An Agenda for Peace : Reviewing Proposals of Civil Society Organisations

on Peacebuilding in Southern Thailand

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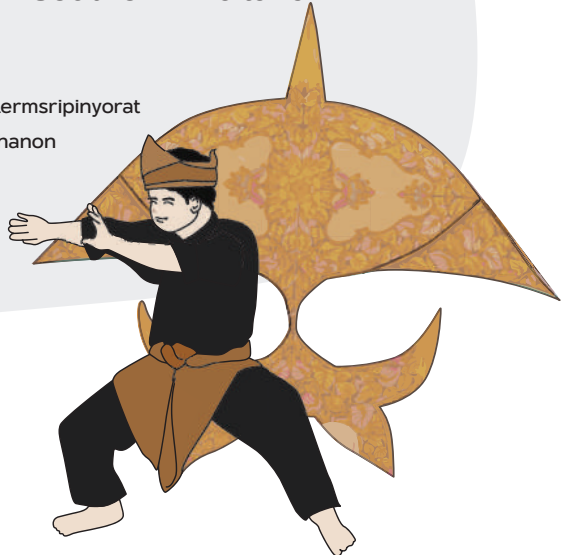|	
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Executive Summary

This report on "An Agenda for Peace: Reviewing Proposals of Civil Society Organisations on Peacebuilding in Southern Thailand" provides a comprehensive overview of recommendations of civil society on peacebuilding in the southernmost provinces of Thailand. The research compiles, reviews and analyses proposals and recommendations from 14 civil society organisations/networks over the past decades since the beginning of the formal peace dialogue in 2013 with the aims of promoting inclusivity and public participation as well as supporting the search for political solutions in the peace process through policy recommendations from different stakeholders.

The proposals and recommendations can be summarised into two main parts:

1. Proposals for the peace dialogue process

• *Improving the Peace Process:* Recommendations include revising strategies to address southern conflict by prioritising the peace process, promoting civilians who are not bureaucrats as delegates for the peace dialogue panel, reducing violence and creating a safe space, building unity among different sectors, and establishing coordinating mechanism such as peace secretariat.

• *Enhancing Public Participation:* Encouraging participation of various stakeholders in the peace process through multi-level consultation mechanisms, integrating gender lens into the peace process, and providing support for capacity and knowledge building for different local stakeholders.

• *Ensuring Freedom of Expression:* Creating a safe space and guaranteeing security for expression of genuine opinions in the consultation process.

• Improving Public Communication on the Peace Process: Developing strategies and capacity for media and peace journalism, developing a network of public communicators on peace, and providing regular updates and communication on the peace process.

2. Proposals on Substantive Issues for Peacebuilding

• *Finding a Suitable Form of Governance:* Learning from the governance models previously proposed by academic and civil society to search for a suitable form of governance.

• *Recognising Identities, Cultures and Coexistence in a Multi-cultural Society:* Permitting local people with different identities to freely express their cultural identities based on recognition and acceptance.

• *Human Rights, Justice, and Law Enforcement:* Reviewing the use of special laws i.e. Martial law, Emergency Decree, and Internal Security Act, promoting equal law enforcement, facilitating justice process for victims.

• *Economic Development and Natural Resource Management:* Promoting public participation in development and sustainable natural resource management, particularly related to food security.

• *Education:* Improving the quality of education, promoting multi-cultural values in educational settings, and ensuring safety in schools.

• *Improvement in People's Quality of Life:* Solving drug issues and promoting a healthcare system suitable for local people's way of life.

Among the proposals and recommendations across different ideologies and concerns from various civil society organisations/networks, we can find at least four commonalities and three contentious issues. Four commonalities include: reducing violence and creating a physical safe space or safety areas, promoting inclusivity and the roles of stakeholders in the peace process, ensuring freedom of expression, and strengthening public communication on the peace process. Nonetheless, there are contentious issues that different groups cannot agree upon including the issue of a suitable form of governance as a core for a political solution to the conflict, the issue of identities and multi-cultures, and the imposition of special laws in the region.

As this research has analysed and synthesised the previous proposals and recommendations by civil society on peacebuilding and the peace process in the southernmost region of Thailand during the past decade, the research team hopes that the findings from this research can serve as a baseline for public consultations in the peace process in the future. Achieving sustainable and quality peace in the Deep South requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses both immediate security concerns and long-term comprehensive political solutions, and voices of the people and civil society are fundamental in this process.

|**Con**tents

1 The Development
of the Peace Process
in Southern Thailand
and Public Consultation

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1. The Development of the Peace Process in Southern Thailand and Public Consultation

The dynamics of the peace process has significantly changed after the launch of the peace dialogue in 2013 under the government of Yingluck Shinawatra. It was the first time that the Thai government and Barisan Revolusi Nasional Melayu Patani (Patani-Malay National Revolutionary Front) have agreed to have a formal peace dialogue with Malaysia playing the role of facilitator. The peace talks prompted the BRN to gradually reveal itself and communicate with the public through statements and interviews with mainstream and social media. The battle has shifted from the military to political terrain. The ten-month-long process was disrupted after Yingluck was forced to step down, followed by a military coup in 2014.

The peace dialogue continued under the post-coup government led by General. Prayut Chan-ocha ; however, it did not produce any tangible results. The talks mainly focused on the reduction of violence and there was little discussion on addressing the root causes of the conflict. Prayut appointed Aksara Kerdphon, a retired general, to head the Thai peace dialogue panel. The BRN refused to take part in the military-led peace process and hence, MARA Patani—an umbrella organisation of the liberation movement—was formed and took its place as a dialogue partner in the peace talks. MARA Patani *[Majlis Syura Patani*
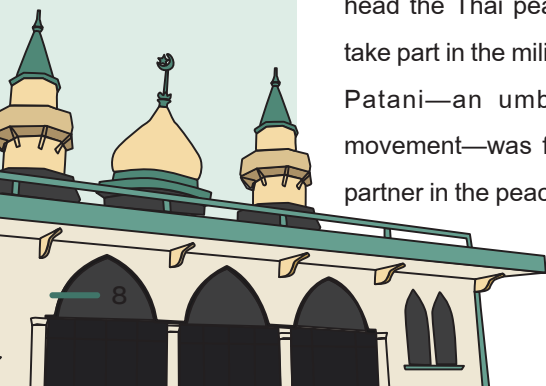
or Patani Consultative Council], is an umbrella organisation, comprising four liberation movements – *Barisan Islam Pembebasan Patani* (Patani Islamic Liberation Front – BIPP), Patani United Liberation Organisation, *Gerakan Mujahideen Islam Patani* (Patani Islamic Mujahideen Movement – GMIP) and a few BRN members. Nevertheless, the BRN members who joined MARA Patani did not receive a clear mandate from the BRN leadership, which has significantly undermined its legitimacy in representing the dialogue party in the peace talks. The only tangible result of the work of the joint technical team was the successful drafting of a plan to set up "safety zone" in the southernmost provinces. However, this plan never materialised because Bangkok refused to ink an agreement to endorse this initiative, fearing the document may be used by the BRN to seek international support to pave the way for secession.

During the final stage of Aksara's term, the National Security Council of Thailand and the BRN began to hold backchannel talks dubbed "Berlin Initiative", facilitated by a Europe-based international organisation, in parallel with the Kuala Lumpur-facilitated process. When General Udomchai Thammasarorat replaced Aksara as the head of the peace dialogue panel in October 2015, he was engaged in this initiative. The result of the Berlin Initiative was a framework of the peace dialogue that both sides aspired to pursue together, which has proved valuable in laying out a groundwork for further negotiations.

The peace talks moved further to more substantive matters after Prayut assumed premiership for the second term after the 2019 general election. It was another important shift in the peace dialogue. Prayut appointed General Wallop Rugsanaoh, a former head of the National Security Council, to lead the peace dialogue panel and the BRN decided to return to the Kuala Lumpur-facilitated dialogue table. The BRN appointed a new dialogue team led by Anas Abdulrahman

(aka Hipni Mareh) – a former head of the BRN's political wing. The BRN's return to the dialogue table was mainly a result of the 'Berlin Initiative' between the Thai government and the BRN in 2018-19.

The new peace dialogue panel led by Wallop reached an important agreement that pave the way for the discussion on fundamental problems underlying the conflict in the restive Deep South. Wallop softened his stance by allowing national and international observers to attend the dialogue but only "in their personal capacity". This shows a compromise on the part of the Thai government. The BRN had long called for the involvement of independent observers in the peace dialogue to enhance the credibility of the process; however, the Thai state had been extremely cautious about involving international organisations in the peace process. The peace talks were delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic as in-person formal meetings were suspended due to the imposition of international travel restrictions.

