



# **European NGOs and the Naga Freedom Struggle: Transnational Engagements**

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***WORRIN MUIVAH***

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Members of the Examining Committee:

**Dubravka Zarkov**

**Kees Biekart**

The Hague, The Netherlands

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***Inquiries:***

**Postal address:**

Institute of Social Studies  
P.O. Box 29776  
2502 LT The Hague  
The Netherlands

**Location:**

Kortenaerkade 12  
2518 AX The Hague  
The Netherlands

Telephone: +31 70 426 0460

Fax: +31 70 426 0799

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## **Dedication:**

To God Almighty and to my parents and to all the Naga martyrs who have laid down their lives for the greater good of the Nagas.

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To my parents for their unfailing prayers, love and support.

To my supervisor Dr. Dubravka Zarkov, without whose valuable inputs and advices, this paper would not have been possible.

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To my discussants who provided me with valuable inputs during the research seminars.

## **List of Acronyms:**

ASOTRECOL - Association of Injured Workers and Ex-Workers of General Motors Colmotores

CDA - Collaborative of Development Action

CFO - Comité Fronterizo de Obreras

CIW - Coalition of Immokalee Workers

CJM - Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras

CONAIE - Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador

Faith Based ENGO

GOI – Government of India

NCIV - Netherlands Center for Indigenous Peoples

NISC – Naga International Support Center

NNC – Naga National Council

NSCN-IM – National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah)

NSCN-K – National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Khaplang)

RPF - Rwandan Patriotic Front

SOA Watch - School of the Americas Watch

UAW - United Auto Workers

UNMM - United NGO Mission Manipur

UNPO – Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization

WfP – Witness for Peace

## **ABSTRACT:**

The signing of the Peace Accord between the NSCN-IM and the Indian Government in August 2015 brought to an end the sixty plus years long armed struggle between the two parties. This decades old conflict has claimed thousands of lives from both sides, leaving a trail of blood and tears along the way. There have been quite a few players and stakeholders in the process, who have made the signing of the Peace Accord possible, or have offered aid to the Naga regions and thus contributed to the regional development and stability. Most notable among these players, but often the most overlooked are the European NGOs. These NGOs have provided the Nagas their much needed links with the rest of the world, and voice outside India. This research looks into two such organizations: Naga International Support Center (NISC) based in Amsterdam, Netherlands and another European NGO (to be referred to as: ENGO), exploring the transnational relationships and solidarities, studying the work of these two organizations. The research found out that the two organizations have very different ways of working, the former engaged in political support and transnational solidarity, the latter in development aid. Each way has its own consequences in terms of who is the main partner and what can be achieved in the process. This points to some of the implications of the cooperation for understanding transnational advocacy.

## **Relevance to development studies:**

A search on the topic of transnational solidarity movement in the Naga armed struggle between the Nagas and the European NGOs drew a blank. There are hardly or any literature on this topic and this is one of the least researched topic in the Naga literature. Despite the important role that these NGOs have played in the struggle, no mention have been made of their role and contributions towards the Naga cause in the form of literature or an academic journal. This paper attempts to shed light on this important entity in the Naga struggle and bridge this gap of unawareness between the Naga civil masses and the contribution of the European NGOs. This paper establishes the important role played by the European NGOs throughout the Naga armed struggle in the form of transnational solidarity and transnational advocacy.

## **KEYWORDS:**

Nagas, NSCN-IM, European NGOs, NISC, ENGO, conflict, peace, transnational solidarity and advocacy movements, development aid.

# **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1. STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM:**

The Nagas have had interactions and collaborations with foreign international organizations over the last few decades at the political, economic and civil society level. Some of these foreign NGOs have worked directly with the belligerents of the armed struggle. Others worked with Naga civil societies and organizations that engage in development. The Naga International Support Center (NISC) is one such organization that falls in the former category. NISC has been supporting the Naga struggle for decades now through different means, mainly through publicizing the Naga's history and struggle to the outside world and garnering support for this struggle by means of written texts via open letters to public figures, press release statements, blogs, pamphlets and the likes. The NISC works towards the acknowledgement of the Naga's unique history and identity and their claim for independence and try to garner the sympathy and support of the general public and governments outside India, lobbying with foreign Governments and international organizations, especially in Europe. There is another European NGO – ENGO<sup>1</sup> - that works with the Nagas at the civil society level, engaging in development rather than in politics, focusing on natural resource management, gender equality, land development, forest preservation etc. They also lobby with the Government to make the basic amenities like education and health care accessible to everyone in the rural areas. They are aware of the effects that the decades old armed conflict has inflicted on the civilians and as such their main focus is to elevate the living conditions of the Nagas in the rural areas who have experienced nothing but violence for decades.

This research delves into NISC and the ENGO's work with the Nagas focusing on the transnational engagements of their relationship. I also look into the relationship between the involved parties and stakeholders and study the dynamics of the relationship to understand the choices and methods of these European NGOs, and choices they make as well as the consequences of such relationships.

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<sup>1</sup> I will be referring to my second organization as “ENGO” throughout this paper instead of using the NGO's real name due to a request from my interviewee.



## 1.2. CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND:

### Brief history of the Naga struggle:

It took the British 40 years to finally defeat Naga resistance after they colonized India. The Nagas had little or no contact with the outside world until the nineteenth century when British colonization started. They were independent and their villages were self-sufficient in food. They grew what they needed. And as such they didn't feel the need to have contact with the outside world. Each tribe lived in different communities in different villages, each independent from any outside influence. This was the mode of existence for centuries before the British came and colonized it (Chandola 2013).

The Naga freedom struggle in the North Eastern part of India has been termed as one of the longest armed struggle in South Asia which can be traced to the formation of the Naga Club in 1918 which told the Simon Commission in 1929 "to leave us alone to determine for ourselves as in ancient times<sup>2</sup>. The Naga Club in 1929 submitted a memorandum on January 10 to the Simon Commission which visited the Naga territory. The Naga representatives under the aegis of Naga Club demanded adequate safeguards from any possible rule by Indians or Burmese, right from that day onward. The Nagas expressed that after the British left their land, the Nagas should be left alone as they were before the British rule so that they could continue to live independently as before. As per recommendation of the Simon Commission, the Naga Hills District was constituted on March 3, 1936, and it was kept as an 'Excluded Area', which meant outside British India. It had provided that no Act of the Federal Legislature or of Assam Legislature was to apply to the Naga Hills; and thus, the Nagas were not brought within the colonial fold of the British Indian new reformed scheme. The British realized the uniqueness of the Nagas and their history and the verdict of the Simon Commission was in a way a re-affirmation of the Nagas' independence and their right to live independently without any external influence, which was a major victory for the Nagas as a whole, after decades of living under the shadow of the British (Ao 2002).

After the British left India, "the Naga National Council (NNC) declared in June 1947 that the Naga Hills would cease to be a part of India with the departure of the British. The NNC turned down the offer of autonomy envisaged in the sixth Schedule of the Constituent Assembly. It was this dilemma in Naga perception about their own future and India's geo-political interest in the Naga Hills that led to the Hydari Agreement in 1947, Clause IX of which up till now has been a major bone of contention for its ambiguity. Clause IX of the agreement reads" (Kotwal 2000: 755),

*"Period of Agreement—The Governor of Assam as the Agent of the Government of the Indian Union will have a special responsibility for a period of 10 years to ensure the due observance of this agreement; at the end of this period the Naga Council will be asked whether they require the above agreement to be extended for a further period or a new agreement regarding the future of the Naga people arrived at"* (Kotwal 2000: 755)

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<sup>2</sup> <http://indianexpress.com/article/explained/simply-put-towards-accord-step-by-step/>

The Naga National Council (NNC), under the leadership of Angami Zapu Phizo, declared Nagaland an independent state on August 14, 1947. The NNC resolved to establish a “sovereign Naga state” and conducted a referendum in 1951, in which 99 per cent of voters supported an independent Nagaland<sup>3</sup>. However, Indian Government did not recognise the referendum result, and sent military forces to quell the uprising and suppress the growing fervor of nationalism in Nagaland and the Naga freedom movement by the use of brute force and by passing various draconian laws that gave the army undisputed power in carrying out violence against the Nagas. Naga leaders were arrested, the men tortured and the women raped, houses and churches were burned down. This forced the Nagas to go underground and form their own army to fight back against the Indian forces and defend themselves. The more the Indian Government attempted to suppress the movement with armed forces, the more the spirit of Naga nationalism developed.<sup>4</sup> This was the beginning of the Naga armed freedom struggle against the Government of India which continued until the Naga National Socialist Council of Nagalim, Isak-Muivah Faction (NSCN (IM)) and the Government of India (GOI) finally signed a ceasefire agreement in 1997 which is still being enforced till date and which has finally culminated in the signing of a peace accord between the Government of India and the NSCN (IM) in August 2015.<sup>5</sup>

Over the course of this 60+ years of armed struggle between the Nagas and the GOI that has finally culminated in the signing of the peace accord between the two parties, special mention need to be made of a third actor, the international NGOs, that have been working relentlessly with these two parties in trying to bring a long lasting solution to the conflict. From a movement that nobody ever heard of to a movement that “developed contacts with the UN Human Rights Organization, Geneva, the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) and the UN working group on indigenous people”, the Naga freedom struggle has come a long way (Srivastava 2015). When the NSCN (IM) leaders could not come back to India over fears and threats of being arrested and imprisoned, it was up to these foreign NGOs to arrange for meetings between these two parties in international territories like Paris, Bangkok, The Hague, Zurich etc. and it was arrangements such as these that made it possible for the ceasefire to be signed in 1997.

