create more equitable and inclusive institutions.

Taking a feminist perspective on institutionalism, feminist scholars argue that empowering women goes beyond just benefiting women themselves. In the context of this study, by involving women in decision-making processes and leadership roles, society as a whole stands to gain. Such inclusion can lead to more holistic and inclusive dimensions, ranging from socio-economic progress to promoting religious and cultural harmony and peace initiatives (Chrames & Wieringa, 2003). In this way, advancing women's empowerment becomes essential for achieving broader societal progress. To achieve positive outcomes is crucial to ensure that women have equal participation and representation within institutions. When women sit at the table, they can address their everyday issues and concerns, advocate for their rights, and work towards achieving positive changes within the system. The active involvement of women in shaping institutional agendas can lead to more responsive and effective policies that cater to the needs of all members of society.

This study indicates that women's organizations are evolving into an institution that performs dual functions in the formal and informal actions towards the agenda for women's empowerment based on the feminist theoretical framework. Women's organizations, particularly feminist ones, can establish goals for women's empowerment, such as emancipation and equality (Lang in Smith, 2000). Women's organizations provide a formal role in facilitating the development of women's capacities as change agents. Having women's organizations, women could access resources to improve their awareness and comprehension of their rights in the informal sphere.

Methods

The research included quantitative and qualitative methods and was mainly carried out in three provinces in Thailand's deep south: Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat. The quantitative study's respondents were women who lived in the study area. One hundred forty-two women satisfied the study's criteria and answered all questionnaire questions. The quantitative approach collected data via a questionnaire, which each lady completed separately. Because the poll was voluntary and confidential, the respondents' identities were not divulged as part of the research. Respondents can withdraw their participation if they feel uncomfortable while completing the questionnaire. Respondents were given informed consent, an explanation, and information about the research and how to participate before completing the questionnaire. A local translator supported the researcher in easing communication between the researcher (a foreigner) and the respondents, who prefer to communicate in Thai for formal purposes. The questionnaire was back-translated and evaluated for validity and reliability by specialists. This questionnaire was based on Oxfam GB's Women's Empowerment Index (WEI) (Lombardini et al., 2017). The tool was primarily created based on thoughts concerning women's empowerment. The questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to find changes in the three indicators: women's identities, partisanship, and type of participation in the peace process.

The interviewees in this study's qualitative design are women who are primarily involved in and active in women's organizations and women's concerns. The snowball sampling method was used in this study to interview ten women from various organizations. The first point of contact was made through the Civic Women, one of the female CSOs connected to the Prince Songkhla University campus in Pattani, which resulted in the identification of the ten interviewees. Additionally, the qualitative method included open-ended, in-depth interviews to gather data. The interviews, which followed a case study approach, attempted to delve deeply into information to address research concerns about the connection between women's identity, including race and religion, and their impact on peacebuilding. During the data collection process, the researcher was assisted by a local interpreter proficient in English, Thai, and Malay. The data collected during the in-depth interviews were analyzed using process content analysis.

Contextualization: Timelines of the Peace Talks

The following section describes the timelines of different rounds of formal peace talks to bring into perspective how the peace negotiations in attempts to resolve Thailand's deep south conflict have been going on. From 2013 up to today, different negotiating teams or task forces have changed over different administrations. Each round of the formal negotiations consisted of Party A referring to the Government of Thailand, Party B referring to Malay resistance groups (i.e. BRN, MARA Patani, and PULO), and a representative of Malaysia as the facilitator. None of the female negotiators from the deep south has ever been involved in those peace tables.