As these restrictions eased in early 2022, the renewed peace talks achieved a breakthrough as both sides endorsed the General Principles of the Peace Dialogue Process (GPDP) during a meeting of the peace dialogue parties on 31 March – 1 April 2022. The GPDP, which was primarily a result of the Berlin Initiative, outlining three substantive matters: 1) the reduction of violence, 2) public consultation, and 3) the search for political solution. This was a significant development as it suggested that the peace talks were about to shift from procedural matters and confidence-building measures to more substantive matters. This agreement also indicated that the two dialogue parties agreed in principle that the upcoming process would have to be inclusive and involve other stakeholders.

The peace dialogue made another important move as the Thai peace dialogue panel proposed a dialogue framework called "Joint Comprehensive Plan toward Peace" (JCPP). In February 2023, the Thai peace dialogue panel and the BRN counterpart met in Kuala Lumpur under the facilitation of General Zulkifli Zainal Abidin, a former military chief who was appointed by Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim to be a new facilitator. Bangkok proposed a two-year plan to undertake the task listed under the JCPP framework, which contains two components i.e. violence reduction and public consultation. The public consultation is set to cover six key areas:

1) form of governance

2) recognition of Patani community, identities and cultures

3) human rights justice and legal matter

4) economic and development

5) education

6) others

The BRN did not endorse the JCPP framework yet, saying that it wanted to wait for the new Thai government to be in office before returning to negotiations. It refused to turn up for the scheduled meeting of the technical team in March 2023 and later declared on YouTube that it would return to the peace talks after the May 2023 general election in Thailand.

The peace talks resumed in late 2023 after Thailand has a new government led by Srettha Thavisin. Pheu Thai Party garnered 141 seats, the second highest after the Move Forward Party (MFP). The party, backed by former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, managed to form a coalition

government after making a deal with the two pro-military parties and nine other parties. Srettha who joined politics only a few months before the elections, won sufficient votes from senators during the nomination process to elect the prime minister in August 2023, most of whom were associated with former prime minister Prayut. The senators' support for Srettha in his bid for premiership manifests that a political deal between Thaksin and the royalist establishment was successfully struck. On 27 November 2023, Srettha issued a Prime Ministerial Order 344/2566 to establish a "Peace Dialogue Panel for the Southern Border Provinces" headed by Chatchai Bangchuad, the NSC's deputy secretary-general. There is other five members, including secretary-general of the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre, representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Justice Ministry, NSC and Internal Security Operations Command. The last two jointly serve as the panel's secretary. Chatchai has long involved in the peace dialogue under several governments and are very familiar with the peace dialogue.

The peace talks resumed in February 2024 as the Thai peace dialogue panel met with the BRN counterpart for the first time under the Srettha government. They planned to finalise the JCPP framework in April and concurrently held public consultation and the reduction of violence with an aim of reaching a peace agreement by the end of 2024 —the timeframe that many see as too ambitious.

Under this context, the research team believes that it would be useful to review and analyse previous recommendations systematically so that it can be used as a baseline for public consultations to be held in the future. This research has two main objectives: 1) to promote meaningful and comprehensive participation of all stakeholders in the southernmost region/Patani through the review of recommendations on peacebuilding from civil society organisations 2) to support the search for political solutions by offering policy recommendations to stakeholders in the peace process in the form of a policy report.

This study has collected documents produced by 14 groups/networks, including Weaving Peace Together, Duayjai, Civil Society Assembly for Peace (CAP), Insider Peacebuilding Platform (IPP), Patani Institute for Research and Human Development (INSANI), The Patani, Civil Society Council of the Southernmost Thailand, Peace Agenda of Women (PAOW), Network of Civic Women for Peace, Kampong Takwa, Child Protection Network (CPN), Peace Survey Academic Network, The Area-based Inter-agency Coordination Working Group (Sor Lor 3), and Saiburi River Basin Association. There are two main criteria for selecting the CSOs: 1) it is locally based in the Deep South, has continuously campaigned on peacebuilding, and is known to the public; 2) it has produced reports and issued public statements as well as disseminated them to the public.

Document collection has been used as the main
research method. The research team has collected materials,
which have been circulated to the public in the form of
reports and public statements for the past ten years since
the launch of the formal peace dialogue in 2013. In addition,
in-depth interviews were conducted with some CSOs to
acquired further data in order to make the report more
comprehensive. We have encountered some constraints
in the data collection process as CSOs in the Deep South
are mostly small-scaled and work on a voluntary basis with
limited resources and lack continuity. They do not store
data in a systematic way making it difficult to search for
documents previously released. Data collection was based
on information provided by the CSOs themselves. Data on
reports are relatively more comprehensive, but data on
public statements are rather limited due to the factors
mentioned above.

2 Importance
of Inclusivity
in Peace Process
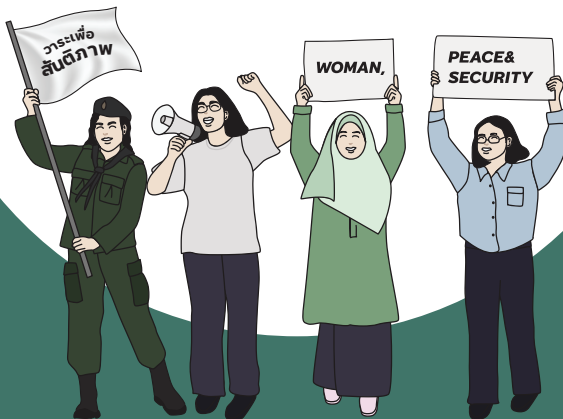
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2. Importance of Inclusivity in Peace Process

It can be noted that the peace process in the Deep South of Thailand since 2013 has been a largely elitist process and there has been no concrete mechanism for public participation in the process. As suggested by John Paul Lederach (1997), the peace process should be comprehensive and inclusive with the participation of people at all three levels i.e. Track 1 which is the leadership or elite negotiation level, Track 2 which includes participation of mid-level leaders, civil society, religious leaders, ethnic leaders and academics, and Track 3 which includes grassroots or community leaders and local communities. Therefore, creating an inclusive peace process for different stakeholders on a wider scale covering civil society, religious organisations, women, youth, marginalised communities, and common people has become a key contributing factor for sustainable peace (Paffenholz, 2014; Paffenholz & Ross, 2015; Nilson et al, 2019). According to the new data and statistics,

Track **1**

leadership or elite negotiation level

Track **2**

Participation of mid-level leaders, civil society,
religious leaders, ethnic leaders and academics

Track **3**

Grassroots or community leaders
and local communities

it is indicated that inclusive peace negotiations have a positive impact on peace agreements with 64 per cent less likely to fail as compared to non-inclusive peace processes (Nilson, 2012). In addition, the concept and principle of inclusivity is a key principle promoted by the United Nations through the resolutions of UN Security Council and UN General Assembly on "Sustaining Peace" (A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282 in 2016) and "A New Agenda for Peace" (United Nations, 2023)

There are three concepts which are related to peacebuilding and public consultation, including (1) strategic peacebuilding, (2) quality peace, and (3) inclusivity.

2.1 Strategic Peacebuilding

Strategic Peacebuilding is an emerging concept in the field of peace and conflict studies. At first, we would need to understand the approach to peacebuilding of this concept, in which peacebuilding is understood as a multi-dimensional process. Schirch (2013) summarises the broad definitions of peacebuilding into two aspects. First, peacebuilding implies to the direct work and activities that focus on addressing or responding to different factors, which could mitigate or drive conflict. The second definition can connote the attempts to coordinate or create channel of communication for developing a strategy for peace work, which is comprehensive, multi-level and multi-sectoral. From this perspective, peacebuilding is a concept that covers processes, approaches and procedures that could help to transform conflicts into peaceful relationships.

Schirch (2003) views strategic peacebuilding as a connecting space between diverse processes and approaches in peace work to contribute to peace in a common direction, which contains four elements including (1) *values for peacebuilding* which is a guiding compass for decision-making and engagement

of different actors, such as the principle of human needs, human rights protection, and interdependence; (2) *relational skills* which could help to work in conflict such as active listening, creative problem solving, dialogue and negotiation skills; (3) *analytical framework* which is a tool to organise our understanding in three aspects, including understanding local context, understanding justification of violent groups, and understanding the linkage of structural violence as a root cause to various forms of direct violence; and (4) *multi-dimensional processes for peacebuilding,* namely non-violent direct actions, the reduction of direct violence, transformation of relationships and capacity building.

