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Women Under Attack : Internal Armed Conflicts and Gender Based Violence in North East India

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Introduction

India's 'North-East' is a post-colonial region created by the partition of the Indian subcontinent (Bhowmik 1998). Ancient or medieval Indian geographical discourse has no reference to the 'North-East'. The British were the first to evolve the concept of a 'North Eastern Frontier' for their Indian dominions after they conquered Assam and the other tribal and princely kingdoms located between Bengal and Burma towards the end of the 19th century (Rustomji 1983).

This was followed by the Second World War, which brought the global conflict between the allied and the axis powers to the doorsteps of the North East. Some of the fiercest battles of the war were fought in this region – Kohima and Imphal ended up as part of the Great War folklore, its battles resembling the battlefields of Somme (Rooney 1992). The distinct identity of the region had already

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emerged. As the partition of the British Indian dominions became imminent, it was only natural for the people of the region to ponder about their future. After the withdrawal of the British, the process of partition led to the conversion of the region into a distinct region. When East Bengal became East Pakistan, this frontier region was left completely isolated, hanging tenuously to the Indian mainland through a small 14 kilometre wide corridor in North Bengal. It was this very general sense of isolation that gave the region the sense of being so different from the rest of the country (Verghese 1997).

When the British left India in 1947, the Naga movement led by Angami Zaphu Phizo, who did not want to join the Indian Union, sowed the seeds of the insurgency in the region. This was followed by the Manipuris, whose seminal seeds of insurgency were sowed by what was called as the 'unconstitutional merger of the state under duress' with the Union of India on 21 September 1949. Then the Mizo insurgency followed suit in the 1960s, and a decade later Assam saw the rise of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) in the late 1970s. However, the 1990s saw the ushering in of a new phenomenon in many parts of North East India and that was the taking up of arms by many other ethnic communities of the region within the state boundaries; their demand was autonomy within the Indian Union. A movement on similar lines is the movement by the Hmar People's Council (HPC), which started in 1990, led by Hming Chhungunga, demanding a separate autonomous district council for the Hmar people. The outfit Hmar Revolutionary Front (HRF) was formed to realize the Hmar's aim of an autonomous council. The HRF operates in Cachar district of Assam, Northern Mizoram and Tipaimukh sub-division of Southern Manipur. Further, a new outfit was formed called the Accord Implementation Demand Front (AIDF). This outfit has the same objective as HRF, of pressurizing the Mizoram government to fully implement the Hmar People's Convention Accord; but differences exist between the two outfits.

Another armed struggle which emerged was that of the Dimasas in the hills of North Cachar of Assam to achieve independent Dimarji, a kingdom which once existed under the Dimasa rulers. An outfit was formed called Dima Halam Daoga (DHD) on 31st December 1994 to realize this aim. Besides the armed movement, the DHD is also carrying out measures to free the society of North Cachar hills from alcohol consumption and other 'evils'. Further, the DHD activists are warning the people to stop poisoning river water in the

name of fishing. The DHD has reportedly also been getting support from the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Issak/Muivah) or the NSCN (IM). Another outfit emerging in Assam is that of Karbi National Volunteers. Another outbreak was that of the Kuki-Naga clashes, followed by Kuki-Paite, resulting in the formation of Kuki militant outfits, which started demanding a separate state for the Kukis within the Union of India. More armed group means more small arms influx in the region. The proximity of the region to the Southeast Asian countries, especially Myanmar, is the main source of the weapons in the region. And it is from such places that weapons are procured for the 'Clash of Micro civilizations'. According to a study done by Sislin *et al.* (1998), a systematic regroup analysis of arms acquisition patterns of disputing ethnic groups is lacking in international level records; however, according to him: 'Light Weapons/Small Arms such as AK-47 rifle, mortars and grenade launchers are the mainstay of ethnic conflicts'.

More than thirty insurgent groups operate in the North-East India. Even in a less disturbed state like Arunachal Pradesh, almost three insurgent outfits have sprung up in the past few years. An assessment of new insurgent outfits indicates the emergence of a new phenomenon in the region, that is, the linkage of ethnicity with insurgency. Some of the tribes in turmoil are Bodo-Santhals, Bodo-Karbis, Kuki-Naga, Kuki-Paites, Tamil-Kukis, Tribal-Non-Tribals (Tripura), Hmars in Mizoram, etc. Most of the clashes occur over territory and resources sharing.