This research will focus on two NGOs that have been involved in support of different activities in Nagaland: Naga struggles and region’s development. Those two NGOs are the Naga International Support Center (NISC) and another European NGO. NISC deals directly with the belligerents of the Naga armed struggle, in this case, primarily with the NSCN-IM and the Indian Government, as opposed to the other European NGO’s engagement with the Naga civil society, Naga NGOs and the North-Eastern region with focus on development issues. Thus, NISC and the other European NGO have very different ways of engaging with the Nagas. NISC directly promotes the Naga struggle for independence in a political way while the other European NGO engages in

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<sup>3</sup> <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/everything-you-need-to-know-about-nagaland-insurgency-and-the-efforts-to-solve/>

<sup>4</sup> A.Lanunungsang Ao, From Phizo to Muivah, p.57

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/pm-tweets-about-historic-and-landmake-announcement-1203417>

development work, not only with the Nagas but with the whole North-Eastern region of India, with all deprived communities.

NISC and the other European NGO started their collaboration with the Naga society in different circumstances. When the founders of NISC first met Thuingaleng Muivah and Isak Swu of NSCN-IM in 1992, NSCN was already divided into various factions, the most prominent being NSCN Isak-Muivah (IM) and the NSCN Khaplang (K). NSCN split into these two different factions in 1988 due to various irreconcilable differences.<sup>6</sup> Besides these two factions, there was another Naga underground military group called the Naga National Council (NNC) who wielded considerable power and influence in the region, although not as much as the NSCN-IM and NSCN-K. All three parties sought to exert their dominance over each other and become the face of the Naga freedom struggle. As the author Subir Bhaumik points out, *“After fighting India for forty years, Naga “nationalism” remains an incomplete process, its growth retarded by at least three major splits within the separatist movement, mostly along tribal lines. Even a China-trained leader like Muivah, a Tangkhul Naga from Manipur state, has no hesitation branding Angamis as “reactionary traitors” and his own tribe, the Tangkhuls—who form the bulk of the NSCN—as “revolutionary patriots.” On the other hand, the Tangkhuls who dominate the NSCN are seen in the Nagaland state as “Kaccha Nagas” (impure Nagas)”* (Bhaumik, S. 2004: 226). This disunity has been one of the major factors in the split of the NSCN camp, and served as one of the biggest stumbling block in finding a solution to the decades old Naga conflict. *“The Naga uprising, the strongest ethnic insurrection in northeast India, has been weakened by repeated splits on tribal lines”* (Bhaumik, S. 2004: 223).

Besides the rivalry and clashes between the different Naga sub tribes, the 1980s and the 90s was the phase of extreme nationalism not only in Nagaland but among the various ethnicities in the North-Eastern region of India. *“By the early 1980s, the whole region was gripped by large-scale violence. There were fierce riots in Tripura and Assam. Separatist movements intensified in Mizoram, Nagaland and Manipur, later spreading to both Assam and Tripura”* (Bhaumik, S. 2004: 225). The author Kunal Mukherjee resonates the same views as Bhaumik when he talks about the state of affairs in the North-East, *“There are multiple levels of this very complex situation. The region as a whole is not united. It is a highly fragmented region, and the divisions exist along racial, religious, tribal, and ethno-linguistic lines”* (Mukherjee, K. 2014). Not only was the rivalry confined within the Naga sub tribes but also between the different ethnic groups from different states, each demanding sovereignty or autonomy, their demands often contradicting with each other, creating a rivalry along the lines of race, language, tribe etc. and resulting in inter and intra- state conflicts. Such was the state of affairs in Nagaland and the North-Eastern region of India when NISC decided to work with the Nagas. Based on the above, situation of Nagas could be categorized into three layers: (a) The internal conflict and disagreements between the various sub tribes of the Naga tribe and between the different armed groups representing the Naga cause; (b) The consequent ambiguity of representation of the Nagas in the political stage. There was not one clear winner among the different armed groups representing the Naga cause as loyalties were divided among the Nagas as to who should represent the people.

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<sup>6</sup> [http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/nagaland/terrorist\\_outfits/nscn\\_k.htm](http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/nagaland/terrorist_outfits/nscn_k.htm)

Although NSCN-IM was the most powerful and influential among the three factions, it did not have the full mandate of the people and as such could not be considered the one true representor of the Nagas; (c) The presence of various secessionist movements in the North-East - The Naga armed struggle was clearly not the only armed revolutionary movement, but one of the many armed secessionist movements happening at that time. It was in this scenario that NISC decided to forge a relationship with the NSCN-IM to support the cause of the Nagas. As my interviewee from NISC would later reveal, NISC started without affiliation to any of the factions, with intentions to support the Naga people and their cause. However, due to lack of interest and co-operation from the other two factions, NISC ended up working with the NSCN-IM. This research will explore some of the dynamics of this choice for cooperation, especially what it meant in the context of transnational solidarity. When the other European NGO started their development projects with the Tangkhul Nagas in Manipur in the 80s and 90s, Manipur was beset with inter-ethnic violence between the various ethnic groups, and specifically between the Tangkhul Naga tribe and the Kuki tribe. Banerjee and Athparia (2011) explain the chronology of events that led to the Tangkhul-Kuki conflict. The Tangkhul Naga tribes lived in compact, well demarcated and well defined areas unlike the Kukis who were scattered in pockets in the hill areas of Manipur. The two ethnic groups had very different governance systems, and reacted differently to the post-colonial administration. In addition, some members of Kuki wanted to maintain their separate identities and keep with the old tradition while others wanted to embrace the new forms of governance.<sup>7</sup> Language also played an important role. Unlike the Kukis, the Tangkhuls, despite being divided into hundreds of villages with their own different dialects had one common language that tied them all. Furthermore, from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the Kukis settled in the lands that were claimed by the Tangkhuls and this led to tensions between the two tribes. All these factors led to the escalation of the conflict when in May 1992 the Kuki militants asked the Nagas to leave Moreh, a town near the Myanmar border. The Kukis claimed that the violence began because they refused to pay loyalty tax to the NSCN. This led to a chain of events that ultimately resulted in the deaths of thousands of innocent people from both sides and villages of both sides being burned down (Banerjee and Athparia 2011). It is in such a scenario that this European NGO came to Manipur to carry out developmental projects. As my interviewee from this NGO would reveal, this ethnic rivalry was indeed a huge challenge in their effort to carry out their projects in Manipur as both parties would accuse this NGO of biasness. However, they did manage to work with various parties in the region despite the conflict, for the betterment of their respective societies. They even succeeded in forming a multi ethnic organization in Manipur whose objective was to help develop the society without ethnic biasness.

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<sup>7</sup> The Kuki tribe, like the Naga tribe, was an amalgamation of various sub tribes such as the Lusei, Sukte, Quo, Simte, Thadou, Vaiphei, Paite, Hmar, Gangte, Chote, Kom, Moyon, Monsang, Ralte etc. (M. Banerjee, M. and P. Athparia R. 2011: 3)

### **1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES:**

#### **Main Question:**

What kind of transnational engagements with the Naga people and region are exercised by NISC and the ENGO?

#### **Sub-questions:**

1. What are the main objectives of NISC and the ENGO in their work on Naga issues, and what kind of activities do they pursue in order to achieve their objectives?
2. How do they frame the Naga conflict in their work, and how do they engage with Naga people, with the region, and/or other international NGOs and supra-national bodies and Governments that work with Naga?
3. What are the theoretical and political implications of such transnational engagements?

### **1.4. METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGIES AND METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION, GENERATION AND ANALYSIS:**

My main methods of generating data for this research are interviews with people working in two international NGOs (NISC from the Netherlands and Due to a request from my interviewee,). I relied upon data compiled by these NGOs in the form of press releases, press statements, open letters, their websites and so on and used these visual and textual materials and data to analyze their engagements with the Naga people and organizations, and with other international NGOs and Government. However, the information gathered from the interviews with my interviewees form the basis of my analysis.

I visited NISC at many different occasions and talked with Frans Welman, who is the secretary and the webmaster of NISC. The longest formal interview with him lasted almost two hours, when he narrated the journey of NISC, from its inception to its present stage, and its relationship with the Nagas and the Naga organizations. I also interviewed a project officer from ENGO about their projects in the North-East India, especially in Manipur. These interviews indicated sharp differences in the work and approaches of the two NGOs. Unlike NISC, the ENGO does not work with specific political organizations or issues, but engages in development work with various civil society organizations. This exposed me to the two types of transnational engagements regarding Nagaland: political and development.

Due to the lack of research and literature on this particular topic, besides the interviews, I heavily relied on secondary data in the form of literatures on transnational solidarity movements around the world to analyze my findings after the interviews.

#### **1.4.1. NAGA INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT CENTER (NISC)<sup>8</sup>:**

NISC is a Dutch organization that was founded by four Dutch men, Jacques de Kort, Frans Welman, Jan Achten and Fred Kolman to support the cause of the Nagas and give voice to their struggle for independence. The official website of the NISC states its mission as, “*The Naga International Support Center (NISC) has been set up to focus attention on a very real but forgotten conflict. A conflict that resulted in a raging war on the frontiers of North East India and Myanmar, between the Naga peoples, India and Myanmar. Landlocked and inaccessible to outsiders, because of India's travel restrictions, Nagalim, homeland of the Nagas, has been practically isolated from the outside world. This being the main reason why the international community knows little about a war that has taken the lives of approximately 200.000 people.*”<sup>9</sup> NISC works mainly on the issues of cultural and political identity of the Nagas. They strive to give the Nagas a voice outside Nagaland and outside India. The first step in providing visibility is by providing an identity. They do this by representing Naga history and culture, making documentaries about the Nagas and selling Naga traditional products around the globe. They also publish press release statements about the Nagas, their political cause and their struggle and distribute these around the globe.