First Round (2013)

The first formal attempt to resolve the conflict in the deep south of Thailand through negotiation appeared in early 2013 under the administration of Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra. It was the first official peace talk held in Malaysia, marking the involvement of the neighbouring country as the mediator of the peace negotiation. Scholars have argued that

the negotiation was an implicit political nature recognition and legitimation of the existence of the National Revolution Front or Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN) as a Malay resistance group rather than just criminals (Wheelers & Chambers, 2019). The negotiation came up with the “General Consensus on Peace Dialogue Process,” which was signed by a representative of the Thai Government (Party A) and a representative of BRN (Party B). Nevertheless, the negotiation did not last for long due to the Thai political turmoil the following year and the reluctance of BRN to participate. Experts signalled that the failure was proof of the unpreparedness of the negotiation body, both its structure and substance (International Crisis Group, 2020).

Second Round (2014-2015)

Since the political change occurred in Bangkok after the coup, the new Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha made some adjustments in terms of the deep south peace negotiation structure. In late 2014, a new working committee was established to extend the peace negotiation with Malaysia remaining as a mediating country. A former army chief, General Aksara Kerdpol, chaired the working committee to represent Party A. On the other side, Party B also made a different move when they initiated an umbrella group to strengthen the bargaining position at the peace table. Both parties shed light that they learned from the previous failure of the peace negotiation. In 2015, MARA Patani was established as an umbrella group of BRN, PULO (Patani Liberation Organization), and GMIP (Patani Islamic Mujahidin Movement). Unlike the first round of peace negotiations in 2014, the second round lasted until the following year. In 2015, Party C, civil society and non-conflicted parties were welcomed to participate in the negotiation process. The primary attention in this round was to reduce violent incidents and be more engaging in participation.

Third Round (2019-2020)

In 2019, the replacement of the leader of the negotiating team happened again. It means that the continuation of the negotiation after a few years of stagnation attempted to be renewed. This round was started with the Berlin Initiatives in late 2019, marking the agreement from Party A and Party B to pursue a newly fresh dialogue with basic principles including sincerity, honesty, human dignity, inclusivity and justice (International Crisis Group, 2020). Meanwhile, both parties agreed that the role of Malaysia serves as a facilitator.

Fourth Round (2022-2023)

According to the International Crisis Group (2022, 2023), the fourth negotiation round occurred in the spring of 2022, from March 31 to April 1, 2022. Organized by the Joint Working Group, this round focuses on fresh developments at the negotiating table and events related to the debate. Nevertheless, new nuance came along with the influence of Anwar Ibrahim, a newly elected Malaysian prime minister with connections to southern Thailand, after the Malaysia General Election in November 2022. Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim appointed a new chief facilitator, a former Chief-Army of Malaysia's security forces, General Zulkifli Zainal Abidin. His appointment, which actively starts in January 2023, is strategically meant to balance the power between Party A and Party B. Even General Abidin's appointment gave some people hope for progress, but Party B members continued to privately lament pressure from Kuala Lumpur to end the informal talks. Experts signaled that the peace process needs informal discussion opportunities so the parties can test ideas and redlines. Malaysia should cooperate with them to develop adaptable agreements that permit

these to continue. After the General Election in May 2023, the ongoing peace talks are on hold, primarily due to Party B's wish to proceed with the negotiation after the formation of a new government in Bangkok after the election.

Locating Women in Peace Process

This section elaborates on the analyses based on interview data sets with ten women in the deep south. The interviews have generally revealed women's struggle to get into the spotlight of the peace negotiation. They also shared their wish for inclusive participation in the peace process, which they referred to as including women (and/or women's interests) in the peace talks.

From several formal peace negotiations that have been held, the women from the deep south have yet to be included. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that a female staff from Party A side was involved, but mainly only served for logistic and non-essential tasks. As such, it is undeniable proof that peace negotiations lack gender awareness and inclusivity aspects. The gender perspective is becoming more significant in peacebuilding and conflict resolution since the global blueprint UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) was launched. The gender perspective emphasizes peace in ordinary life and its foundation from grassroots efforts to elevate the importance of equality, social welfare, and fairness through its emancipatory nature. At the same time, it facilitates changes in prevailing power dynamics and gender relations (Bjorkdahl & Selimovic, 2016).