Marginalized Condition of Women

It is important to understand what we mean by 'marginalized' within the Asian plural context. In a much broader sense, the marginalized are those who are pushed to the periphery and sidelined from the main socio-politico-economic and religio-cultural vein. Women are the most vulnerable target of marginalization in all levels, where violence against them has no boundaries and limits - it affects all spheres of human existence and even beyond.

The more egalitarian, largely tribal culture of the North East region also does give the women of the region greater visibility and mobility. Although, women enjoy some amount of economic autonomy but despite all this, women's role in decision making is minimal (Swami 2013). None of the traditional institutions of governance accept women as an integral part. Even where women

have managed to get into these institutions, the roles assigned are either peripheral or figurative.

In many areas of the North East, traditional customary laws and practices are strictly adhered to. In some areas these laws sanction polygamy and child marriages; in others, land, property rights and custody of children are strictly given only to the males, and in yet others women are debarred from participating in the political decision making. Besides the inherent gender biases of some of the traditional systems, greater contact and exposure to other cultures has also resulted in acculturation and dilution of some of the positive and women friendly aspects of the indigenous cultures. With women playing a subsidiary role and without any decision making powers in the traditional institutions, the impact of the conflict on women has been great.

Conflictual Dynamics and Gender Based Violence

The effect of this 'silent war' has been and continues to be felt on the lives of the women of the North East India. While it is true that in any situation of conflict, the entire community, whether they are directly or indirectly involved in the conflict, are affected, the impact on women is especially complex because of their already marginalized status in society and their sex. In its classic publication *Women Facing War*, ICRC's study shows that women's experience of armed conflict is multifaceted: it means separation, loss of relatives, physical and economic insecurity, an increased risk of sexual violence, wounding, detention, deprivation and even death. In all conflicts, women suffer in ways specific to women. Yet they should not be seen as a homogenous group; different women have different needs, vulnerabilities and coping mechanisms. Women in armed conflict are not passive and not necessarily 'victims'. Around the world, women become members of the regular armed forces, armed groups or their support services. Moreover, women are engaged as politicians, leaders of NGOs and active campaigners for peace (ICRC 2006).

Women play different roles in a situation of conflict and human rights violations against women take on various dimensions depending on their role in the conflict. Categorizing women according to their roles, it is seen that a common underlying thread runs through all categories. These are the already existing inherent gender biases of the communities, which get reinforced

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in such situations. In fact, in the North East region where much of the conflict is linked with the question of ethnic identities, the pressure on women is tremendous. Women are seen as the keepers of culture and tradition and as such patriarchal controls on the way women express themselves have increased. But while women are expected to uphold without questioning, even the negative and retrogressive practices and traditions, men have the choice of remaining unbound and unregulated by the positive traditions of their indigenous cultures. Women may be particularly vulnerable if they are held up as 'symbolic' bearers of cultural and ethnic identity and the producers of the future generations of the community. In such situations, women may be vulnerable to attack or threats from their own community for not conforming to this role, for example, by not wearing a veil or by cutting their hair, or conversely they may be targeted by the enemy in order to destroy or subvert this role (Swami 2020). In the Northeastern state of Manipur, the Manipuri women at one point of time were 'instructed' by one insurgent group not to wear any mainland Indian dress like *salwar kameez* or *saris*. Those who wore it were shot in the leg or in the stomach. The women were told to wear only 'phaneks', a traditional Manipuri dress.

Women have been, in internal conflict/war, the targets of sustained and frequently brutal violence committed by both parties of armed conflict. Both the sides often use violence to punish or dominate women believed to be sympathetic to the opposite side. Women have been threatened, raped and murdered (Human Rights Watch 1998). Soldiers or police can succeed in translating the attack upon their communities because of the emphasis placed on women's sexual purity, in very culture on the world. It is the premium placed upon protection and control over women's purity that renders them perfect targets for abuse. Besides, the violence experienced by women in conflict zones, especially in internal ones, women experience ambiguous transformation due to the scattering, displacement and breakdown of their families and communities.