The website of the organization notes that the organization's founders take it upon themselves to support the Naga peoples in their struggle to obtain justice and peace and is committed to letting the outside world know of this struggle for independence and the violence perpetrated by the Indian Government against the Nagas. NISC is aware that hardly anybody outside North-East India is aware of this conflict and injustice that has been meted out to the Nagas since the 1950s, and therefore launches campaign that aims to lift the Nagas out of obscurity and make their struggle for self-determination a matter for the international community. The NISC endorses the demands of the Nagas to integrate all Naga inhabited areas, strives to generate world opinion to support peaceful and democratically just solution for Nagas, and highlight the human rights situation and the impact of the conflict on the Naga peoples and society. NISC also attempts to attract international (European), national and local attention to the impact of Naga–Indo conflict, such as destruction of the environment and exploitation of natural resources (wood, mining etc). by India. Among NISC's main tools to achieve these goals are publicity campaigns targeting the general public, human rights organizations, international aid organizations, political groups and parties etc.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.nagalim.nl/page1.html> (More details about NISC can be gathered from their website)

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.nagalim.nl/page1.html>

### **1.4.2. ENGO**

ENGO is the globally active development and relief agency of one of European Churches. It works in more than 90 countries around the world to empower the poor and marginalized to improve their living conditions. Its main areas of work are food security, the promotion of health and education, access to water, strengthening democracy, respecting human rights, and keeping peace. ENGO's work primarily focuses on the support of development projects in the countries of the global south. An essential feature of their projects is the close and continuous cooperation with local, often church-related partner organizations. It seeks to influence political decisions in favor of the poor and to raise awareness for the necessity of a sustainable way of life through lobbying and education in Europe. The European office has been engaged with developmental projects in the North-Eastern region of India, especially in Manipur and Nagaland.

ENGO works with development projects in conflict areas around the world, with conflict sensitive and 'do no harm' approaches. They work with the civil society organizations in conflict afflicted regions in their effort to alleviate the lives and living conditions of the affected people. They carry out projects in the field of education, natural resource management, gender justice, among others, that improve the lives of the people who have been affected by violent conflicts. Their work in Manipur and Nagaland follows the same kind of engagements: civil society work on a number of development and gender issues.

### **1.4.3. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH:**

Since the beginning of my research, I understood that my topic would be a challenge. Very little has been written or published on the relationship between international NGOs and the Nagas. Online search for this particular topic drew a blank. And as such, I had to rely heavily on literature on transnational solidarity movements in other countries and analyze the Naga European solidarity movement based on this literature, which could have affected my research.

In addition, besides NISC and the ENGO, I have tried to include other Dutch and European organizations that have played a significant role in the Naga struggle. One of them is Cordaid, a Dutch NGO that worked with the Nagas, and according to many respondents, has been important in the latest round of peace negotiations between NSCN-IM and Indian government. However, this engagement proved to be controversial and too sensitive for discussion, and Cordaid was not ready to accept my request for an interview. The information and experience from Cordaid could have greatly helped in the research about engagements of European NGOs with organizations and regions in conflict in the South in general, and specifically could have added more depth and insights to my own analysis of Naga case. Logistical and financial issues also restricted me from travelling back to India from Netherlands to carry out my field work and interview Naga organizations and civilians and get their side of the story, which could have added more perspectives to my research.

## **1.5. JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY:**

The Naga armed struggle against the Indian Government, since the mid-1940s has often been termed as one of the longest armed struggles in Asia. The decades old struggle has cost thousands of lives on both sides. However, despite its importance, very few people outside India know about it. The Indian Government has successfully muffled the voices of the Nagas for decades. The armed struggle finally ended with the successful signing of the peace accord between the Indian Government and the NSCN-IM in August 2015. A very significant stakeholder in this development besides the Indian Government and the NSCN-IM that made the signing of the Peace Accord possible were the foreign NGOs that have supported the Naga freedom struggle from outside in various ways, most prominently by facilitating peace talks between the GOI and the NSCN-IM in neutral third party countries. Other NGOs have worked with Naga civil society and in the region, focusing on livelihoods and development. All these engagements, however different, have contributed to addressing peace and justice in the region. However, despite the significant role that the European NGOs played in the Naga political struggle and economic development, there is very little work examining their engagements. Very few studies have been written on the topic of transnational solidarity between the Nagas and the European NGOs. This paper is an attempt to bridge this gap and contribute to knowledge about relationships between Naga and European NGOs.

## **1.6. ETHICAL AND POLITICAL CHOICES AND PERSONAL INVOLVEMENTS:**

Being from the Muivah clan myself, writing this paper has been quite a challenge. The Naga in me would have liked to write and analyze my research and findings from a particular perspective. There was a possibility for me to be consumed by my Naga patriotism and just look at things from a single lens. However, I have taken a neutral stand in my analysis as much as possible, and looked at various aspects of my research from multiple lenses, doing my best to make sure that my analysis and conclusions have not been biased.

My relation to the Muivah clan also exposed me to a lot of possible criticisms and backlashes in every aspect of my work. However, through this whole journey of writing my research, I have done my best to shed my “Muivah” identity and assume the role of an engaged academic who looks at both sides of the coin. In addition, some potential interviewees whose knowledge would have been valuable have rejected participation in this research, while in other cases some valuable information was withdrawn by my interviewees due to privacy issues. Finally, the peace accord between NSCN-IM and Indian government is still fresh, and the conflict between various Naga factions is not over. Thus, my research results may sit uncomfortably with various parties involved in the conflict. Nevertheless, I hope that my research effort will contribute to the broader



understanding of the complexity of European NGO's engagements with regions in conflict, in the South.

## **CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

### **THE CURRENT STATE OF THE ACADEMIC FIELD IN THE RESEARCHED AREA**

This chapter starts with reflections on research on Naga conflict, especially on discussions about political and cultural identities and uniqueness of Naga history. I turn then to literature on transnational advocacy networks and transnational solidarity.

#### **2.1. Naga struggle and political vs cultural identities**

The central theme surrounding the demand for a separate nation for the Nagas revolve around the concept of Naga's unique history, claiming that the Nagas have always been independent and do not have anything in common with the rest of Indian population, in any aspect of lifestyle, be it appearance, culture and tradition, or food, and it has been this way since time immemorial. So when the Indian Government annexed the North-East region inhabited by the Nagas (and other ethnic groups) after the British left India, the central theme of the Naga's separatist movement has been the Nagas' unique history. Even the former Prime Minister of India, Atal Bihari Vajpayee mentioned the Naga people's "uniqueness" when he came to visit Nagaland in October 28, 2003: *"It is true that of all the states in India, Nagaland has a unique history. We are sensitive to this historical fact, but this uniqueness has in no way diminished the spirit of patriotism among the Naga people. We have the inspiring examples of patriot Jadunong, who became a martyr, and Rani Gaidinliu. Who can forget that in critical times of war in 1962, 1965 and 1971, Naga underground organizations did not fire on the Indian Army? They showed restraint."*<sup>10</sup> The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) also reiterates this same point in their statement, *"The Naga's are a unique people, different from India, with their own language, culture and religion. India used harsh measures to weaken the resolve of the Naga people, but to no avail. Although their villages were burned, some up to twenty times, and they were driven into the jungle, they still remained firm in their stance to be recognized as separate from India"*<sup>11</sup>.

The author Dolly Kikon says that the demand for a sovereign Naga state based on its history was justified in the past, when the struggle first started in the 1950s. However, with the advent of time, this demand is getting more difficult to sustain, and more problematic (Kikon 2005). According to Sabhlok,

*"In the case of South Asia, the major task confronted by the intellectuals and political leaders after achieving independence of the countries was to establish the legitimacy of the states inherited from the colonial rulers. This was done through the adoption of their respective constitutions with national integration as the dominant state*

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<sup>10</sup> <http://indianexpress.com/article/explained/how-atal-bihari-vajpayee-won-naga-hearts/>

<sup>11</sup> <http://unpo.org/article/92>

*rhetoric. In the case of India, a sovereign democratic republic was to be constituted on the basis of secularism and national integration. In practice, very few symbols of post-independence integration and secularism actually emerged. A new distinct culture of secular nationalism based on the pluralism of culture, religion and languages would have required each group to contribute something of their own to the whole. But the framework adopted by the Indian Constitution neither involved an assimilation process for minority groups to adopt the values and norms of the dominant group nor was it a clear case of a melting pot. The legitimacy of the state was accepted albeit reluctantly by some parts of the country (for example, Kashmir and Nagaland in India) and except for an official language, the rest was devoid of any identity markers” (Sabhlok 2002: 26).*

And along these lines, the Indian Government formed new states and drew new boundaries which led to the Naga people being divided in different states. According to Sabhlok, *“With the passage of time, the zeal for nationalism seems to have dissipated and group consciousness of people has centered around smaller groups based on religious, cultural and linguistic identity. Ethno-nationalism and micro-nationalism within the system of nationalism have given rise to ethnic conflicts of serious magnitude”* (Sabhlok 2007: 24). The scattering of the Nagas to different states seems to have reinforced their claim of unique history and identity and culture, and the need to be reunited.

There is another theory that Burman mentions that could explain why the “uniqueness” of the Naga history is very important to the Naga struggle. When the Simon Commission visited India in 1929, the Naga Club presented a memorandum where they made it clear that the Nagas would not be tied to the political future of India because, prior to British colonization, the Nagas were an unvanquished people. They urged the Commission that their areas be put directly under the British rule, rather than under Assam. The Nagas were apprehensive and unwilling to be under Indian rule because they were not unified as a group—their educational levels were poor, and because of their small population, in any electoral system based on numbers, their interests were sure to be overwhelmed. (Burman 2008). So Burman argues that this “uniqueness” has been one of the binding factors among the various Naga sub-tribes. However, the author also goes on to say that this could be Naga’s undoing because India’s divide and rule policy is based on the complications and complexities of the Naga freedom struggle’s grounding in tribal and sub-tribal affiliations.

The “uniqueness” theory is once again questioned by Ngaihte when he cites the example of the Kuki tribe. According to the author, *“When the Naga Club, the Nagas’ first political body, submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission in 1929, the Kuki tribes were represented in it but the Tangkhul tribes were not. Now, the Tangkhul tribes are at the heart of the Naga movement, whereas the Kuki tribes are not only excluded but have become the most vocal in opposing the demands. This shows that identities and ethnic solidarities remain fluid, with tribes and clan groups oscillating from one group to another, influenced by a host of factors”* (Ngaihte 2014: 27). The author argues that the Nagas cannot use the argument of their “uniqueness” in their demand for a separate nation because according to this argument, Naga as a tribe is a political identity and not a cultural identity. Another problem with this argument according to Ngaihte is that in the North-East India, each ethnic group has its own reading of history and its own preferred image of itself and others, and as such India needs to see that the problem is the

North-East as a whole, and not just the Nagas. So the only way forward is not to look at the Nagas' "unique" history but at the North-East as a whole. The author argues that India should also look at reconciliatory measures amongst the various tribes who have experienced communal clashes over the many years.