Lederach & Appleby (2010, pp. 40 - 41) also propose the concept of strategic peacebuilding with the key assumption that, in the context of deep-rooted conflicts, it is necessary to have key alliance as well as collaborated and coordinated efforts to create the transforming processes that could lead to desirable changes. These processes are based on five principles underlying the peacebuilding conceptual framework. First, strategic peacebuilding is *comprehensive.* This principle commits us to develop the lenses to see the overall picture of needs, actions, vision, and design — the architecture of peacebuilding. Second, strategic peacebuilding is *interdependent.* This principle proposes that peacebuilding is connected to the nature and quality of relationships, implying that we need to develop processes that link and relate dissimilar concerns and activities and that forge relationships between people who are not like-minded. Third, strategic peacebuilding is *architectonic for just peace.* This principle demands that we provide the social space, logistical mechanisms, and institutions necessary for supporting process of changes engendered to pursue a just peace. Fourth, strategic peacebuilding is *sustainable.* This principle emphasises a long-term concern for where our activities and energy are leading rather than responding to issues and crises so that it can address and transform the recurring

cycle of conflict. In addition, sustainable peacebuilding seeks to discover and strengthen the resources rooted in the context of protracted conflict. Fifth, strategic peacebuilding is *integrative.* This principle helps us to situate the design and assessment of peacebuilding action in terms of how it links between responding to immediate needs and concerns and reinforcing the platform supportive of desirable change processes. Furthermore, this principle helps us to raise analytic inquiries to the level of the strategic who, what, where and how of any peacebuilding activity. It also requires peacebuilders to have a more comprehensive view of the situation in terms of levels, timeframes, processes, and their respective roles/activities.

2.2 Quality Peace

Quality Peace is a theoretical framework developed and synthesised by Joshi and Wallensteen (2018, pp. 10 – 18) viewing that quality and successful peace processes can lead to social, political, and economic changes in the post-agreement period as well as systematically addressing causes of conflicts and the issues from the conflicts. They proposed five dimensions or key elements for the achievement of peacebuilding: (1) post-war security that focuses on security management through security sector reform; (2) governance that aims to develop mechanisms for dispute or conflict resolution related to access to power and resources through governance reform; (3) economic reconstruction that emphasises on restoring and providing economic opportunities for marginalised populations; (4) reconciliation and transitional justice which promotes reconciliation for people in the society from all parties; and (5) participation of civil society which focuses on creating space for civil society to monitor government efforts and to provide services and supports for people when necessary.

According to the above-mentioned conceptual framework on quality peace, we can contextualise into the settings of peacebuilding in Deep South of Thailand/Patani region with five dimensions as appeared in the following table:

Participatory Peace Process	Peace with people's participation that reflects and connects to people and civil society (Participatory Dimension)
Ensured Security	Peace that ensures security and safety for people from all parties (Security Dimension)
Accountable Governance	Peace that distributes and allocates power responding to the needs of local people (Governance Dimension)
Credible Justice and Reconciliation	Peace that promotes justice or just peace (Justice and Reconciliation Dimension)
Economic and Social Development	Peace that is edible, promotes local developments and respect local identities (Economic and Social Development Dimension)

The quality peace framework helps us to envision peace with comprehensive and multi-dimensional perspectives as this framework is also aligned with the JCPP in various aspects. For example, the framework on the reduction of violence or cessation of hostilities can be in line with the security dimension and the other dimensions also align with substantive issues including governance, acceptance of identities and culture of the Patani community, human rights, justice and legal system, economic and development, education and other issues. In this framework, the participation of people and civil society is a crucial factor for the peace process. Paffenholz (2018, pp. 164-169) suggests that civil society is successful in supporting the development of quality peace if it contributes

to four areas including: (1) reducing violence, (2) facilitating a peace agreement, (3) helping to ensure medium- to long-term sustainability of the peace agreement, and (4) establishing conditions to address the causes of conflict constructively in the society at large. This could happen through different functions such as protection, monitoring of the situation and the peace agreement, advocacy, socialisation, social cohesion, facilitation and service delivery. In the case of Thailand's Deep South, it can be noted that civil society in the area has constantly played a crucial role in advocating the peace process even though their role at the peace negotiation table is restricted. Nonetheless, the opportunity for public consultation under JCPP framework reflects the key signal for public and civil society participation based on inclusivity as clarified in the following section.

2.3 Inclusivity, Participation and Public Consultation in Peace Process

The main principle of public consultation is inclusivity, as it is a mechanism for broadening participation. Empirical evidence suggests that inclusive design for peace negotiation could enhance sustainability of peace agreement as it could prevent violence in the post-agreement period in the long run. Therefore, the international community tends to give more importance to inclusive participation in peace process which reflects in "Sustaining Peace" agenda endorsed by resolutions of both UN Security Council and UN General Assembly in 2016 (A/RES/70/262 & S/RES/2282) and UN Secretary-General's report

on "Peacebuilding in the Aftermath of Conflict" in 2012 which proposed the significance of inclusivity that "[w]hile inclusive political settlements may take longer to negotiate, they are more sustainable. An inclusive process builds confidence among participating parties that their core objectives can be achieved through negotiation rather than violence, it is also more likely to address the root causes of conflict and increases the legitimacy and ownership of political settlement" (UN Secretary-General, 2012).

In general, the principle of inclusivity covers two main aspects: (1) inclusion of actors and stakeholders who are both supporters and spoilers in peace process; and (2) inclusion of issues which takes into account needs, interests, and concerns of the actors especially those who are the most marginalised who cannot be present on the negotiation table. The principle of inclusivity is also in line with the principle of "leaving no one behind" (Berghof, 2022, p. 66).

In addition, with regard to the inclusivity of actors, the distinction can be made into two characteristics: (1) *horizontal inclusivity* that refers to inclusion of relevant actors who can be influential on decision-making
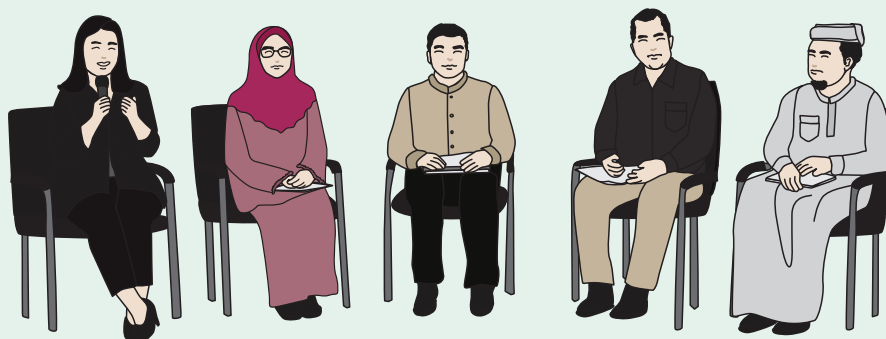
of peace agreement and its implementation, such as different sectors in the government including civilians and military, political and military wings of the armed groups or armed movement, participation of different armed groups, political parties, business elites, etc.; and (2) *vertical inclusivity* that refers to participation of various groups or segments of actors/parties who were affected by conflict in peace process (both formulation of agreement and implementation) such as civil society actors, community leaders, minorities, women, youth, and victims (Berghof Foundation, 2022).
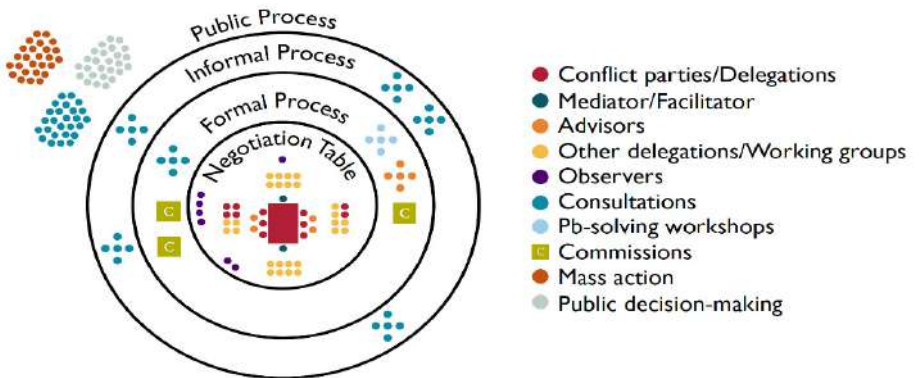
Figure 1: Modalities of Participation in Peace Process (Jensehaugen et.al. 2022)