Besides the impact of armed violence on women and that of the ambiguous transformations, which occurred, a lot of women seemed to be joining the armed insurgent movement. It is perhaps the history of women's oppression to suffer seclusion in the family, political exclusion and exposure to male violence, which instituted the dangerous association between active violence and the urge for separation. According to Susanna Ranconi, "Feminism will never

translate into a 'separate' militancy. However, it will reinforce in a visceral manner the conviction that there is a radical alternative to the reigning social and cultural model... It will give full meaning to the term 'liberation' in which subjectivity becomes 'strength' against the paralyzing objectivity of marginalization [and exploitation]" (quoted in Neuburger and Valentini 1996).

The hostile affection of women, freed of the consciousness of their own suffering, having seen their near and dear ones being killed, the desire to work for a cause for the welfare of her society may be some of the reasons why women join the insurgent movement.

With this backdrop, I am analyzing few case studies in the following section:

Sexual Assault in Custody: Case of Ms Maibam Naobi of Manipur

Ms. Naobi, 26 years old, of Yairipok Leirongthel Pitra in Manipur, was picked up by Thoubal police commandos after its OC Lokhon was gunned down in 2006. The commandos neither issued an arrest memo while arresting the girl nor followed the legal formalities prescribed by the Supreme Court. After illegal detention for 9 full days, Ms. Naobi was released as no charges against her could be substantiated. After her release, Ms. Naobi had alleged that she was subjected to severe torture, including sexual molestation while in custody (<http://e-pao.net/channel.asp?what=features>).

Rape by Indian security forces most often happen during crackdowns, cordon-and-search operations, during which men are held for identification in parks or school yards while security forces search their homes. Besides rape, women have been used as *human shields* too. On 11 March 1996, provoked by the attack by the NSCN, the 20 Assam Rifles used women as human shields by placing the muzzle of their guns on the women's shoulders. One Ms. Kanchungla was made to cover Captain Sharma with a Naga Shawl while the army was approaching Huishu village. Rape, whenever it occurs, is considered a profound offence against individual and community honour (Human Rights Watch 1998).

Rape and Murder: Jakhama Village Case, 1972

The villagers of Jakhama can never forget what happened in the year 1972. On the outskirts of the village, a girl was abducted and raped for three days. People knew that the army had taken her away but there was nothing anyone could do about it. After three days her

dead body was found 500 feet away from the village bridge. It was the army personnel, who were posted to guard the mini-hydro water supply meant for the army camps, who did it. The case was closed as no one could identify the culprits as all looked alike in uniform. When the villagers went back to work that day, they carved the year 1972 on one of the big stones in the quarry (Kikon 2015).

The very nature of women's vulnerability often lies more in the fact that armed conflicts have evolved to the extent that the civilian population is totally caught up in the fighting and women are frequently the ones trying to maintain and provide for the everyday survival of themselves and their families. The notion of vulnerability also comprises the problem of being at risk (exposure to danger), the ability to cope with the situation and the stress, shock and trauma of warfare. Vulnerability as such does not fit into an easily determined category or definition, especially where women are concerned. It is in accordance with the specific nature of each situation and the different factors involved that groups of women could be identified as being particularly vulnerable and in need of special assistance, for example, pregnant women, nursing mothers, mothers of small children, female heads of households. At the same time, women throughout the world are showing not only that they can be extremely courageous and resilient but also that they can put their ingenuity and coping skills to full use in their daily roles as heads of household, breadwinners and care-providers within their families and active participants in the life of their communities, as employees of international organizations and NGOs, and as campaigners for change, agents for peace, etc. (ICRC 2006).

Vulnerability refers to the precarious living conditions of individuals, households or communities in the face of a threat in the form of an abrupt change in environment. Such a change is typically the result of an armed conflict or internal disturbances of the people affected. The following variables are often taken into account for vulnerability analysis: labour (income); human capital (access to education, health); housing; intra-household relations; and social capital (solidarity networks and reciprocity relationship between households and with state and private institutions).

Disappearance at Gunpoint: Case of Mr Laishram Bijoykumar of Manipur

According to family members of Mr. Laishram Bijoykumar, armed Hindi speaking men picked up Mr. Laishram Bijoykumar from his Thangmeiband Hijam Leikai house in the night of 4-5 June 1996. After this he disappeared without a trace. His captors were all heavily armed with sophisticated weapons, but revealed no identities or unit insignia at the time of arrest; no arrest memo was issued. As former student activist, Bijoykumar was noted for his social work in the locality and talent in sports. He was also the major bread earner of the family and his parents had pinned their hopes on him. Now, his mother is trying to make ends meet by running a small roadside restaurant with her surviving son. Till now his dead body has not been found to be mourned and given a burial.