The absence of women in the deep south peace talks has tended to be associated with several underlying barriers, the structural and partisanship issues. Structurally, the peace negotiating team in Party A formed based on civil servant employment ranks. Such a requirement implies a matter of seniority in each department assigned by the government. A junior and less than five years of civil servant career would not be counted as eligible to serve on the team. Unfortunately, senior Thai bureaucrats are dominating the high-rank positions. Thus, few female officers would have a chance to be appointed to the peace dialogue team. A senior woman leader (Malay-Muslim) based in Pattani province told her thoughts:

If she (referring a Thai female staff involved in Party B) herself got limited by male negotiators to involve into more essential tasks, then, sorry to say, but it proves women like us in the Deep South participating in the peace table is just becoming more difficult.

Meanwhile, on the Party B side, the domination of Malay-Muslim male leaders of the resistance groups is rigid. To conservative Malay and Islamic interpretations, leadership is seen as a male arena as they often refer to men as imams (leaders) and women as maximum (followers). Besides, women in the Deep South, in general, are concerned about the partisanship issue. It deemed them to be confidently involved in the peace table directly. Women are avoiding being accused of taking sides between Party A and Party B. Similarly to what this Thai-Buddhist female leader from Pattani said in an interview session:

I guess we (women) do not want the image that we are taking sides, either we support Party A or Party B. Thus, the peace negotiation should create an independent group, like Party C maybe. In that way, we women groups would feel safer to involve in the peace table.

In contrast, women groups in Thailand's deep south are notably active at the grassroots level in promoting peace. Women, both Thai Buddhists and Malay Muslim communities, have led various initiatives. Women work in different fields, from providing mental support to the victims, acting as trust builders and community facilitators and influencing peace negotiation (Marddent, 2017; Buranajaroenkij, 2018). During the second round of peace talks in 2015, women's groups formed an umbrella collaboration of 23 women-led local organizations, namely (Peace Agenda of Women) PAOW. Together, PAOW drafted a policy recommendation sent to the peace table to demand an end to violent incidents in public areas or what they called a "safety zone" (Suwardi, 2023). Women's grassroots organizations and networks, as well as other parts of civil society, play an essential role in giving support and help to victims and survivors of sexual abuse in crisis circumstances (Kanchanalak, 2015). In the past two decades, women's activism and efforts in advocating peace have gradually improved and shifted from victim-solidarity-based groups to become more structural, formal, and institutionalized women's civil society organizations (Suwardi & Chambers, 2023). One of the PAOW leaders said:

I think PAOW successfully drafted and sent the recommendation to the peace table was a strong message that women groups' interests are demanding peace and justice. We are glad when the safety zone pilot project was implemented.

Subsequently, a notable Muslim female human rights activist in the deep south stated that women's participation in the deep south peace process required extra attention and efforts from many elements. She said, "It is important to have gender justice in the peace negotiations, but women themselves must also improve their capacity and knowledge on how to be capable negotiators." In addition to capacity concerns, the socio-cultural environment of the deep south community, strongly influenced by the strict security maintenance techniques used by Thailand's security forces, has made it more difficult for women to achieve their objectives. The power and resistance of the prevailing state often prevent women's groups from bringing about structural change towards peacebuilding. Overly centralized state power has caused it to dominate the deep South society and marginalize citizens' efforts to raise social consciousness, notably of women's issues. Consider the political motivation behind the government's propensity to maintain its position by ignoring the primary reasons for the deep south conflict—granting people more autonomy and assisting them in improving their lives. Similarly, Jitpiomsri & Mcargo (2010) argued that such circumstances had created frustration among the deep South people and showed a crisis of state legitimacy, which the government has incessantly attempted to deny.