According to Figure 1, Paffenholz et. al. (2015) suggests seven modalities of inclusivity in peace process as follows: (1) **Direct representation at the negotiation table** within the delegation of conflict parties or as a proper delegation whom can be selected by the main negotiation parties, by the mediator, or by a self-selection process with formal procedures. (2) **Participation as observers** who can be selected by negotiation parties with different roles ranging from simply observing the process to providing advice to negotiation parties or serving as guarantors of the process. These two modalities can be found in the figure's inner circle (Negotiation Table) (3) **Consultative formats** range from official consultations that run parallel to, and feed into, the official negotiation table, to less formal consultations with elites or the broader public. (4) **The creation of support structures** namely committees, working groups or technical advisory teams could open opportunities for different stakeholders to get involved as supporting mechanisms to peace negotiation directly or to a broader peace process and peace agreement implementation such as Technical Advisory Team (TAT) in Myanmar peace process which incorporated experts from civil society to support the peace secretariat. (5) **Problem-solving workshops or initiatives** that can take place during pre-negotiation phase or parallel to official negotiations, and to influence the official process by providing feedback and advice. The No. 3 – 5 models can be found in Figure 1's the secondary and tertiary circles of official and unofficial processes. (6) **Public participation** in public decision-making mechanisms such as public hearings, opinion polls, signature campaigns and referendums. (7) **Mass Actions** such as campaigns, street actions, protests, petitions, etc. The last two models are in the outer circle of the public process in Figure 1.

From the above-mentioned models of inclusivity, consultations can be considered one of these models and they can take place in three formats: official consultations, unofficial/quasi-official consultations, and public consultations. One format or option in designing the consultation process is thematic multi-arena inclusivity, which organises parallel arenas for decision-making that are dedicated to particular themes or concerns. For example, ceasefire negotiations amidst violent conflict will, by definition, include armed groups and result in a series of simultaneous discussions among multiple actors. In this instance, it would be possible to conduct security talks with the military actors on both sides, facilitate political discussion with (armed and unarmed) political actors, coordinate socio-economic discussions with relevant sectors, facilitate transitional justice talks with direct participation from victims' representatives; in addition to making space for broader issues, such as forums on agrarian reform with the participation of peasants' association, etc. (Berghof Foundation, 2022, p. 73).

To ensure inclusivity in peace negotiations, it is necessary to consider three key aspects including inclusive process design, the structures conducive for participation, and capacity building for actors who will possibly participate in the process. Furthermore, these considerations for the design of public consultation and public participation should be based on three guiding principles:

1) Content of the peace negotiation or peace process: It suggests considering who is knowledgeable about the topic and who is the most concerned/affected by the topic in the peace process.

2) Implementation stakeholders: This principle suggests considering who will be crucial actors for ensuring implementation at different levels.

3) Commitment to a transformative agenda: It suggests considering who will be in the driving seat for socio-political reform in the future.

Apart from these three guiding principles, we should also consider the selection criteria for participants that need to be represented in the peace process such as religious leaders, religious groups (representatives of Muslims and Buddhists in the area) women groups, youth groups, victims, etc. Besides, it is necessary to take into account the selection procedural mechanisms such as through invitation, nomination, election, or some form of self-selection procedure within the group (Berghof Foundation, 2022, p. 76).

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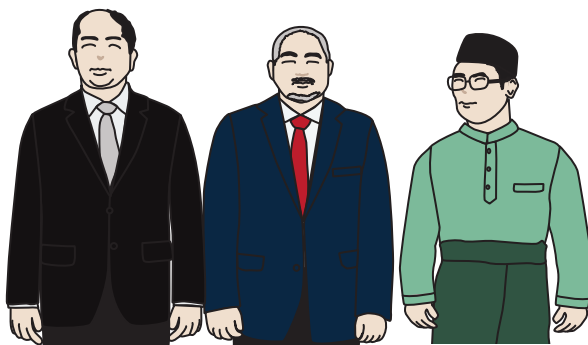
Civil Society and a Decade of Proposals Towards Peacebuilding in the South
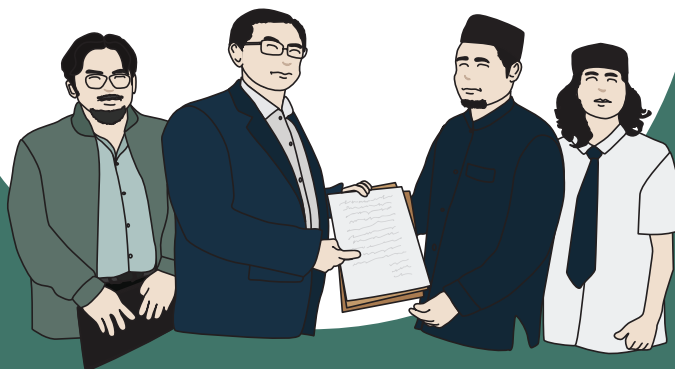
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3. Civil Society and a Decade of Proposals Towards Peacebuilding in the South

In the past two decades, civil society organisations working on peacebuilding have increased greatly in number. Some organisations have presented ideas and opinions related to peacebuilding on the southern border provinces, including proposals for peace talks that officially began in 2013. The research team has compiled the reports and statements of the 14 civil society organisations listed above. The proposals are divided into two groups: **(1) proposals for the peace process,** which comprise four main points; **(2) substantive proposals for solutions to violent conflict,** which comprise seven main points.

3.1 Proposals for the peace process

3.1.1 Improving the peace process

A. Improving the strategy for solving southern violence by making peace talks the core of conflict resolution

The Peace Survey Academic Network (2019, p. 6) presented a report titled *Seven Recommendations from People to Policies of Southern Border Provinces/Patani*, suggesting "raising the level of peace talks to be the core of the resolution of political conflicts." The Network reflects the results of opinion surveys. Public awareness of the peace process remains relatively limited, but more than 65.4 per cent of the people surveyed that year support the use of talks/negotiations as a

means for conflict resolution. The Network therefore sees "dialogue as a legitimate direction for solving the problems, and the state, the movement and the relevant parties need to provide more information on this issue for the public to become more aware." Enabling the public to see the positive effects will stimulate more discussions in the future.

The book titled *The Freedom to Decide Our Future: Patani People Call for a Peaceful Settlement,* written by The Patani in collaboration with the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, a research and peacebuilding advocacy institute based in Cambodia, contains a proposal for political parties, especially democratic parties, to endorse the "Issues in Patani " as a "national agenda" for in-depth studies to address the problem at its roots and seek feasible political solutions. (Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies & The Patani 2019, p.19) The proposal to elevate the southern violence to the national-level agenda is not new, as the BRN has been calling for this since the start of peace talks in 2013. The National Security Council first stated in its 2017-2019 Administration and Development Policy for the Southern Provinces that the talks were on the national agenda, but it does not appear to have been able to provide adequate guarantees in the eyes of the Patani liberation movement.

Since 2023, the idea of enacting legislation to support the peace talks process began to be proposed from the public sector. In September 2023, the Peace Survey Academic Network (2023, p. 23) proposed "having political and legal mechanisms in place to support an inclusive dialogue process," with the survey finding that 70.1 per cent of the public support dialogue and have trust in national political parties/national-level politicians (MPs) playing a prominent role in peacebuilding. This group received 28 per cent of the votes, ranking first among various kinds of social groups. In November 2023, civil society networks jointly organised a forum to mobilise the people's proposals for public consultation.