It is also interesting to note Dolly Kikon's view on the uniqueness of the Nagas and its consequences on the recently signed peace accord between the NSCN-IM and the Government of India, *"The Indo-Naga political process has taken unexpected turns, as well as created new conditions for ethnic alliances and hostilities across the region. Those who are skeptical about the Framework Agreement have obvious questions on their minds. Who are the groups of people and classes that find comfort in the idea of a unique Naga history and culture? What is so threatening about the idea of shared sovereignty? Who will be the beneficiaries of the Indo-Naga negotiations? Will poor Nagas and their neighbours be able to raise the issue of an equitable redistribution of resources? Perhaps the answers to such questions will dislodge the rhetoric of a unique history and culture and push us towards demanding a just future and a concrete political deal. Everyone from Northeast India is aware that the Indo-Naga negotiations will also have an impact on their lives as neighbours with shared histories"* (Kikon, D. 2015)

One of the core demands of the Nagas since the inception of the freedom struggle has been the integration of all the Naga inhabited areas into one state. But the Nagas have been scattered all over the North-East, from Nagaland to Manipur, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Myanmar. Hypothetically, if the Indian Government were to integrate all the Naga inhabited areas, it would lead to re-drawing of India's internal and external borders. This is in complete contradiction with Fearon's argument that ethno nationalist wars cannot be resolved by formally partitioning states. The author is skeptical of partition as a general solution to nationalist wars because: *"First, ad hoc partition applied to one trouble spot may help produce more violent separatist nationalist movements elsewhere, in addition to making existing nationalist wars more difficult to resolve. Second, the incentive effects of imposing partitions on weak states apply not just to relations between insurgents and governments, but also to relations among states"* (Fearon 2007: 397).

This is the present scenario of the Naga struggle, in which the arguments about uniqueness of history and cultural and political identities are debated. It should be kept in mind that there are various other separatist movements in various parts of the North-East. Dealing just with the Nagas' demands thus might be a recipe for more separatism in the future. This brings us back to Ngaihte's point that the way forward is to look at the North-East as a whole. So going by Fearon's theory, partition/integration is not the solution for the Nagas, even though this particular demand is in the heart of the Nagas' demands.

Given this contradiction in demands and divided opinions about uniqueness of Naga history and identity, it is important to examine what are the points that European NGOs stress in their own engagements with the Naga, with other NGOs, as well as with governmental and supra-national bodies.

## 2.2. Transnational advocacy and solidarity:

Keck and Sikkink (1999) talk about the importance of non-state actors in world politics in the 21st century and their relationship and interaction with each other and the state. This relationship that brings about many different actors engaged in the same/similar activities and struggles, across state borders, is called transnational advocacy networks. By building new links among actors in civil societies, states and international organizations, transnational advocacy networks multiply the opportunities for dialogue and exchange, blurring the boundaries between a state's relation with its own nationals and the recourse both citizens and states may gain through the international system. Thus advocacy networks are helping to transform the practice of national sovereignty. Transnational advocacy networks are organized to promote causes, principled ideas and norms. Keck and Sikkink (1999: 91) note that *"in spite of the differences between the domestic and international realms, the network concept travels well because it stresses the fluid and open relations among committed and knowledgeable actors working in specialized issue areas"*.

Transnational solidarity appears when groups of people or organizations from different countries come together for a common cause and fight against a common enemy to achieve a common goal. Sharon Erickson Nepstad (2001) also talks about the significance of transnational movement and solidarity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, stressing how social problems are expanding beyond national borders and the ripple effect that a shift in one country's economy can have on the international market and economic health of other nations. Along with these social problems are the problems of nuclear and biological weapons proliferation that threatens the security of the world and the problems of global warming that affects the entire earth. Nepstad gives a few examples of successful transnational solidarity movements between the US and the Central American countries like El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala in the 1980s to express the importance and significance of transnational movement in addressing social problems (Nepstad, E., S. 2001).

Julie Steward's (2004) research on the Rio Negro transnational movement in Guatemala shows that this movement was a result of human rights violations by the Government and the massacre of thousands of civilians in the name of "counter insurgency" operations. Transnational movement was a retaliation against the Government and its actors for the crimes perpetrated against civilians. The movement was successful in implicating Guatemalan Government and the World Bank for their role in atrocities in the Rio Negro case. This achievement was made possible only because of solidarity of the organizations in the United States like Witness for Peace (WfP) who investigated and published reports that highlighted and suggested the World Bank's role in a failed development project and its connection to the genocidal regime in power at that time (Steward 2004).

H.I.J.@S.-Vancouver<sup>12</sup>, the Canadian chapter of the transnational social movement supporting Latin American struggles for justice started with just a few people. These were children

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<sup>12</sup> Hij@s por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio; translation in English: Sons and Daughters for Identity and Justice against Oblivion and Silence

of Latin Americans who had fled to Canada, whose parents had disappeared under mysterious circumstances or were killed under the genocidal regimes, coming together and sharing their stories and experiences with one another and creating a common ground irrespective of their nationalities. As Sundberg notes, group such as this with such humble beginnings went on to play an important role in setting up other chapters all over Latin America and working with the School of the Americas Watch (SOA Watch) to expose the crimes of the governments and fight for justice for the victims (Sundberg 2007). The beginning of the transnational movement of the Nagas is similar. It can be traced back to 1960 when the leader of the Naga National Council (NNC), Angami Zapu Phizo fled to London to escape from the Indian Government where he worked to internationalize the cause of the Nagas (Phukan 2015).

Guillermo Delgado talks about the advantages of transnational indigenous movement to women in South and Central America. Such movements have made many indigenous women re-evaluate gender relationships in the family, the community, their political organizations and the society at large. *“Indigenous women propose to re-narrate the historical epics of women that directly shaped their own social history and agency. Several indigenous women of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), have retrieved stories about the power women leaders and elders have had in their communities, and are promoting the active participation of women in the communities' social struggles”* (Delgado, G. 2002: 38). This is what is happening in Nagaland as well. In the predominant patriarchal society, the role of the women has changed drastically in light of the Naga conflict. Organizations like the Naga Mothers Association have played very important role in the pursuit of peace and solution to the Naga conflict. The Naga Mothers Association along with the Meira Paibis of Manipur were awarded the Social Impact Lifetime Contribution Award in 2012 by the Times of India, the largest English Language Newspaper in the world. In a congratulatory message to the Association by Dutch NGO Cordaid (engaged in transnational advocacy at the time) it was said that women from the Naga Mothers Association “are village women who often risk their lives to bridge the gap between the different ethnic groups, and between them and the government”<sup>13</sup>.

The Naga’s transnational movement can be seen from the perspective of Keck and Sikkink’s “boomerang model”: *“When the links between state and domestic actors are severed, domestic NGOs may directly seek international allies to bring pressure on their states from outside. This is the ‘boomerang’ pattern of influence characteristic of traditional networks where the target of their activity is to change a state’s behaviour. This is most common in human rights campaign”* (Keck and Sikkink 1999: 93). When the Nagas established contacts with international NGOs, mainly those in Europe, their voices began to be heard of and the Indian Government was left with no choice but to start dealing with them.

Melissa Gouge (2015) talks about play and emotion working to build transnational solidarity and offering alternative pathways for agency to its members, participants, and allies. In the early 1990s, the enactment of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) led to harsher working conditions for agricultural labourers in South West Florida as a result of competition from Mexican tomato imports. Six workers began a hunger strike as a response to the brutal beating of a

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.cordaid.org/nl/nieuws/conflictbemiddeling-vrouwen-manipur-erkend-door-ti/>

farmworker for taking a water break. Structural pressure from NAFTA and physical violence against workers led to labourers from Mexico, Guatemala and Haiti to form the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW). Melisa Gouge discusses successes of CIW, achieved by the CIW's creative playfulness and subversive storytelling in their human rights campaigns and solidarity-building practices (Gouge 2015). This is also one of the tools of Dutch NGO NISC in its transnational solidarity movement with the Nagas. NISC has proposed and supported the formation of a Naga cultural troupe that would tour Europe and raise awareness about the Nagas and their struggles through folk songs and dances. Another strategy that NISC uses is the establishment of a brand name "Naga" that sells Naga handicrafts, handlooms and food all over Europe which then can serve as a medium of sharing the stories of the Nagas to the outside world.<sup>14</sup>

However, transnational movements are not always successful. Kevin Young and Diana Becerra (2014) takes the case of the U.S. solidarity campaign with the Association of Injured Workers and Ex-Workers of General Motors Colmotores (ASOTRECOL), fired from the GM plant in Bogotá, Colombia, after suffering injuries on the assembly line. The ASOTRECOL could have achieved a lot more had they not depended too much on the United Auto Workers (UAW) union leadership. The authors argue that this failure of transnational movement was due to UAW's practice of cordial backroom negotiations rather than rank and file mobilization as is the case with all worker's unions. Also, UAW leaders perceived General Motors, the main protagonist in this case, as a partner and not as an enemy. So siding with ASOTRECOL would have put UAW in the bad books of General Motors (Young and Becerra 2014). All these factors contributed in ASOTRECOL not achieving their goals from this transnational movement. Over-dependence on international NGO networks by local actors, or over-identification with certain local actors by the NGOs could be dangerous in transnational movements. This is quite apparent in the case of Naga. On the one hand, although Naga transnational movement has come a long way since its beginning, the options are still not big enough for the Nagas to say no to an organization. For example, if the UNPO, under pressure from the Indian Government, would remove Nagaland's membership from the organization unless the Nagas were willing to accept certain terms and conditions, the Nagas would be left with no choice but to accept those terms and conditions. This would in turn lead to derailment in the peace process between the two parties. On the other hand, NISC has identified its solidarity for Naga with its solidarity with NSCN-IM, and in doing so has not only limited its options for engagement, but also made itself dependent on its sole local partner. The **ENGO**, on the contrary, has worked with a variety of local civil society organizations in North-East and thus preserved its own independence, as well as a wider reach into the local communities.