Additionally, majority Malay-Muslim women carry the burdens of the Islamic Family and Inheritance Law. Unfortunately, some of this law's execution favours men and is outdated in modern society, making women's rights even more ambiguous. Lack of legal protection from divorce, widowhood, and polygamy, absence of a minimum marriage age, reduced access to property ownership, and obstructions to leadership are only a few of the discriminations faced by Muslim women (Patani Working Group, 2017). Women's participation in public speeches, such as influencing the peace process, is becoming more challenging considering gender-blind circumstances.

Unravelling Women's Participation in the Peace Process

This section examines related factors to investigate further why women are absent from the Thailand deep south peace negotiations, presenting the quantitative result based on 142 participating women.

First, concerning the diverse identities of the communities, both ethnicity and religion. Although conflict is not exclusively treated as inter-ethnic or inter-religious, scholars have noted that ethnicity and religion are intertwined in adding topics to the debate of the reasons for conflict. For instance, to Anjarwati and Trimble (2013), since the government has gradually imposed more substantial restrictions to force groups to assimilate their identities, this line of action developed a trend that separated the perceived 'otherness' resulting in an undesirable growth in biased attitudes and pervasive stereotypes between the Malay-Muslim and Thai-Buddhist groups. Historically, these two groups maintained opposing faith and cultural viewpoints. Thus, these disparities in religion and culture are essential in prolonging the conflict.

Deep southern women are more vulnerable to gender-based, which is afflicted by developmental issues and conflicts (Yang et al., 2000). This is primarily due to the influence of traditional cultural norms and religious practices, which frequently portray women as meek, weak, and dependent. Gender norms have been substantially affected by Islamic teachings and Malay culture in the ethnic majority of the Malay Muslims community in the deep south. As a result, World Bank (2020) reported that men and women have distinct gender roles, with women obliged to follow Islamic rules and practices while fulfilling their responsibilities through marriage and cultural identities.

Characteristically, women's groups in the deep south differ in their focus areas, the diversity of their members' backgrounds, and their affiliations. Some women's organizations focus on economic empowerment, peace and capacity building, education, culture, etc. Although the majority population is Muslim, there are women's groups that exclusively represent Thai Buddhists, Malay Muslims, and mixed. Thus, the different backgrounds of women's groups could impact how they run their collective agendas. The complexity of identity issues is reflected in how women's groups navigate their efforts and participate in the peace process. The data showed that 15% of women's groups exclusively represent the Thai-Buddhist community, followed by 30% representing the Malay-Muslim community. The percentages are not surprising, considering the demography of the deep south population. Nevertheless, interestingly there is a growing trend of 51% of women's groups becoming more inclusively collaborated in inter-religious and inter-ethnic communities. This half the data shows that women's groups are increasingly becoming aware that religious and ethnic identities should not be highlighted as their main issues but rather to build more vital unions to seek collective interests, which is peace in Thailand's deep south.

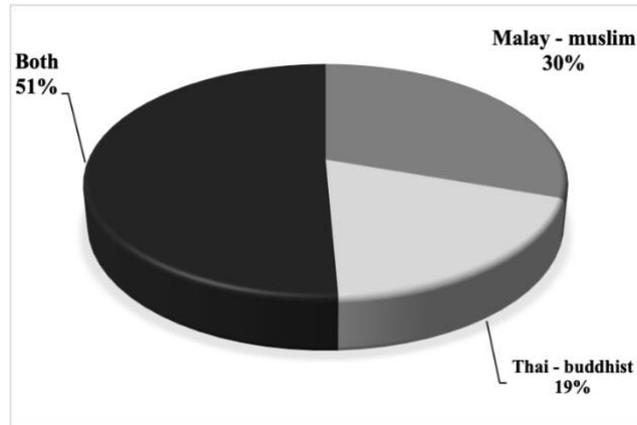


Figure 1: Compositions of Women’s Groups based on Religion and Ethnicity

Second, women from the Malay-Muslim community participation in peace dialogues involved dilemmas and considerations around partisanship issues and women's status seen by heavily conservative male Muslim leaders. Specifically, to Malay-Muslim women, their voices and participation in public spheres are often perceived by the general audience as second class (or even less influential). Nevertheless, a remarkable and historic event in Thailand's deep South appeared when the first female Muslim governor was appointed in 2022, 57-year-old Governor Pateemoh Sadeeyamu, shed light on women's leadership in the deep South society (Bangkok Post, 2022).