One conclusion from the forum is a proposal to "push for the peace process in the southern border provinces to truly become a national agenda, by being given priority by Parliament" (Kampong Takwa et al., 2023), emphasising parliamentary endorsement of the peace process. Anas Abdulrahman, head of the BRN peace dialogue panel, also proposed this issue in his opening remarks at a meeting with the Thai counterpart and the facilitators on 6-7 February 2024, calling on the Thai government to "enact a law to accommodate all issues related to the Patani peace process."[1]

In addition, proposals for peace talks to be the main approach to resolving conflict in the southern border provinces have come from various other organisations and networks, such as a proposal from the Network of Religious Leaders, Academics and Civil Society in Patani/the Southern Border Provinces (2023, pp. 2-3), presented to representatives of the Thai government and BRN at a public forum on 23 December 2023, in which they called on the Thai government to make peacebuilding in Patani/the Southern Border Provinces a national agenda and called on the BRN to make peace talks the main agenda of the Patani community, including a call for the Legislative to play a role through the enactment of a law on the Deep South peace process and the establishment of a Standing Committee on Peacebuilding in the Southern Border Provinces/Patani. There is also a proposal by the Child Protection Network (CPN), calling

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[1] Opening remarks posted in Malay on the Facebook account of Hara Shintaro, Japanese translator of Malay, on 8 February, 2024. See https://www.facebook.com/shintaro. hara.75/posts/pfbid0Kb6qRarFTbzCbmPVzTkErqrimp4e8qFQAKWcXNXzcAhJUWs-b7J4jeFo9yxbiuQzil?__cft__[0]=AZW0T7TW1TstYujkA1rh147op6I8gTiyUy082tYFfLP-1erWLWyY7glN7HxaHXT60oGd0DiyUWL8HuTlQFVHXTTGPvQMvdn6NNclXP24Nw-w2Vl7G742Oy_c90gwWEgapa3ZktihbHfQwMErMLZwPDU06wfd19jbfTpo5K9d0FlESD-dA&__tn__=%2CO%2CP-R

for the peace talks to make a speedy move (Faaik Konrasee, 2023, p. 36) and a proposal from the Buddhist Network for Peace that proposes that both sides seek a peaceful political solution to the conflict through peace talks (Peace-loving Buddhist Groups in the Southern Border Provinces, 2022, Buddhist Network for Peace, 2018, p. 8) etc.

B. Having civilians other than civil servants as representatives in the peace dialogue panel

Civil society networks proposed in a public forum in November 2023 that the delegations to the talks should include "civilians (not just civil servants)" and for there to be continuity and credible monitoring mechanisms (Kampong Takwa et al., 2023). The current Thai peace dialogue panel is led by Chatchai Bangchuad and has six representatives from five government agencies, i.e. the National Security Council, the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre, Internal Security Operations Command, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Justice. This is the first time a civilian is heading the peace talks. This is in line with the proposal of the Network of Religious Leaders that the head of the Thai peace dialogue panel should be a civilian representative, since all previous heads of the peace dialogue panel were representatives from the military (Network of Religious Leaders, 2023, p. 3). But in the past, there have been representatives
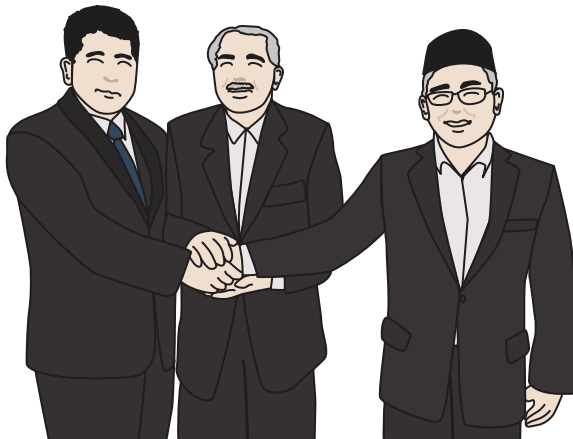
who were not government officials. The first peace dialogue
panel, led by Lt. Gen. Paradorn Pattanatabut, had two civilian
representatives who were not government officials: Asst. Prof.
Dr. Srisompob Jitpiromsri, a lecturer from Prince of Songkla
University, and Aziz Benhawan, who was the chair of the Advisory
Council on Administration and Development of the Southern
Border Provinces at the time. (Srisompob Jitpiromsri, personal
communication, February 15, 2024; Isra News Agency, 28 November
2023). Having members who are not exclusively government
officials should provide a more diverse range of perspectives
and be more beneficial for advancing the peace process.
Civil Society Council of the Southernmost Thailand (2013)
proposed during the talks in 2013 to have "religious leaders
recognised by the people" in the peace dialogue panel. There
are also proposals from the Peace Agenda of Women (PAOW)
and the Women's Movement and the Creation of an Environment
Conducive to the Peace Process (2018) to open up space for
female representatives to participate at the table as direct and
indirect stakeholders in the violent conflict.

C. Reducing violence and creating a physical safe space

There are proposals from many civil society groups to take steps to reduce violence, both as a measure to build trust between the dialogue parties and as   a long-term proposal. One of the most prominent groups advocating the end to violence has been the PAOW (2016), which proposed "Safe Public Spaces for Women in the Deep South" in April 2016, focusing on the top five priority spots: markets, streets, schools, mosques/temples, and Village Defence Volunteer posts (known in Thai for short as *Cho Ro Bor)*. It also proposes being strict about officials carrying weapons in public places outside official hours. There are calls on the Patani liberation movement to stop harming civilians or people on the basis of religion, language or ethnicity different from their own (PAOW et al., 2018, pp. 6, 11). The Civil Society Council of the Southernmost Thailand (2019) urged all parties to adhere to international human rights and humanitarian principles in protecting communities and civilians.

The Peace Survey Academic Network (2023, p. 16) in its 2023 report called for a reduction in both direct and structural violence by proposing the following urgent measures by the government: 1) avoid violence against vulnerable targets; 2) strengthen the capacity of communities to protect their own safety without weapons; 3) have the authorities avoid extrajudicial killings of insurgents who resist during raids. In 2018, the Peace Survey Academic Network (2018, pp. 18-19) proposed "measures to expedite the protection of civilians from violence and human rights violations." The Civil Society Council of the Southernmost Thailand (2017, p. 7) called on the Thai government and the Patani movement to protect children, women, civilians of all faiths and ethnicities from the effects of military action, and to give serious support to the creation of safe public spaces by respecting international human rights norms and humanitarian principles.

The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies & The Patani (2019, pp. 18-19) have proposed a reduction in the number of soldiers and checkpoints in communities to make people feel safe and reduce tension within the community. They say such policies will reduce the community's sense that they are "occupied" and ease public fears, which will improve relations between the people and the state. At the same time, the BRN should also act in accordance with humanitarian values and principles to maintain legitimacy.

In addition, the Area-based Inter-agency Coordination Working Group (Sor Lor 3), a civil society mechanism established by the state during the Prayut Chan-ocha administration after the 2014 coup, is a group that do not have ideas that oppose the state. Sor Lor 3 has proposed an approach to reducing violence that makes people in the area feel safe by having government agencies create mechanisms to reduce violence at the level of Subdistrict Administration Organizations (SAOs), subdistricts, communities, and villages by instructing SAO chief executives, subdistrict heads and village heads in working jointly with the communities to reduce violence at the village level together with both local and online dialogues on violence reduction and the ability to control forces under various conditions at the community level. It also recommends that the Thai state build trust with the people by pledging to reduce violence in three ways: (1) announcing an end to or reduction of all forms of military action and violence, whether physical violence such as blockades and clashes, or psychological violence such as visits people's homes and pressure by fully armed personnel; (2) removing wanted notices at various spots; and (3) not having the military lead in law enforcement operations such as cordons and search, but having psychologists or people trained in persuasion to negotiate the surrender of suspects and exercising utmost patience (The Area-based Inter-agency Coordination Working Group,), 2022, pp. 3-4, 7-8).

The dimension of the safety of life and property is a major concern for networks of various Buddhist groups in the southernmost provinces. It reflects the problems faced by Buddhists who are victims suffering both direct and indirect effects of the ongoing violence, including loss of life, injury, disability, the loss of family members, the loss of family income, migration out of the area and fear of threats and expulsion from the area. The Buddhist Network for Peace (2018, pp. 6-8) and the Weaving Peace Together group (2019, p. 16) propose that all forces end violence against Buddhists, end the expulsion of Buddhists from the area, and ensure a safe space for children, women, monks and minority Buddhists, that the government coordinate the safety of monks during alms rounds and other religious ceremonies, and that the government coordinate the building of cooperation with people in the community, and protect and defend people in the community, especially Buddhist communities. Communities where Buddhists and Muslims live together should be made safe to prevent incidents that create discord and misunderstanding between Buddhists and Muslims in the same community. In addition, the Peace-loving Buddhist Group in the Southern Border Provinces (2022, p. 3) proposed in July 2022 a "Peaceful-Safe Buddhist Lent for All in the Southern Border Provinces" agenda for both sides to make an agreement to end violent actions and military operations of all parties over the three-month period of Buddhist Lent.

D. Involvement of third parties

The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies & The Patani (2019,   p. 13) have proposed that the international community be involved in the peace process to ensure objectivity and build confidence in the pursuit of an agreement that is acceptable to all parties. They also propose that Malaysia join in taking on the duty of facilitator with other groups/organisations to reduce bias and bring about greater impartiality. At the same time, they called on the Thai government to be open to learning experiences and exchanging approaches of conflict management and resolution with the international community. (The Patani, 2022)

In a similar manner, Insider Peacebuilders Platform – IPP[2] (2014, p.30) also recommended in 2014 at the beginning of the formal peace dialogue, that both peace dialogue panels consider raising the level of the talks by having a mediator acceptable to both sides. There should also be observers and witnesses who may represent the governments of neighbouring countries or international organisations acceptable to both sides to help make the peace process more credible.