Transnational advocacy and solidarity can be a powerful positive force in achieving human rights and justice, but it could also create a drawback under certain circumstances as can be seen from all the instances above. However, if we look at the transnational relationship between NSCN-IM and the NISC, the pros outweigh the cons. NSCN-IM's transnational relationship with European NGOs such as NISC has proved dividends, the most prominent being its induction as a

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<sup>14</sup> These plans were revealed during the author's interview with Mr. Frans Welman from NISC.

member of UNPO which would not have been possible without NISC. This in turn has led to more visibility of the Nagas and given a louder voice to the Naga struggle. Another example of the success of this relationship can be seen in the way the Indian Government deals with the different factions at the negotiation table. The peace talks with NSCN-IM are held at the Prime Ministerial level, which is the highest level in a negotiation, while peace talks with the other factions are held at the Home Ministerial level. One can attribute this success to NSCN-IM's connection with notable international NGOs that has the power to pressure the Government from outside while the other factions have no such external backing. This in itself is a clear result of successful transnational solidarity movement. It was because of such a relationship that peace talks between the GOI and the NSCN-IM were made possible in neutral third party countries in the first place when the safety of the NSCN-IM leaders in India were compromised and this paved the way for further rounds of negotiations that have finally culminated in the signing of the Peace Accord in 2015. It is because of such factors that the Indian Government regards NSCN-IM in a higher level over the other factions. However, such a relationship also has its drawbacks which will be discussed in length in a later chapter.

The two fields of scholarship listed here – the work on Naga conflict and its claims of “uniqueness”, and scholarship on transnational advocacy and solidarity - will be used in this research to address the work of the two selected NGOs: NISC and the **ENGO**. I will especially look at the NGOs' goals and objectives, at the ways they frame the Naga conflict, and the choices they make in engaging with the Naga community, the region, as well as other national and international NGOs and governments. After examining what they do, I will ask what the consequences of their choices for the transnational advocacy politics are.



## **CHAPTER 3: ENGAGING WITH THE NAGAS:** **CHOICES AND CONSEQUENCES**

This chapter will examine the two European NGOs looking at two directions of their work: towards the Naga community and the NSCN-IM, and towards the other national and international NGOs, European governments and international community. I will also examine their organizational objectives and activities by which they try to achieve them, the choices they make in their work and the consequences of these choices for the NGOs as well as the Nagas.

### **3.1. NAGA INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT CENTER (NISC): STAYING WITH THE NSCN-IM**

Over the course of my interview with Mr. Frans Welman, Secretary of the Naga International Support Center (NISC), it first became clear that the direction of their work is not towards the local community – the Naga people, civil organizations and political factions – but rather towards the international community – the European Union and governments, the USA and the UN. Secondly, it became clear that – among different political and military factions of Naga – the NISC mostly cooperates with NSCN-IM.

NISC acted as the medium between the National Socialist Council of Nagalim - Isak-Muivah (NSCN-IM) and the European organizations, the most prominent being the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO). It has to be noted however that NSCN-IM was not the first Naga organization that the founding members of NISC came in touch with. The first ever contact with a Naga and their history was through the meeting with General Mobu of the Naga National Council (NNC) in 1989 in Amsterdam. However, at this stage, NISC as an organization was still non-existent and the founding members of the NISC were working as board members of the Netherlands Center for Indigenous Peoples (NCIV). The second meeting with a Naga(s) was with Thuingaleng Muivah and Isak Swu of the NSCN-IM around 1991-92. Their stories of the Nagas and their struggle intrigued and fascinated the founding members of the NISC and drew them towards the Naga cause. The very fact that they along with the rest of the world were oblivious to this decades old conflict was a shock for them. This experience made them decide to travel to Nagaland and learn more about the conflict first hand. However, after reaching Delhi, the Indian Government refused to allow them entry to Nagaland and this experience convinced them to establish NISC so that they could provide support for the Nagas from outside, and make the rest of the world aware of the Nagas and their struggle.

Their objective has been to provide support to the Nagas from outside and publicize its struggle for independence outside India, as the Indian Government has been muffling the voices of the Nagas and preventing their stories from leaving India. As to why NISC has the most prominent relationship with NSCN-IM as compared to the other factions, Mr. Frans attributed it to the

willingness of the NSCN-IM to work and co-operate with NISC. The other factions were suspicious and weary at the prospect of working with a foreign organization.

The NISC has provided assistance to the NSCN-IM in many ways. After the first meeting between Thuingaleng Muivah and Isak Swu and the founding members of NISC around 1991-92, the NISC introduced NSCN-IM to the UNPO and arranged for the NSCN-IM to become a member of the UNPO thereby giving the NSCN-IM a huge boost in terms of international presence. Becoming a member of UNPO also gave the NSCN-IM a huge credibility and advantage over its rival factions in Nagaland. NSCN-IM's connection with NISC and UNPO also made it possible for the Dutch Foreign Affairs Ministry to issue visas for the NSCN-IM leadership without any problem which made it possible for the peace talks between NSCN-IM and the Government of India (GOI) to happen in a neutral country. These peace talks were the stepping stones that made possible the recent signing of the Peace Accord between the two parties in 2015. The NISC also arranged living quarters for the NSCN-IM leadership in Netherlands away from the public eye to enable them to prepare themselves for the peace talks with the Government of India (GOI) during the initial stages of the peace talks between the two parties. Besides all these contributions, the NISC has also been relentlessly supporting the Naga cause by publishing and circulating numerous press release statements and distributing it all over the world, thereby spreading the story of the Naga struggle to as many places as possible

NISC has also provided the NSCN-IM with a comprehensive plan of activities that can be carried out, but unfortunately most of them are still only ideas. For example, a professional Naga cultural troupe was supposed to tour Europe and raise awareness about the Nagas through folk dances and folk songs. Another plan was to create a brand named "Naga" that would export Naga products like handlooms and handicrafts, pottery, food products etc. all over Europe and other parts of the world thereby making people aware of the existence of the Nagas and their stories. Another proposition was to make a documentary video about the Nagas, their lifestyle, culture and their history and let the world know about the Nagas. Unfortunately, according to Mr. Frans, none of these plans and propositions have taken wings and are yet to be implemented. When asked the reason for this, Mr. Frans attributed this failure to both the NSCN-IM and the Indian Government. Since the peace talks between the two parties began, according to Mr. Frans, the Indian Government has not been supportive of the NSCN-IM having close ties with NISC. And with positive results coming out of the dialogue between the two former enemies, the NSCN-IM has more or less heeded the advice of the Indian Government. Because of this the relationship between the NISC and NSCN-IM has taken a downward curve as can be seen from the lack of interest and failure to take action on the part of the NSCN-IM regarding the propositions of the NISC.

The questions however remain as to both why NISC choose to stay with NSCN-IM after other factions refused to work with it, as well as why the relationship between the NSCN-IM and NISC changed. While looking at the similar relationships between Northern NGOs and Southern struggles, Jackie Smith (2002) notes the North-South divide as one of the most important challenges that transnational activists face. The author talks about groups' abilities to relate local

concerns to global level campaigns in transnational movements. She talks about limitations in the interaction between the parties involved in the transnational movement because of factors such as finance, human and material resources. She also talks about the gaps and the power inequities between the Northern and Southern members in terms of Government and business sectors (Smith, J. 2002). This is quite apt in the case of NISC and NSCN-IM because as revealed by Mr. Frans in his interview, meeting with Mr. Muivah and Mr. Swu was the very first time he and his colleagues had ever heard of the Nagas and human rights violations still happening at the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century in India. It was overwhelming for them, but apparently, Mr. Muivah and Mr. Swu talked about atrocities as being quite normal part of life. This gap in terms of personal experience could have also hindered the relationship in the way the two parties looked at things and perceived them.

It seems also an important point that NISC's understanding of the struggle was quite limited in the sense that their connection to the Nagas was limited to NSCN-IM and only a few other Naga civil society groups. Their entry to Nagaland being denied by the Indian Government, they had no other means of connection with the Nagas besides secondary sources. This could possibly have affected the understanding of the conflict, the methods of work and the means that NISC resorted to in their effort to help the Naga struggle. In turn, this could have led to the other Naga leaders who were opposed to NSCN-IM and who do not subscribe to NISC's methods and tactics to withdraw from cooperation. Also, the Naga NGOs and civil society leaders did not have the means to travel outside India even if they wanted to, due to lack of funds and support, thereby hindering the progress of the relationship between the Nagas and NISC.

What could have been done to overcome this limitation and bridge this divide between the Nagas and NISC? Jackie Smith (2004) in the same article talks about Rupp and Taylor's (1999) *"feminist activists' adoption of a notion of international "sisterhood" that helped them transcend the different experiences of nationality, culture, and class and motivated their efforts to work through their differences. Groups that lack shared physical or group characteristics defined by race, gender, or sexual preferences must define other common values upon which to base their collective identities"* (Smith, J. 2002: 507). Despite NISC's best and genuine efforts, NISC was not very well known among the Naga masses besides the Naga leaders. Very few know about NISC and their work. While this is a criticism towards the Naga leadership, this fact itself should be seen as their strategic choice, rather than as an omission. Political nature of the NISC's engagement with the NSCN-IM – lobbying in Europe and UN – has probably influenced the mode of cooperation between the two. But this absence of connection between the NISC and the Naga civil society and population could also have played a role in the limited relation between NSCN-IM and NISC since the peace talks with India have turned to be more positive, and ultimately resulted in signing of the Peace Accords.