Women whose husbands have ‘disappeared’ or are missing experience many of the same problems as widows, but without official recognition of their status, and this again creates specific problems. In addition, they have to suffer the psychological effects and insecurity that stem from not knowing their husband’s fate and not being able to bury their loved ones and mourn properly, and the long-term consequences of raising children without a father and not being able to remarry.

In some communities, a widow is responsible for her late husband’s dependants, in others she is taken in by his family. The situation can become desperate for those who have to assume responsibility for dependent family members. Furthermore, social traditions may be abandoned by families so overburdened by economic hardship resulting from war that they can no longer cope, or by families that no longer see themselves as being under any obligation towards the widow. If the link between the family and the woman has been severed by the death of the man, the widow may not always be allowed to keep her children.

Child Taken Away: Case of Mrs Renpyingo of Nagaland

Mrs. Renpyingo, 27 years old, from Dimapur in Nagaland got married at the age of 18 years to her husband who was an activist with armed opposition. She had two children when her husband defected from the group in the year 1996 and joined another rival group. He was later shot dead by the first group. In order to survive, Mrs. Renpyingo took loans from her neighbours but without a job

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it was not easy for her to sustain living. After her husband's death, her in-laws came to take both her children away but she protested. However, they forcibly took her son away while leaving behind the daughter.

Cultural practices may demand that widows are taken in by extended family members, but poverty or reduced resources resulting from war may mean that extended family members are not able to meet this obligation. Women can be left entirely without social status in their community when they lose their husbands, especially in patriarchal societies. The death of the main breadwinner can cause a breakdown in the family's division of labour because women take over roles traditionally carried out only by men. Women can face extra difficulties when they become heads of households if they do not have an adequate educational background or are prevented from obtaining further education; this can, for example, restrict their capacity to find work. Moreover, in countries where land is regulated by customary laws or cultural barriers, women often do not have the right to own land and property; where armed conflict has led to the destruction of traditional coping mechanisms this may lead to widowed women becoming homeless and unable to support themselves and their dependants. Many women have organized themselves into groups and networks to support each other and to fight for recognition of their loss and status, as well as to determine the fate of their missing relatives.

Extra-judicial killing by Security Forces: Case of Thangjam Manorama

A 32-year-old woman named Thangjam Manorama alias Henthoi was brutally tortured and allegedly executed by personnel of the paramilitary force 17 Assam Rifles stationed in Manipur, after she was picked by them on the early hours of 11 July 2004. According to the victim's family, troops of the 17 Assam Rifles came to their house in Bamon Kampu, Imphal East District around midnight of 11 July 2004. At around 3:30 a.m. of 11 July, the security personnel took Manorama along with them. The army personnel told the family that Manorama would be handed over to the Irilbung police in the morning. However, the bullet ridden body of Manorama was found at around 5:00 a.m. on 11 July 2004 by the villagers at Keirao Wangkhem Road near Ngariyan Maring Village, about 4 kilometers from the family's house. When it was found, the body wore no proper

clothes. The body reportedly bore finger-scratch marks all over; a gashing wound probably made by knife was found on her right thigh too. Several fatal bullet wounds were seen on her back, the upper buttock and the genitalia. Manorama's family strongly believes that she had been raped and then killed by the army personnel.

Impact of Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958

Anuradha Chenoy defines militarization as 'an increased emphasis on military power by states to further their national interest, with the option of using military threats and war as an extension of politics'. Militarization is the use of the military to solve political problems. It implies the growing dominance of the military over civilian institutions, with a simultaneous decline in democratic institutions (Chenoy 2002).

In a situation where both state and non-state forces are heavily militarized and brutalized, women have been the worst sufferers. They have been violated, harassed and relegated to homes (Other Media 2007).