In addition, the Network of Religious Leaders, Academics and Civil Society in Patani/the Southern Border Provinces (2023, p. 5) has made many

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[2] The Insider Peacebuilders Platform in the southern border provinces is a collaborative from network comprising academics and practitioners in academic institutions and civil society organisations in and outside the southern border provinces. It was established in 2011 to open an opportunity for groups of people of different ethnicity, culture and political opinion to learn and exchange information and collaborate in the experience of peacebuilding to drive conflict resolutions in the southern border provinces/Patani on the basis of academic knowledge.

proposals regarding the participation of the international community in the peace process in the South through, for example, a role in monitoring and supporting the peace process. International experts should witness the peace talks and make public statements. The international community's role in supporting backchannels to bolster the peace process includes calling on the Malaysian government in its capacity as facilitator to provide opportunities for the international community and international organisations to take part in the peace process. Besides, it called on the international community to coordinate and harmonise support for the peace talks process.

E. Building unity among state agencies in their approach to viewing problems and resolve the conflicts in the southern border provinces

The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies & The Patani (2019, p. 13) have reflected on the different approaches of state agencies in dealing with the problem in the Deep South. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs views the problems as "organised crime" and is concerned that interpreting the situation as a "conflict" will trigger foreign interference. At present the National Security Council and other agencies view the problems in the Deep South as a "conflict". If different state agencies continue to understand the problem and solutions differently, it is difficult to move the peace talks forward, not to mention seeking a political solution through negotiations. This is in line with the proposal of the IPP (2014, p. 30), which recommends that the delegations from each side should
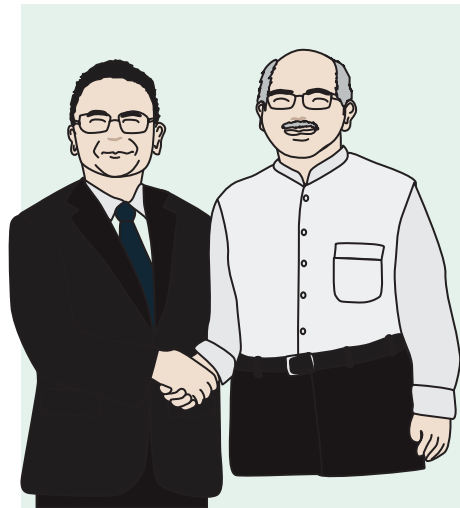
conduct an intra-dialogue on their own side to build consensus and prepare for peace talks. Also, the proposal of the Sor Lor 3 (2022, p. 7) wants the Thai state, both security and political entities, to have a common strategy to reduce violence and communicate with each other within the security forces so as to direct forces at all levels, both doves and hawks, in the same direction.

The fear is that if the southern problem is elevated to the international level, it will turn into a path that may lead to secession. This problem is a "spectre" that has long haunted the Thai state. It refuses to accept the existence of armed underground movements that are motivated by political ideologies demanding independence and to sign any agreements resulting from peace talks. It has also posted restrictions on international organisations aspiring to participate in the peace process. Seeking common ground among government agencies on their view of the problem is critical to advancing the peace process.

F. Developing coordination mechanisms and approaches to the peace talks

The IPP recommended in 2014 that formal mechanisms and guidelines should be established to support the future of the formal peace talks. This included a proposal that the two peace dialogue panels and facilitators should consider establishing a Peace Secretariat with permanent staff with the duty to coordinate

and communicate to ensure the continuity of the peace talks, establishing joint working groups on issues that remain in dispute in order to build mutual understanding and to make proposals that they agree on, such as the suitable form of governance, education, language, culture, fact findings, etc. (Insider Peacebuilders Platform, 2014, p. 29)

In addition, it is proposed that both peace dialogue panels push for the creation and development of an informal dialogue channel or Track 1.5 to open a space to seek compromise in the face of obstacles. It would also serve as a safety net for the peace talks/negotiations process through formal channels (Track 1) to be able move forward. There is also a proposal to extend the duration of each round of the peace talks in order to have more opportunities for dialogue and use the time together, and for the agenda of the talks to be agreed in advance in detail, and a "Roadmap for Peace" should be jointly planned (Insider Peacebuilders Platform, 2014, p. 30). It can be seen that this proposal was later developed by the dialogue partners resulting in the creation of the "Joint Comprehensive Plan towards Peace" (JCPP) in 2023.

3.1.2 Promoting stakeholder participation in peace process

According to the ideas of Lederach mentioned above, a peace process is not just a negotiation between two conflicting parties. Building sustainable peace requires opening opportunities for all stakeholders to participate. After the Thai government and the BRN agreed on the JCPP framework, Building public participation can be achieved through public consultation. Civil society sector has made proposals related to listening to the voices of the people in various dimensions as follows:

A. Creating mechanisms at multiple levels to encourage the participation of various stakeholders in public consultations

During the early stages of the formal peace talks in 2014, the IPP (2014, pp. 31-32) proposed that structural mechanisms be established to support a multi-track peace process, highlighting the importance of mechanisms for the participation of civil society and academia in Track 2 and Track 1.5 to create a "safety net" to prevent the peace process from failing by inviting all stakeholders to come together to search for a solution and monitor the peace process. There was also a proposal to establish Community Peace Committees with the duty to build understanding of the peace process and search for mechanisms in communities to resolve conflicts peacefully and to handle future changes in the conflict. This also includes the establishment of Council for People's Dialogue to act as a central space for different groups to express their opinions and debate issues discussed at the higher level of the peace talks (Track 1). In addition, at 12 workshops organised by the Civil Society Council of the Southernmost Thailand and Office of Private Education in 2016, participants proposed community-based peacebuilding, included the establishment of Shura Councils to promote participation of people in various sectors with representatives of religious leaders, local administration leaders and local leaders by establishing Peace Process Coordination Centres in the communities and increasing communication channels on the peace process to the public (Office of Private Education and Civil Society Council of the Southernmost Thailand, 2016, p. 18)

In addition, the Civil Society Council of the Southernmost Thailand (2019, p. 9) has supported the creation of civil society-led mechanisms as a safety net to support the peace talks, including women's groups, youth groups, people of diverse cultures and religions, academics, politicians, and the government sector. In a forum where civil society working on women issues met with politicians,

a proposal was made to establish a "civil society fund" supported by law to enable civil society to advance its work independently (Network of Civic Women for Peace et al., 2019, p. 2), while The Patani (2019, p. 13) has proposed that social activists be able to listen to the opinions of people in different communities in an open and safe manner and summarise and synthesise those voices to present them to the government.

In the current phase of the peace process after the Thai government proposed the JCPP framework in February 2023, the Peace Survey Academic Network (2023, p. 17) proposed in a report released in September 2023 that a joint committee of the government, the BRN and civil society be set up to organise various forms of public consultation. In an opinion survey, 66.8 per cent of the population ranked this fifth in importance. The Peace Survey proposed that public consultation mechanisms should create the participation of all voices, including vulnerable and marginalised groups. It should not follow a top-down format, but instead should operate through strong civil society mechanisms. A safe space must be created for people to participate in the public consultation process. The process must be neutral, non-partisan, and should have political mechanisms to support the peace talks, such as through the mechanism of People's Councils and legal mechanisms to support the peace process (pp. 23–24).

Civic Women (2023, p. 3) also made a similar proposal by requesting the creation of a working group consisting of representatives of the Thai government, the BRN, civil society and academia to jointly design a public consultation process and determine the issues that will go to public consultations. There is also a proposal from the forum on "Women, Peace and Security" in November 2023 that there should be civil society observers at the talks with a more equal proportion of women and men, to open an opportunity for civil society organisations to meet and communicate directly with representatives from both sides (Civic Women et al., 2023).