In addition, NISC never grew into a large NGO, nor was supported by a large network of other NGOs and activists. It relied very much on a few deeply dedicated people who have enabled many necessary links between NSCN-IM and other important organizations, but have been less successful in producing a firm, sustainable and well organized supportive network. Jackie

Smith takes the example of EarthAction to show the importance of broad-based activism and sense of belonging to a struggle that enjoys wide support:

*“Finally, it cultivates the expectation among affiliates that their actions will be part of a much more extensive global campaign: each Action kit they distribute includes the message ‘This action alert is being sent to over 1,500 citizen groups in more than 140 countries which are part of the EarthAction network. . . . When you act, you are acting together with citizens from all parts of the world.’ And the EarthAction web page and organizational brochures display a tidal wave with the message that: ‘Together, we can create a wave of public opinion around the planet that no government can ignore.’” (Smith, J. 2002: 514). “In response to open-ended questions on the EarthAction survey, respondents repeatedly raised this point, expressing their appreciation for EarthAction’s international network. They indicated that knowledge that they were part of an international effort helped encourage and motivate them to take part in global political campaigns” (Smith, J. 2002: 515)*

As can be seen from EarthAction’s method, the secret to their success was to make their partners and shareholders feel that they belonged to the group and their actions were responsible for bringing a change. We can ask: What if the Naga civil society and population were made to feel and realize that they were supported by International groups – rather than a handful of well-meaning individuals - and that they could be a part of this collective movement and thus influence their own future together with the wide network of supporters? This awareness and realization could have furthered NISC’s cause. However, the general Naga population remained oblivious to NISC’s work and efforts and there was no sense of belonging to a common struggle with NISC – even if people in NISC did feel that they belong to the Naga struggle. Probably the result could have been different if NISC had taken this factor into account in their work.

Another factor relevant for the relationship between NISC and NSCN-IM can be drawn from Lesley Gill’s article on the anti-Coca Cola campaign in Colombia. He observed, *“The anti-Coca-Cola campaign highlights the unequal power relations that characterize transnational activism and the disjuncture between the goals of Colombian trade unionists and northern activists. It emphasizes the importance and the difficulty of coordinating the diverse objectives of transnational social movements. It suggests that transnational activists consider the development of tactics to push governments, as well as corporations, to protect labor rights and formulate better understandings of the different analyses, tactics, and objectives of the working people with whom they claim solidarity”* (Gill, L. 2009: 669). Could it be possible that as the first and only European organization representing solely the Nagas and their struggle, however genuine the intentions of NISC may have been, NISC has failed to recognize and address issues of difference in their own objectives and those of the NSCN-IM? And could it be that there was unequal power relation between NISC and NSCN-IM? Could it be possible that the NISC’s interpretation of certain things in terms of human rights and human rights violations differed from the interpretations of the NSCN-IM as direct belligerents of the armed conflict as opposed to NISC as a third party observer. To further stress on this point, let us look into another excerpt in Gill’s article on the relationship between the affected workers of the Coca-Cola plant in Colombia and their crusaders from the United States.

*“Sustaining the campaign’s momentum in the United States was difficult, as the union’s lawyers had neither the time nor the manpower to promote activist efforts, and by the end of the first year, the campaign had stalled. Rogers then joined forces with the sputtering movement and assumed the task of keeping the human rights abuses in the public eye and broadening the campaign’s base of support. He and SINALTRAINAL’s lawyers believed that his expertise in “corporate campaigns” could help to defeat the Coca Cola Company, and the mobilization of shame—also a classic tactic of traditional human rights activism—was an important component of his anti-corporate arsenal. Rogers, who was moved by the stories of Colombian trade unionists, became the public face of the anti-Coca-Cola campaign in the United States, even though he never visited Colombia and had only brief, intermittent contact through an interpreter with exiles and Colombian labor leaders when they came to the United States. Nevertheless, Rogers professed an understanding of the Colombian situation because, he explained, “it was all neoliberalism,” just like the situation in the United States. Not surprisingly, there was little direct contact or coordination between Rogers and Colombian labor leaders, who never fully grasped the outsized role that he played in the campaign and who never trusted him because of their perception that he had an undisclosed personal agenda. Through the Killer Coke website, speaking engagements, and media contacts, as well as protests outside Coca-Cola corporate headquarters and at the corporation’s annual meeting for shareholders, Rogers built public pressure against the Coca-Cola Company, and he was joined by a growing number of students on university campuses across the country” (Gill, L. 2009: 673).*

As genuine as individual activist’s intentions may have been to help the Colombian workers, the lack of knowledge about the ground realities and lack of communication with the affected workers put a strain on the relationship between the two parties. In addition, instead of a broad network of NGOs the activities were dependent on one person and his own interpretation of the causes and dynamics of conflict. As already stated, NISC is a small NGO consisting of a handful of people, who, despite their best effort, lacked the first hand communication with the Nagas and depended on a single Naga actor - NSCN-IM – for understanding of the Naga struggles.

Joe Bandy also talks about the problems of transnational movements. Despite the progress in the technology that has made cross border alliance much easier and more convenient, the inequities of economic liberalization within and between nations have weakened transnational civil society (Bandy, J. 2004). In a case study that the author carried out on Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras (CJM) in Mexico on why it failed as a transnational movement, one of the factors that the author brings up is that American organizations in trying to help its Mexican counterparts ended up making decisions for them. This can be better understood in the following statement made by CJM’s executive board directed towards Comité Fronterizo de Obreras (CFO) during the CJM’s annual meeting in 2000<sup>15</sup>:

*“Several times the CFO has expressed to the Executive Board that the CJM should not make decisions for the people, nor have the Executive Director determine what the workers need. . . . Unfortunately, many times we have seen in the staff of the CJM a lot of insensitivity to the opinions of CFO and to our legitimate desires to . . . carry on our own activities, national and international. We do not agree to continue having the staff of the CJM as our*

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<sup>15</sup> More details on this movement can be found in the article “Paradoxes of Transnational Civil Societies under Neoliberalism: The Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras” by Joe Bandy (2004). Link to the article - <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/sp.2004.51.3.410>

*middle-persons, because we do not believe the coalition should be above, or intend to represent, all the members of the coalition. We expected the CJM to support more and more directly the groups of workers from the maquiladoras . . . . The new Executive Board should eliminate the barriers that make the CJM bureaucratic and minimally functional, and answer better to grassroots workers, not just activists who are too involved in mere discussions about the workers”* (Bandy, J. 2004: 421)

There is a possibility that NISC’s scarce first-hand knowledge and information about ground realities of the armed conflict in Nagaland along with very little contact with the parties involved in the conflict could have affected and influenced some of their ideas and propositions to solve the problem which in turn could have come off as insensitive and impractical to the parties involved in the conflict, thereby putting a strain in the relationship. However, the reverse of this scenario could also have been a possible reason for the failure of this relationship. The peace talks between NSCN-IM and the GOI was making positive progress and NSCN-IM did not want a third party involvement in these talks that would strain this progress. This could also serve as an explanation to all the propositions of NISC not being answered, like the proposition of a Naga cultural troupe touring Europe, establishment of a “Naga” brand, making a documentary on the Nagas etc. Such initiatives would have definitely put the Nagas on the world map and made the world take notice of the Nagas and their struggle which is definitely not in the interest of the Indian Government. NSCN-IM probably did not want to risk the progress achieved in the peace talks with the GOI by collaborating with NISC which would have put India in an awkward position at a crucial juncture of the peace talks. This could have led NSCN-IM to abandon its relationship with NISC. Thus, in this case, it is the NSCN-IM who was insensitive to the concerns of NISC rather than NISC being insensitive to the Naga struggle as it was NISC who set the wheels in motion for these peace talks to happen in the first place.

Joe Bandy also in the same article talks about the dependency in terms of finance and influence of the smaller organizations on the bigger and wealthier organizations in any transnational movement, usually the dependency of the Southern NGOs on the Northern NGOs, and the dynamics involved in such a relationship. This dependency often results in failures due to conflict of goals and interests between the two parties. This is important because in any such relationship, financial dependency and objectives/goals are often intertwined. This creates a situation of obligation of the recipient towards the lender that restricts the recipient’s agency in the relationship thereby forcing the recipient to compromise on their goals and objectives. However, in the relationship between NISC and NSCN-IM, there was no such inter-dependency. Mr. Frans in his interview mentioned how NISC was a self-funded organization without any external funding from the Nagas or NSCN-IM. Could this non-dependency have inversely affected the relationship between the two parties wherein NISC or NSCN-IM, owing no allegiance or obligation to one another in terms of financial dependency have been working on their own to what they thought was best for the Nagas and the struggle without a deep co-operation between them. This aspect of financial non-dependency could have played some role in both parties pursuing things on their own. Although the end goal was the same, the methods used to achieve this goal were different.

John Budarick talks about the advantages of media and communication technologies and its uses in diasporic transnationalism. In his article, he quotes, “Modern communication technologies have increased the ease with which dispersed populations can maintain a sense of collective identity and cooperative action via networks that expand beyond geographical location. With this in mind, it is important to critically investigate the precise role of media in understandings of diasporic communities and to ask whether the full range of possibilities is being appreciated (Aksoy and Robins, 2003)” (Budarick, J. 2014: 140). One can say that NISC have incorporated this aspect in its campaign very well and also is one of its strongest weapon. As was mentioned by Mr. Frans in his interview, press release statements are their main weapon in their campaign. And this is done effectively via internet and social media by sending out electronic press release statements to organizations and individuals around the world. This campaign has made the Naga struggle more visible among the NGOs and relevant political actors around the world.<sup>16</sup>