In parts of India's North East, the Indian army and security forces have been given extraordinary powers through diverse means, in particular, the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (also known as AFSPA). This Act has led to severe human rights violations for decades. There have been various encounter deaths, extra-judicial killings, disappearances, arbitrary arrests, rape and torture due to imposition of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (Kikon 2009). These incidents find echo in the words of Quart-ul-Ain (as seen in Kashmir): 'The encounter killings, crack down, identification parades, house-to-house searches, nightly raids, disappearances are some of the instruments of humiliation that huge Indian army has come to guard us with ...' (Other Media 2007). As long as the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act exists, violence will continue and security personnel committing acts of rights violence will not be held accountable. Needless to say, the impact on women over decades of militarization has been particularly acute. Daily life has been routinely affected by the arbitrary house searches, body searches, questioning threats and harassment of sorts. Women in the AFSPA-imposed India's North East do not feel safe or secure in their own houses. Their mobility has been severely curtailed. This has in turn had a grave impact on their livelihoods as well as their ability to receive education or medical care. The psychological impact of such

militarization on the society at large has been immeasurable.

The deployment of Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958, has not left a single family untouched by suffering. In such situations of conflict, women and children are the worst affected. The President of the Naga Mothers' Association stated that the intense searches have caused long-term mental and physical trauma. The Rengma Mothers' Association also stressed that women are not at peace because of the presence of security personnel and the constant harassment. Therefore, women have sound reasons to reject militarism and war; to prevent the lives that they have borne and nurtured destroyed (Khala 2003).

Change in Womens Traditional Roles

Armed conflicts greatly affect the lives of women and can completely change their role in the family, the community and the 'public' domain. This is normally unplanned. The breakdown or disintegration of family and community networks forces women to assume new roles. Armed conflicts have created large numbers of female-headed households where the men have been conscripted, detained, displaced, have disappeared or are dead. Women invariably have to bear greater responsibility for their children and their elderly relatives, and often the wider community when the men in the family have gone. The very fact that many of the men folk are absent often heightens the insecurity and danger for the women and children left behind, and accelerates the breakdown of the traditional protection and support mechanisms upon which the community, especially women, have previously relied.

Increased insecurity and fear of attack often causes women and children to flee, so they form the majority of the world's refugees and displaced. Women are heads of households and breadwinners, taking over responsibility for earning a livelihood, caring for farms and animals, trading, and being active outside the home – activities often traditionally carried out by men. This necessitates the development of new coping skills and confidence, requiring courage and resilience to help sustain and rebuild families and communities torn apart by war. This is exemplified by the situation of many.

Widowhood and Missing

The proliferation of armed conflicts and the high levels of military and civilian casualties in those conflicts have meant that there are large numbers of widows in many countries. This has a major impact

not only on women but on society in general. Widowhood often changes the social and economic roles of women in the household and community and the structure of the family. The impact of widowhood differs between cultures and religions. However, it can affect the physical safety, identity and mobility of women. Widowhood can also affect their access to basic goods and services necessary for survival and their rights to inheritance, land and property, in addition to the wider impact it has on the community.

Trafficking of Women

The situation of the state of women in India's North East will not be complete without the mention of the newly emerging phenomenon of trafficking of women from the region. Police and activists have raised the alarm that human traffickers are increasingly turning to India's poor and insurgency-ridden North Eastern states in their search for young girls to work in big city brothels. According to sources, more than 300 women and children are trafficked cross-border in the state of Meghalaya alone. Over the past five years there has been a rise in reports of missing girls from the remote region of the eight states, an increase which authorities believe is due to trafficking. Police say at least 700 girls from the region have been reported missing over the last five years, 300 of whom disappeared in 2005 alone. But activists estimate that thousands of northeastern girls disappear every year - most of whom are not reported by families due to the stigma associated with being part of the sex trade.

Traffickers are mostly women, often well-known in their respective villages, who promise poor rural families good jobs for their daughters, most of whom are between 12 and 16 years of age. In reality, they sell the girls to brothel owners in towns and cities like New Delhi, Pune, Mumbai and Kolkata, earning anywhere between Rs 2,00,000 to Rs 4,00,000 for each girl. Police estimate that around 20 per cent of the girls in India's big city brothels come from the North East. At least a million Indian girls and women work in India's sex industry, which is estimated to be worth around Rs 400 billion annually, according to the UNODC. The rise in the number of girls disappearing from states like Assam, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh is partly due to tighter surveillance on India's North Eastern border with Nepal, where most girls were being trafficked from efore.