A report released by civil society network in November 2023, summarised and made observations on three models of public consultation. First, the government and BRN jointly organise public consultations. These have multiple challenges such as the trust of the negotiating partners, collaborative mechanisms, immunity guarantee to enable the BRN working groups to travel to the southernmost region, and an open and safe atmosphere. Second, the government and BRN separately hold public consultations, which the network sees as already being done despite no official or explicit status. The challenge is whether the process and its outcomes are seen as credible. Third, allow civil society as a third party, be the initiator of the public consultation process, which enables broad and safe engagement to evaluate opinions, observations and proposals before presenting to the two parties. Kampong Takwa, Institute of Peace Studies, Prince of Songkla University and the Minority Rights Group International have already initiated some public consultations of this third model (Kampong Takwa, Institute of Peace Studies, Prince of Songkla University, 2023). The challenge in the future is how to harness the strength of civil society to reinforce the upcoming public consultation process.

The Sor Lor 3 (2022, pp. 5-6) has recommended a variety of consultation mechanisms, noting that there must be a common space to create understanding to cover all areas in the dialogue process, to listen to the issues and the perspective of people of all ages, and for monitoring and evaluation. Public consultation should include a variety of forums to penetrate all villages in the locality that are

close to the people by listening to all the opinions of people of different religions and cultures, as well as coordinating with the Subdistrict Democratic Councils to open up space for participation to create understanding among the people who have not yet been reached. In addition, "people with different opinions from the state", the term often used to refer to those in the underground separatist movement, should be allowed to participate in local dialogue forums and the public must open space for the BRN both online and on-site formats to express their views freely.

In addition, Civic Women (2023, p. 2) has proposed to have an online platform for public consultations with official endorsement of this channel so that young people and the public can express their opinions more widely, in addition to public consultation mechanisms. The Network of Religious Leaders (2023, pp. 3-4) has also proposed providing opportunities for the people and civil society to participate in the peace process through other mechanisms, such as a coordinator mechanism, a monitoring and evaluation mechanism, a mechanism for public consultation, a mechanism for contacting facilitators, experts and observers, etc.

B. Having a perspective on gender, gender equality, and consideration of diversity and identity in the peace process

The Civic Women (2023, p. 2) proposes that all groups must be able to participate in the peace process in a meaningful way, the gender-responsive dimension is taken into account in order to be able to respond to the problems and meet the needs of different genders. At a forum where civil society organisations working with women met with politicians, it proposed to increase the proportion of women in decision-making mechanisms for peacebuilding in the Deep South at all levels to no less than 30 per cent. It was proposed that the allocation of budgets should also take into account gender budgeting (Network of Civic Women for Peace et al., 2019, p. 2)

A proposal from a forum on "Women, Peace and Security" in November 2023 called on the National Policy and Strategy Commission on the Development of the Status of Women to consider upgrading the "Measures and Guidelines on Women and the Promotion of Peace and Security" (2017-2023) to the "National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security" (NAP-WPS) by declaring it as soon as possible so as to create four key guarantees for women: participation, protection of rights, conflict prevention and rehabilitation/healing.

In addition to the gender dimension, there are also calls to take into account people of other identities in the peace process. As a minority group in the southern border provinces, Buddhist networks such as the Weaving Peace Together (2018, p. 11), the Peace-loving Buddhists in the Southern Border Provinces (2022, p. 3), and the Buddhist Network for Peace (2018, p. 9) have proposed a call to create mechanisms to encourage the participation of religious groups and do not neglect the dimensions of emotions, opinions and demands of Buddhists. It should also be acknowledged that Buddhist voices are important in shaping peace agreements and will be factors that may support or hinder the peace process in the South. For their part, the Child Protection Network and youth groups have proposed promoting the participation of children and young people in the peace process and conflict resolution in the southern border provinces by involving children and young people as one of the mechanisms of the dialogue as stakeholders and those affected by conflict and violence in the past 20 years (Faaik Konrasee, 2023, p. 36; Fasai Association for the Promotion of Child and Youth Well-being et al., 2024, p. 3-4).

C. Supporting learning about peacebuilding among different stakeholders

Learning and creating an understanding of the conflict and peace process among various stakeholders is an important factor in the success of the peace process. The Civil Society Council of the Southernmost Thailand (2017, pp. 10-12) proposed that a process for learning about the conflict and peace process should be provided to stakeholders such as civil society organisations, business organisations, politicians, religious leaders, local leaders, government officials operating in the area at the level of both supervisors and workers/officers, etc.

The Patani liberation movement itself should also organise a learning process through training to increase political capacity and promote understanding about the peace process, human rights and humanitarian principles to members and supporters both inside and outside the area. Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC) and the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC) should also train civil servants and security officials operating in the area about the peace process and conflict resolution by peaceful means. In addition, peace education should be included in the National Policy. The Ministry of Education should provide peace education in educational institutions at all levels and promote research on issues related to peacebuilding in the southern border provinces seriously and systematically.

The children and youth network in the southern border provinces has also made proposals on this issue. It proposes the promotion of knowledge and understanding among children and youth about the peace process. If we want to build peace, we need to start with children and youth, and a new generation of children with knowledge and understanding of the peace process will help drive the peace process in the future. There is also a proposal to design a curriculum to build an understanding of peacebuilding with children and youth acting as co-designers (Fasai Association for the Promotion of Child and Youth Well-being et al., 2024).

3.1.3 Freedom of expression

The creation of a safe space for expressing opinions without intimidation and harassment is a common issue for almost all civil society organisations working on peacebuilding. In a PAOW report (2016, p. 7) released in 2016 — when Thailand was still ruled by a government appointed by coup-makers — there were calls for "opening spaces for women in civil society to work safely and freely," reflecting that activists working on the ground and on sensitive issues face suspicion, distrust, monitoring, surveillance, prejudice, or in some cases intimidation by opposing parties, both the security agencies and insurgents, creating fear, distress, insecurity and feelings of being unsafe in their work. Another PAOW report, released in 2018, reflects that this problem is likely to get worse.

There is still no truly safe space to express opinions, and attempts are being made to create a climate of fear. So, we can see that human rights activists or defenders have been intimidated, monitored, had their credibility attacked, or even been prosecuted by the government. Female human rights defenders in particular are prone to gender-based attacks. All these are negative factors for the peace process in the region (p.6).

A report by Civil Society Council of the Southernmost Thailand, released in 2017, also called for a safe space to express opinions.

All parties should create an atmosphere and environment conducive to peacebuilding, with a focus on "safety" beyond reducing or ending direct violence. In other words, it must ensure that freedom of expression is allowed in safety without intimidation and harassment over the expression of political ideas or beliefs, as appropriate in the legal and constitutional framework regarding issues

of historical, ethnic and religious identity, the expression of a variety of identities as well as participation in improving the quality of life of people in the region. (p. 7-8)

In opinion polls conducted by the Peace Survey Academic Network four times in 2016-2018, the "silent voices" (those who "asked not to answer" or answered "I don't know") were found to be a very high percentage on some of the items, especially on those concerning what the main targets are for people who use violence against the state (54.6 per cent), views on the causes of violence in regions seen as the result of Siamese colonial occupation of Patani (46.4 per cent), views related to political goals or independence (42.9 per cent) and views on the causes of violence in the region seen as the result of government officials prolonging the problem so that they can get budgets (41.2 per cent), etc. Their silence shows that these are "sensitive" matters that people feel unsafe to speak about and therefore need to have a "space" for people to express their opinions freely without being watched, threatened or stigmatised by any side. The more space to express opinions, the greater the variety of alternatives, which will encourage debate and lead to conclusions that are most consistent with reality (Peace Survey Academic Network, 2019, pp. 38-39).

Civil society networks also reiterated this point in 2023, reflecting in a forum that "meaningful public participation in the peace process in the southernmost region is only possible when both sides in the conflict guarantee the safety of the people to express their opinions freely" (Kampong Takwa et al., 2023). In the same year, Civic Women (2023, p. 2) also called for women and other groups to be able to talk about their problems and needs safely, without interference, intimidation, harassment, fear or hatred. These have created an atmosphere and environment that is not conducive to dialogue and deter public

participation in the peace process. Meanwhile, the results of the Peace Survey (2023, p. 28) in the same year found that 33.5 per cent of people viewed the right and freedom to participate in public consultations without threat as urgent and 32.2 per cent as extremely urgent, totalling 65.7 per cent, a very high figure.