Although women's organizations are primarily not-for-profit, their activities are financially supported by many different resources. These include government agencies, international non-governmental organizations (international donors), and civil societies. These different forms of affiliation can impact CSOs' agendas for women. The data showed that most women's groups work together (or receive support from) government agencies (49%). While 32% collaborated with government and non-government agencies, only 19% worked with non-governmental agencies.

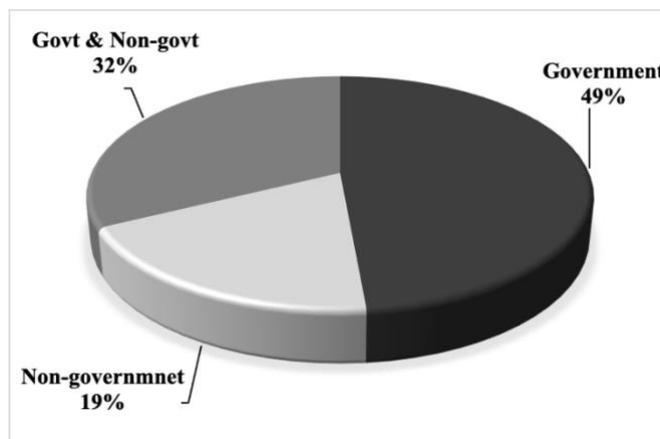


Figure 2: Percentages of Women’s Groups Partisanship and Collaboration

Numerous women's organizations work closely with governmental entities created to address concerns in the deep south. The influence of governmental organizations meant that these alliances could not be ignored and increased in significance. These organizations include the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC), the Coordination Centre for Children and Women in the Southern Border Province (CCWSBP), and the Southern Border Provinces

Administrative Centre (SBPAC). Although these governmental organizations were primarily created to stabilize the lives of those affected by violence, depending on the program types and organizational structures, they have also had a variety of connections with civil society organizations. However, when there have been bureaucratic changes in these organizations, it has negatively impacted the implementation of policies pertaining to civil society organizations, including women's organizations. As a result, working with government agencies has become more complex. A tendency of state-induced deviation, where state control over the populace burdens women's organizations in developing their capacity to influence change, is experienced by women's organizations as a result of the consequences of inconsistent state policy as a result of the changing of policymakers.

Third, the two indicators above, both women's ethnic and religious identities and their partisanship defined the result of their influence on the peace process. The result showed that 72% participated women fall under the 'indirect' influence on peace negotiation. Meanwhile, only 28% could reach 'direct' influence. The 'indirect' influence is the range of activities, efforts, and initiatives promoting peace in the deep south. It includes women's agendas in strengthening harmonious relations and building trust between Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhist communities. While 'direct' influence on the peace process is defined as women's initiatives in interacting with peace negotiating parties. For instance, according to key informants, a few well-known women leaders from the deep south participated in several informal meetings with either Party A or Party B. Even informally, it is crucial that women can communicate their interests to the peace negotiating team (mainly in the second round of peace negotiation). The recommendation letter drafted and sent by PAOW is another categorized effort as a direct influence of women's influence in peace negotiation. Although women were physically absent from the peace table, their voices were being discussed.