However, the representation of the Naga on NISC’s website may also be criticized. Arthur Kleinman and Joan Kleinman (1996) talk about the power of images in representation. Media uses images of pain and suffering to appeal both emotionally and morally to global and local audiences. Images of suffering get commercialized in the way media represents them. The authors talk about the need and the importance to avoid essentializing, naturalizing, or sentimentalizing suffering, using the case of Kevin Carter’s Pulitzer winning photograph of a vulture perching near a little girl in the Sudan who had collapsed from hunger. This photograph has been reprinted so many times over the years to raise funds for humanitarian projects and spread awareness about poverty. The authors point out that this is a classic example of using moral sentiment to mobilize support for social action. They also talk about the effects of such appropriations of images of such serious forms of suffering. They say that it could lead to desensitization of the viewers. Critics of NISC can say that NISC is following the same path that Arthur Kleinman and Joan Kleinman are critiquing, because they are focusing on the ethnicized and orientalist representations of the Nagas, and this has the potential to fall under the category of exploiting pain and misery for political gains. The world is witnessing a major shift in the discourse on tribal and ethnic minority rights and the international community has publicly acknowledged the atrocities that have been perpetrated against ethnic and minority tribal communities all over the world and they are fighting for their reparations. In such a situation, the use of the particular images of the Nagas at the NISC website becomes very apt. One glance at the image is all it takes to figure out that the Nagas are an ethnic tribal community and hence a minority. Its “tribalness” is flashed all over the images, starting from the head gear to the necklaces to the earrings to the colourful traditional attires. Coupled with that, the NISC home page immediately describes the Nagas’ rightful claim to independence, the human rights violations that have been committed by the Indian Government against the Nagas, their helplessness and the need

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<sup>16</sup> Such media work does not appear to have made NISC more visible among Nagas in the North East India, where more than half of the population lives in rural areas. Until a year ago, people living in the villages had no access to cable TV, let alone the computer and internet. It is not even a year that some villages now have access to mobile data but majority still don’t. Majority of the older generation are computer /internet illiterate even if they have access to the internet. But NISC’s main direction of work is towards the Western countries rather than Naga people in the region or diaspora.

for outside support, thereby reiterating the all too common discourse on tribal subjugation by the majority. For example, sentences such as, “While this struggle is going on, repression continues; villages are torched and civilians get killed” from the home page of the website gives the viewer an insight into the helplessness of the Nagas that evokes a sense of sympathy. This strategy of the NISC falls along the line of Entman’s (1993) definition of framing: “To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. (p.52)” (Papacharissi, Z. and M. Oliveira 2008: 53,54). The NISC framing of the Naga is that of subjugated exotic tribe that braves a powerful enemy. And while this can be criticized, it seems to be working out well for both parties in the area of reaching the desired audience, as such a representation seems to have been successful in making Nagas visible in the West.

Hakan Thorn talks about two crucial factors that enabled the transnational anti-apartheid movement possible – *“(1) mediated interaction, particularly the development of a number of media strategies, related to the emergence of new media and media technologies; and (2) face-to-face interaction, facilitating exchange of information and experiences between individuals representing groups, communities, and organizations with different locations in the world—thereby making identification with “distant others” something concrete for grassroots activists in the solidarity movement”* (Thorn, H. 2006: 298). The author talks about how transnational movements have been facilitated by mobility – mobility in terms of *“temporary travel, student visits facilitated by scholarships, as well as “exile journeys.” This made face-to-face interaction possible between individual activists that were based in different parts of the world or were coming from different points of origin. Of course, far from all people who participated in the movement travelled, but amongst those who did were many key activists, who could be understood as “spiders” in the webs of global anti-apartheid activism. They were the people who through individual moves and movements were connecting places, organizations, and networks”* (Thorn, H. 2006: 297). He also mentions the three functions of mobility in the anti-apartheid transnational movement.

*“First, conferences played an important role as a space for networking, discussions, and coordination of national as well as transnational campaigns. Second, the exile South Africans played an important role as organizers and mobilizers, travelling extensively around the world, making speeches at solidarity meetings and thus giving “the other” a public face. Third, according to solidarity activists own accounts, travel was related to an emotional aspect of solidarity activism, crucial for the individual’s motivation to engage in, as well as to sustain commitment through the years. More importantly, travel facilitated personal encounters between South African activists and solidarity activists, sometimes developing into friendships”* (Thorn, H. 2006: 297).

This is quite apt in the case of NISC and NSCN-IM because it was mobility that brought these two parties into contact with each other for the very first time and it is also the lack of this mobility that has strained the relationship between these two parties. According to Mr.Frans, the very first meeting between him and his colleagues with Mr.Muivah and Mr.Swu of NSCN-IM was made possible by a human rights conference in Geneva around 1991-92. Mr.Frans’ colleagues met them in Geneva and they brought them to Amsterdam where they met more people and their stories and experiences inspired the establishment of NISC to show their support and solidarity with the



Naga struggle. Had it not been for this chance meeting in Geneva, NISC would never have been there and it is also highly possible that NSCN-IM would not be a member of the UNPO as it was NISC that introduced NSCN-IM to UNPO. This goes on to show and reiterate Thorn's emphasis on the importance of mobility in transnational movements. This encounter has also forged a lifelong friendship and relationship between the two parties despite the lack of concrete results in terms of achievements in the struggle. But it is this relationship that has kept the movement going till date. At the same time, for whatever reasons we have mentioned earlier, the mobility between this partnership is also reducing. Specially due to the lack of finance, this mobility becomes a challenge. Mr. Frans during the interview, mentioned that NISC is a fully self-funded organization with no financial support from outside. The only means of funding they get are either through voluntary donations or from their own pockets, which is often not enough to carry out their work most of the time. So it restricts their movement around the globe in their effort to raise awareness about the Naga struggle due to the lack of finance. This could possibly have hindered the opportunities of meeting more prospective organizations and individuals that would be sympathetic to the Naga cause. We can also categorize the NISC's proposition of sending Naga cultural troupes all over Europe to raise awareness about the Nagas, starting a "Naga" brand and making documentaries about the Nagas and their history into the "mobility" category. All these plans would have definitely helped the mobility of the Nagas and their story but it also required money. Definitely, this mobility could have led to more meetings and interactions with more people which hopefully could have translated to more funds and visibility. But the very absence of funds to kick start this project is what hindered it. During the interview, Mr. Frans did mention of how the Naga leaders were concerned with the finance aspect of this project and how this aspect discouraged them from carrying out this project. Mr. Frans tried to convince them that money was not the main importance of this project but their interest and enthusiasm as money will definitely start coming in once they kick start the project. But the Naga leaders did not share the same view as Mr. Frans and his colleagues. This then takes us back to the earlier point of the partners making decisions for their stakeholders. Due to the lack of finance, it was not possible for both parties to fly to each other's bases for meetings and as such emails and phone calls were the main sources of communication. Probably the NSCN-IM had other things and ways in mind to carry out their mission which probably might not have been as good as the proposition made by NISC. But in the absence of mobility due to the lack of finance, it was not possible for them to sort these differences out in person and this could possibly have led to the clash of ideas which could have led both parties to question each other's real intentions thereby straining the relationship between them.

If one could incorporate John Budarick's ideas to Hakan Thorn's ideas, NISC or for that matter the Nagas could probably have had better results in the transnational movement. If NISC could exploit the area of communications technology as mentioned earlier, NISC and the Naga cause would expand its audience. This expansion could possibly lead to more contacts and networks among the Naga diasporic community around the world and their contacts that would be willing to fund and sponsor Naga students and individuals for further studies or conferences which in turn could boost the mobility of the Naga cause and struggle thereby possibly leading to the establishment of various other organizations like NISC working for the Naga cause. With the

establishment of more such organizations, the Nagas have a better chance of spreading its cause to a bigger audience with a much further reach around the globe.

### **3.2. ENGO: DEVELOPMENT FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE**

ENGO is a European NGO that supports NGOs in the global south. It is a young organization in the sense that four different organizations merged together to form this organization in 2012. One of the predecessors of the organization which I will call here Faith Based ENGO was the organization that had a strong focus on supporting NGOs in the North-Eastern part of India since the 1980s. Faith Based ENGO had strong focus on partner organizations in Manipur, with Naga organizations forming a bulk of the partners there. After the merger, this organization has continued the work with the NGOs in the North-East. The primary area of this organization's work are natural resource management, land development, forest preservation, rights based approach which includes government lobbying, gender justice and inclusion of women in decision making. Agriculture is the most common form of occupation in the North-East. The most common form of agriculture in the North-East is jhum cultivation which involves cutting and burning of forest to create fields. This practice has led to deforestation on a large scale. This organization works with local NGOs to address this issue and prevent deforestation. Villages in the North-East are still very backward and are often deprived of electricity, education and teachers. This organization and its local and transnational partner organizations work and lobby with the Indian and European Governments to provide these basic amenities to all the villages.

However, according to my interviewee, they have encountered quite a few problems along the way while working in Manipur. When they first started working in the North-East, they were oblivious to the ethnic rivalry that existed between the different ethnicities in Manipur, namely the Nagas, the Meiteis and the Kukis. Kuki NGOs were the least represented in their work, and at the height of the Tangkhul-Kuki communal war, the Kukis sent letters to Faith Based ENGO alleging them of favoring the Nagas over the Kukis. Only then did Faith Based ENGO realize the sensitivity of the issue. However, there was a positive outcome to this experience. Around the same time that this incident happened, an organization in the United States started a research on understanding how aid interfered with conflict. Faith Based ENGO had a close relationship with this organization and this collaboration led to the development of the "Do no harm" framework. The US organization was looking for field research areas and Faith Based ENGO suggested Manipur. As a result, Faith Based ENGO brought together representatives from all the three ethnicities for a workshop as a part of the research. This workshop proved very useful and it led to the formation of a multi ethnic network working towards the achievement of a peaceful environment. This network played a crucial role in bridging the gap between different ethnic groups and bringing them together. This organization into which the Faith Based ENGO has been merged, with all its methodologies, has not worked with the direct actors of the Naga conflict such as

NSCN-IM or any other political organizations for that matter, as it is against their mission to be affiliated to any political parties. Their main mission is development with social and gender justice, and in order to achieve such a development they have to address conflict, when the regions they work in are experiencing conflict. They work with the civil society organizations and the general population and contribute towards the development and progress of the marginalized communities in general, and thus also in the Naga society, as well as other ethnic groups in the North-East.