Authorities say increased security along the border to curb Maoist

insurgencies in both countries has deterred many traffickers, and the number of Nepali girls being brought into India annually has halved from around 20,000 three or four years ago. Police, who are more used to fighting rebels in the troubled region, are now receiving training on issues ranging from dealing with traumatized victims to the legal complexities of investigating the crime.

Response of Women Against Armed Violence

In North East India, women have always played a major role in many social movements. Concepts of solidarity amongst women's groups are very strong in the region. This is often illustrated in the existence of self-help groups, traditional cooperative systems, women's markets and other forms of cooperative village action. Women's contribution in the economic sphere is great and women have some amount of economic autonomy (North East Network 2005). When armed violence erupted in Northeast India, women resorted to a century of struggle to address the issue.

Northeast India Women Initiative for Peace (NEIWIP)

Northeast Women Initiative for Peace is a network of women's organizations that are working for peace in this region of India to counter the level of militarization that has engulfed India's Northeast under the garb of insurgency and counter-insurgency. It is an initiative of the Manipur Women Gun Survivor's Network and was formed on 13 June 2009. NEIWIP brings together women from all over the Northeast states to strategize an action plan for building peace, providing justice and political rights in the region ruptured by years of conflict. Following are the objectives:

- ❖ To provide an opportunity to bring together women from all walks of life, including peace makers, academicians, researchers, policy makers, lawyers, social activist and students, to share knowledge, raise issues, to listen to one another and determine ways to promote peace in the region.
- ❖ To strategize an action plan for building peace, providing justice and political rights in a society ruptured by years of conflict.
- ❖ To pressure the government into 'sincere dialogue' with the insurgent groups to end recurring armed violence.
- ❖ To find solutions to promote empowerment of women in the region by involving them in decision making.
- ❖ To analyze and recommend the best ideas to the Government of

India to promote peace in the region.

In a landmark meeting organized under NEIWIP which was held in August 2010, the following was the resolution taken by women in Northeast India on the theme, 'Action for Democracy, Human Rights, Economic Justice and Conflict Prevention in India's North East'.

- ❖ The upholding and protection of the Indian Constitution and the recognition of the central government of the insurgencies in the Northeast of India.
- ❖ The reformation of the security sector, involving a boosted morality especially when it comes to the protection of women. Their security needs to be ensured by increasing the amount of female police officers in the stations and guaranteeing their presence at all arrests of women.
- ❖ To work towards ending the exclusion of women from non-traditional roles in society, especially in the governing sector. The legal rights of women in conflict zones also need to be strengthened by their promotion. This can be advocated by an appropriate implementation of the United Nations Security Council 1325+ and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
- ❖ For all women to work on a shared vision, through re-establishing relationships, networking and interacting with other workers in the regional, national or international level. Misguided perceptions can end when we learn about and from each other, and this interchange can begin through efforts such as community exchange programmes.
- ❖ To build positive peace starting with developmental aspects.
- ❖ To address the main identity issue within each state. Divisions are easily made because of this problem especially when it comes to people's common interests. Alliances should be made across communities and state borders.
- ❖ To break the connection between drugs and arms, both of which are utilized by state and non-state actors.
- ❖ All sectors (security, judiciary, legislative, and executive) need to be reformed and made democratic instead of militarized. Resources and mindsets are controlled by those with guns or those in office. The common people need to educate themselves, and so resources such as the Laws of War need to be distributed

in local languages.

Conclusion

Women in situations of armed conflict may be positioned differently in the conflict. Regardless of the role women play, all women are uniformly discriminated against, although the dimensions of violation may differ. The underlying thread running through the violations and discriminations that women suffers, is the unequal power relations between men and women and the stereotyped, socially determined roles or images that women have to fit into. In order to address the full range of needs of women in these situations and to put into place corrective measures and affirmative action to change the ground realities, it is important to pay attention to each of the categories and surface the depth and dimension of the violations and the causes underpinning these. Thus, in the situation of armed conflict, one has to address the violations and needs of all the women of different categories like women relatives of armed activists, women relatives of state armed forces, women militants or combatants, women as shelter providers, women as victims of sexual and physical abuse, women as peace negotiators and women's rights activists.

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