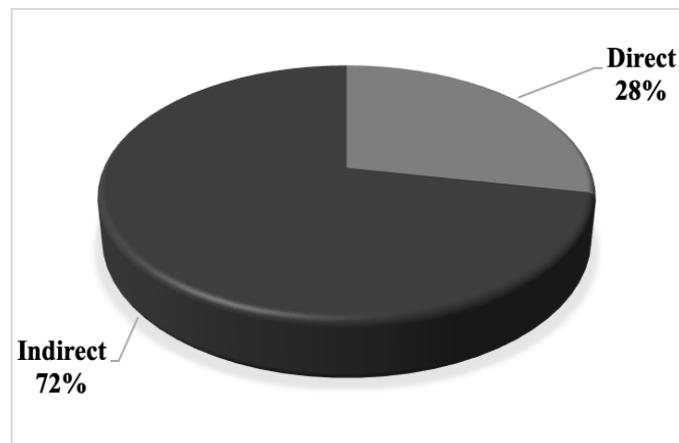


Figure 3: Percentages of Women's Groups Influence on Peace Process

Finally, the study summarizes the result of the relationships between three indicators, partisanship (or collaborating partners), identities (religion and ethnicity), and influence on the peace process. The table below shows that the most 'impactful' women's participation in the peace process is when they collaborate with government agencies, representing both identities of Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists. Nevertheless, the extent of influence of women's participation in the peace process, indirectly and directly, fell into the category of 'moderate'.

Indicators	Women's participation in peace process		
	Less impact	Moderate	Impactful
Partisanship			
Government			
Non-Government			
Government & Non-Government			
Identities			
Malay – Muslims			
Thai – Buddhists			
Both			
Participation in peace talk			
Direct			
Indirect			

Table 1: Impacts of Women's Participation on Peace Process

Conclusion

Since the escalation of violent conflict in 2004, women in the deep South of Thailand are experiencing obstacles in their daily life. The conflict has victimized women differently than men since women often extensively suffer from both direct and indirect impacts of conflict. Nevertheless, women have been actively promoting peace in the front row; they conducted various initiatives and efforts, both formally and informally. Contrary, women's active participation at the grassroots level was not fully recognized at the formal peace negotiation level. For the past ten years, in 4 rounds of formal peace negotiations, women from the deep South have never been present at the peace tables.

This study argues that underlying factors are associated with women's participation in peace, including partisanship or collaborating partners and identity representations. Living in a heavily dominated patriarchal Malay-Muslim community, women face multilayer obstacles when participating in public, including promoting peace. At the same time, the deep south conflict is associated with identity issues between Malay Muslims and Thai-Buddhist communities. Even though not a sole factor, identity differences contributed to prolonging the conflict to some extent. Therefore, women's groups that inclusively work together and represent Malay-Muslims and Thai-Buddhist identities can create a more impactful influence in promoting peace. Additionally, women's groups that closely collaborate with non-governmental agencies tend to have less impact than those women's organizations that work together with government agencies.

The trend shown in the results deemed the importance of inter-religious harmony in running women's organizations in Thailand's deep south. Being exclusive to a particular religious group would deter possible more significant impacts (such as promoting peace). Similarly, Hicks (2002) argued that in an organization, it was necessary to have organizational leadership that did not endorse a single religious framework but built a structure and culture of religious diversity between leaders and followers of an organization. Especially in a conflict zone like the deep south, religious exclusivism was more likely to be involved in conflict issues. Because religion is often used as a source of mobilization and recruitment to run an organization in conflict zones (Isaacs, 2016). In addition to ethnic diversity in a

conflict setting, like in the deep south, Novta (2016) highlighted her argument that there was a strong association between ethnic diversity and conflict. Although in the context of the deep south, the notion of "ethnic conflicts" could not be generalized (Brown, 1993) since the Malays and the Thais were not exclusively conflicted parties but were more into ethnopolitical struggles of the Malay ethnic groups in the Thai nation (Norsworthy, 2008).

In sum, with the absence of women, formal peace negotiations of Thailand's deep south conflict are still far from adopting gender-wise principles. Either the conflict itself or even the peace process architectures are still very much male-dominated arenas. Thus, women's efforts in establishing more vital allies with interreligious groups, both partnerships with government and non-government agencies, would be needed. When women's groups become more unified, women could build more influence towards their participation in peace negotiations.

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