Such experiences in the North East and in areas of conflict in South Asia have shaped the kind of work that Faith Based ENGO has carried out in conflict areas around the world. Faith Based ENGO has taken a stance of “Non-Partisan” instead of a “Neutral” role in its developmental works in conflict areas. Rather than remain passive and neutral to violence and conflicts, Faith Based ENGO through its experiences with its partner organizations in South Asia have shown that local actors can play a constructive role while at the same time not being neutral to the issues at stake. Another method that Faith Based ENGO has learnt from all its work in conflict areas and which it now follows is prioritizing the reduction or stoppage of violence rather than assisting the victims of violence. Another important lesson learned from working in conflict areas was that for peace to be sustainable, it involves different actors with different talents working together for a common objective. It requires the ability to build alliances and be a part of a network and the inclusion of actors external to the conflict who are working at regional or international levels (Berndt, H. 2006). We can see the implementation of all these methods in Faith Based ENGO’s work with the Nagas. It is because of such policies that Faith Based ENGO worked with different ethnicities in Manipur that led to the formation of a multi ethnic network that has proved dividends in building inter-ethnic unity in Manipur.

Thus, unlike NISC whose work with the Naga community was nonexistent, and was based on one single political faction, ENGO has been deeply embedded in Naga as well as other communities in the region. And while NISC work was mostly directed towards EU and global society, the work of ENGO was equally divided in paying attention to the local and regional realities of the North-East India and European and global realities, including their lobbying of the European government to keep development engagement in the region. This focus on development work, rather than direct engagement with political actors is important. Atin Basuchoudhary & William Shughart for example found out that *“institutions that promote economic liberty are more effective in reducing terrorist violence in ethnically tense societies than purely political institutions that protect individual rights”* (Basuchoudhary, A. and W. Shugart II F. 2010: 85).

Although ENGO does not work with the direct actors of the conflict – such as political or militant groups, they focus on the various aspect of social justice and economic freedom of the Naga civil population. Sometimes it is poverty that compels people to join armed groups. If they are provided with means to elevate their economic condition, they probably would not have joined the armed groups. ENGO thus engages in improving the education system in the rural areas, lobbying the Indian government for better amenities etc. With such measures and improvements, Nagas have more chances of being educated thereby increasing the “mobility” of the Nagas (Thorn,

H. 2006). Thus we can relate economic freedom to mobility. During my interview with a staff of this organization, she mentioned about the workshop conducted by one of its partner organizations, on the effects of aid in conflicts. Representatives from the three rival ethnicities participated in the workshop, bursting their bubble of ethnicity in the process which led to the formation of a multi ethnic forum which exists till date. This experience also led them to more contacts around the country and the world thus increasing their visibility. Thus in a way, this organization facilitated the mobility of the Nagas and the other ethnic groups exposing them to development issues around the world and making them come out of their ethnic shell and look at their problems with a new lens. This exposure also made them known outside Manipur with all the different NGOs and the participants of the workshop from all over India thereby increasing their visibility outside the state of Manipur, which would not have been possible without this organization.<sup>17</sup>

Along this same line, Joe Bandy talks about workers' exchange in the transnational solidarity movement between Mexico and United States in the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras (CJM), a coalition endeavoring to reform exploitative labor relations in Mexico's export processing sector<sup>18</sup> (Bandy, J. 2004: 410). He says that the *"most common forum for brokering coalition is that of worker-to worker exchanges, organized by CJM staff and member organizations. They allow activists and workers from the United States and Canada to meet their counterparts in Mexico, typically in community spaces in workers' colonias (neighborhoods) where they may discuss their work experiences and common efforts for labor rights. These exchanges provide opportunities for citizens throughout the continent to understand more intimately the everyday living and working conditions of maquila employees, and to identify as workers of the world. CJM members have cited worker exchanges as being the most profoundly empowering since they offer interpersonal experiences that politicize workers and mobilize them into transnational movements. These experiences come in four different forms. First, as Mexican and U.S. workers are exposed to the humanity of one another's lives, they have been able to overcome prejudice and distrust."* (Bandy, J. 2004: 417). This is quite apt with the workshop that ENGO facilitated for representatives of the three different ethnicities from Manipur in Ahmedabad where representatives from different ethnicities after attending the workshop and getting to know each other better and hearing their side of the story, changed attitude towards the other ethnic groups and this change in attitude enabled the establishment of the multi ethnic network called the United NGOs Mission Manipur (UNMM). They not only got to hear each other's stories and perspectives but stories of other groups around the world and their struggles thereby broadening their outlook and giving them fresh perspectives. This exchange wouldn't have been possible had it not been for the efforts of this European organization.

There are two dominant discourses surrounding aid and conflict – the discourse on aid as the cause of conflicts or intensifying conflicts, and the discourse on aid as a medium to stop conflicts. One can say that ENGO has experienced both aspects in its developmental projects in

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<sup>17</sup> The ~~ENGO is European NGO~~ did not play any role in the establishment of this forum. It only facilitated the participation of the members in the conflict sensitivity conference as the situation was apt for such conferences. The forum was formed independent of this organization after the conference by their own free will.

<sup>18</sup> Paradoxes of Transnational Civil Societies under Neoliberalism: The Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/sp.2004.51.3.410>

Manipur. Esman and Herring argue that aid causes and intensifies ethnic cleavages (Esman and Herring 2001). And this is exactly what happened initially with Faith Based ENGO's developmental projects in Manipur. As mentioned earlier, it caused frictions and rivalries between the different ethnicities in Manipur thereby intensifying the already existing rivalry between the Tangkhul tribe and the Kuki tribe. One could argue that if Faith Based ENGO had not engaged with developmental projects in Manipur in the first place, the intensification of the inter-ethnic rivalry between these two ethnicities could somehow have been prevented. At the same time, one could also argue that the involvement of Faith Based ENGO /European NGO helped in reducing the inter-ethnic conflicts between the different ethnicities in Manipur. Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler argue in favour of aid in conflict. They argue that aid decreases the risk of civil war by promoting economic growth (Collier and Hoeffler 2002). As can be seen from my interview with one of the staff from this organization, ENGO engaged in development in a way that not only took conflict into account but also engaged with it constructively, through the development activities.

ENGO has not worked directly with Naga political actors, nor has it aimed its project directly towards the resolution of the Naga conflict. Nevertheless, its engagement towards dealing with poverty and social and gender justice has created opportunities for cooperation that can mitigate conflict. In addition, ENGO has kept European Government's and European Union's attention to North-East India alive, by continuously lobbying the Government and the EU for support of development projects that have social and gender justice in their core. It has been an outspoken defender of the right to development, as well as of the 'do not harm' and 'conflict sensitive' approaches to development. It has been active in the European and global networks of church- and faith-based NGOs. This has certainly made the conflicts in the North-east – thus also Naga conflict – visible on international development NGO scene. And while ENGO has refused to become a political player by supporting specific political faction in any of the ongoing conflicts in the North-East, it has been part of important politics of peacebuilding through development, as well as of transnational solidarity with marginalized groups in the North-east India.

## **CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS:**

The decades old Naga armed struggle, one of the longest armed struggle in South Asia, has finally seen the light of day with the signing of the Naga Peace Accord between the NSCN-IM and the Indian Government in August 2015. This research examined how a third stakeholder (besides the Indian Government and the NSCN-IM)- i.e. the European NGOs - addressed the conflict and engaged with it. This research looked into the nuances of the relationships between the Nagas and two European NGOs and examined the dynamics of these relationships, focusing on their transnational aspects. Over the course of the analysis the researcher discovered that these NGOs have made specific choices, and that the choices have had specific implications for their work and for the Naga partners.

The main form of collaboration between the Nagas/NSCN-IM on the one side and the European NGOs on the other were carried out through the combination of transnational solidarity movement and transnational advocacy with international development. The European NGOs provided support to the Nagas by giving them their much needed voice outside India, but they did it in a very different way. NISC did it by supporting one specific faction of Naga political movement – the NSCN-IM. The ENGO did it by opening the space for inter-ethnic encounters and dialogues, wherein many different voices could be heard. The NISC had no direct contact and cooperation with Naga civil society and communities, while the ENGO directly relied on civil society and communities in the entire North-East, thus also Nagaland, for its work on development. NISC focused on the conflict and its political actors, accepting and supporting the claims about Naga “uniqueness”. The ENGO focused on development and social justice actors, taking ‘do no harm’ and ‘conflict sensitivity’ as its main approaches.

Consequently, these two European NGOs created two different transnational advocacy and solidarity movements, catering to two different aspects of the Naga realities: – political and socio-economic. The political aspect of this transnational movement was comparatively successful as it was this collaboration and relationship that led to recognition of the Naga within the Unrepresented people’s organization and laid the foundation of the peace talks between the NSCN-IM and the Indian Government that would eventually lead to the signing of the Peace Accord. It was this relationship that gave the NSCN-IM a strong voice in the outside world, by which it claimed to be a legitimate representative of the Naga people. This would not have been possible whatsoever had it not been for the NISC transnational engagements. And it was this voice that made the Indian Government change its stance from a non-negotiation position to the negotiation table. In this sense, one can say that the political aspect of this transnational movement has been quite successful despite its many drawbacks. Those drawbacks however raise important questions about the relationships between European NGOs and South-based struggles. One of those questions is: if a European NGO has no contacts with the local community, but instead with only one of many political factions, who is its solidarity with, and to what extent is its work contribution to the resolution of the conflict?

In the socio-economic aspect of the transnational relationship between the Nagas and the European organizations, the ENGO played an important role by empowering the civil masses through its various development projects in the North-East, mainly in Manipur. While NISC engaged with the NSCN-IM in a political way, the ENGO engaged with the Naga communities, and other North-East communities, in a non-political way. With an inter-tribal rivalry already existing within the Nagas, the outbreak of another inter-ethnic rivalry between the Nagas (Tangkhuls) and the Kukis was against the interest of the Nagas in their pursuit of the larger goal – peace with the Indian government. In this situation the ENGO's work on inter-ethnic reconciliation and cooperation through development project based on social and gender justice had played an important role not only in uplifting the social conditions of the Naga people and other marginalized groups in the region, but also in bridging this inter-ethnic conflict and rivalry, and thus creating conditions for peaceful resolution of conflicts in the region, among the various actors, as well as with the Indian government.

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