3.1.4 Communicating the peace process to the public

Public communication is an important factor in the success of the peace process. The results of the Peace Survey show that public knowledge of the peace process remains limited. The results of the 2023 opinion poll found that 33.6 per cent of respondents said they had never heard of the peace talks. Sample groups in in-depth interviews gave the opinion that communication is a major challenge, especially communicating the degree of progress in the ongoing peace process in order for the whole country to find out about and understand the problems and the process of solving the problems in the three southern border provinces. It is proposed that communication mechanisms should be developed and improved to bring about widespread public awareness and put the southern border peace process on the public agenda. This may use a variety of communication channels and technology to help as a medium for communication. Communication through community communication spaces needs a continuous and consistent communication process (Peace Survey Academic Network, pp. 7, 25). The Patani (2019, p. 21) takes the view that the public must have an understanding of the sensitivities of the problem, in particular, that both Thai Buddhists and Malay Muslims are victims of the protracted violent conflict. They must understand that this is a political problem with religious motivations. People of different races and religions in Patani do not have problems with each other, but the central problem is the long-standing historical struggle in which Malay Muslims want to claim the right to determine their own destiny.

There are four key proposals for making communication about the peace process more effective.

A. Improving the effectiveness of mass media

PAOW et al. (2018, p. 10) proposed that the media should provide information objectively and comprehensively, and present to the people in a continuous manner solutions to various problems, especially the progress of the peace process. The state sector should publicise progress in policy work and the resolution of complaints it has received and should encourage people to be thoroughly and comprehensively informed of the peace talks. In addition, it is proposed that there should be television programmes about peace, variety programmes,contests, and talk shows about the peace process (Office of Private Education and Civil Society Council of the Southernmost Thailand, 2016, p. 19).

In addition, the network of Buddhist youth and youth groups proposed that the government have a policy for the mainstream media to allocate space and time to present accounts of the situation of violence and the peace talks process or various policy projects being implemented in the three provinces as daily news, together with presentations of the progress of peace talks from the peace dialogue panel, the parliament's ad hoc committee and others on how progress and activities through various channels such as television, social media and websites to create awareness and understanding for the general public, especially children and youth to build peace with the participation of insiders. (Fasai Association for the Promotion of Child and Youth Well-being et al., 2024, pp. 3-4; Kanokphon Chuphan, n.d. p. 4).

B. Development of a network of public communicators

The development of a network of public communicators may begin with the development of a comprehensive database of local media organisations and communication channels. Joint activities may be organised as a tool for exchanging information, and working groups may be established in line with a joint agenda that drives or advances public issues. The potential of communication campaigners in the area may be developed by focusing on the development of knowledge and understanding of the language used in communication, multi-media production skills, and an understanding of public communication ethics. The emphasis should be on actively producing and creating a new generation of communicators who are spread around different communities by initiating a drive to establish "Community Communication Centres" both as a communication channel for the community and a central space to enhance the communication skills of people in the community. Communication channels should be developed, expanded and connected to more areas, particularly, community radio networks, independent programme producers, radio and TV programme hosts, as well as online communication groups, to open opportunities for people in the area to make their voices heard. In addition, "Peace Communicators Support Fund" should be established to reinforce the joint work of groups working on communication in the area (Civil Society Council of the Southernmost Thailand, 2017, pp. 14-15)

In addition to networks among journalists at both national and local levels that should play a key role in reporting the development of the peace process seriously and continuously, the IPP (2014, pp. 29-30) proposed that civil society organisations and academics should focus on working with national and local media to keep the public informed, understand, and be supportive of the peace process. This includes holding public forums on peace regularly with coordination of timing and issues to ensure harmonisation.

C. Both peace dialogue panels should communicate more publicly about the progress of the talks

The IPP (2014, pp. 29-30) has proposed to both peace dialogue panels and the facilitators at the talks that there should be a mutual agreement on communication practices and how to work with the media apart from the closed-door peace talks. For example, statements on the outcome of meetings should be issued by consensus and assigned to a facilitator to announce with publication in Thai, Malay and English.

The Weaving Peace Together group (2018) also suggested that the Thai peace dialogue panel should give importance to promoting a broad public understanding of the peace process to reduce the communication gap on the dialogue process. The Thai government, especially the Secretariat of Sor Lor 3, should reach out to people at the village level to provide full information about the peace process to Buddhist and Muslim groups and networks and invite communities to monitor, check and provide feedback on the peace talks.

The Patani liberation movement originally conducted an underground armed struggle. In the period from the resurgence of violence in 2004 to the start of peace talks in 2013, no group has issued a statement claiming for violent actions. After the start of formal talks, there were some representatives who made public appearance and make statements, but their presence remained limited. The Patani (2019, p. 21) suggested that the BRN should be more communicative with the public and develop an organisational communication strategy with the international community, and it should be transparent and have clear goals. Once the struggle has moved from the military to politic terrain, communicating with people outside the organisation is therefore essential to building legitimacy and seeking support for movement.

3.2. Substantive proposals for resolving violent conflict

3.2.1 Form of governance suitable for the southernmost region

Some civil society organisations have proposed a change in the form of governance toward more decentralisation of power to localities as a way to resolve the problem of violent conflict in the Deep South. In 2011, before peace talks formally began, academic and civil society sectors, including the People's Network for Improving Administrative Participation in the Southern Border Provinces, Deep South Watch, Prince of Songkla University's Centre for Conflict Studies and Cultural Diversity, Civil Society Committee, the Political Development Council and the Office of Peace and Governance, King Prajadhipok's Institute, jointly proposed a special model of local government called "Pattani Mahanakhon" (Pattani Metropolis), which was the result of 49 public opinion forums with approximately 1,427 participants. It contains the following findings about people's expectations for an appropriate form of government.

1. Governance in the southern border provinces shall be within the framework of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand.

2. Governance in the southern border provinces should be of a kind that brings about political justice in such a way that all parties experience the feeling that they themselves have a place in and belong to Thai society (inclusivity), that listens to the majority without neglecting the minority, that takes into account different identities, and that guarantees concrete rights and freedoms to Thai Buddhists, who are a minority in the region.

3. The person with the highest administrative authority is from the region and the number of government officials who are Thai Buddhist and Malay Muslim is proportional to the population. This is to ensure that administrators and government officials have a sense of allegiance to the region and have a true

knowledge and understanding of the way of life, culture and needs of the local people.

4. There are mechanisms that facilitate the people's participation in initiating, proposing and deciding on policies related to local affairs, as well as scrutinising, monitoring, and evaluating the performance of local administrators at a level that makes people feel themselves empowered to manage their own lives.

5. There is a system of screening candidates for election as administrators or local councillors that can reduce competition and divisions in the community and build a level of confidence among the people that a number of candidates for election are people with integrity and competence who are truly suitable to be representatives of the people.

6. Two languages, Thai and Malay, are used together on government premises and signs.

7. There is an education system that meets the central standards of the Ministry of Education and must also be in line with local needs and identities. The educational curriculum shall be integrated between secular and religious streams, and the Malay language shall be taught in public schools in such a way that parents from all cultural groups are comfortable and confident in sending their children to study.

The Islamic law is enforced on Muslims in the region, both in terms of legislation, judgements and enforcement. It focuses primarily on laws relating to the family, inheritance and moral supervision of Muslims, which are the most directly intertwined with their way of life (People's Network for Improving Administrative Participation in the Southern Border Provinces et al., 2011). The proposed "Pattani Metropolis" model is detailed in the following figure.

Central Government Representatives Committee

- Coordinate/solve disputes between the Government and Pattani Metropolis
- Oversee administrative compliance with legal and central standards
- Providing advice on laws and regulations
- Comprises 22 representatives of ministries and related agencies

Pattani Metropolis

- Combination of 3 provinces and 4 districts of Songkhla

Senior Ethical Committee

- Provides rulings on Islamic principles upon request of the governor or council presidents that do not infringe upon the rights and liberties of people of different faiths and are in accordance with the law
- Comprises 15 members elected by people of Islamic faith with secondary or higher education

Governor of Pattani Metropolis

- Possesses administrative/policy making authority
- Directly elected by the people with absolute majority
- One-third of the Deputy Governors are Buddhists

Pattani Metropolis Council

- Proposes/deliberates on ordinances
- Queries the administration
- Establishes committees
- Comprises 31 elected members:
  25 from constituencies,
  3 from Buddhist groups,
  1 each from other religious, women,
  and people with disabilities' groups

Permanent Secretary of Pattani Metropolis

- Carries out routine administrative work in accordance with policies
- Appointed by the Governor

District Directors

- Coordinate with the District Council
- 37 in all, appointed by the Governor

District Councils

- Prepare district development plans
- Allocate development budgets
- Comprise a minimum of 7 members elected from constituencies

Sub-district Chiefs

- Coordinate with the District Council and village heads
- 290 in all, appointed by the Governor

Council of the People

- Recommends/investigates/evaluates the performance of the Governor and Pattani Metropolis Council members; prepares annual reports
- Nominates experts to the Pattani Metropolis Council for appointment to various committees
- Recommends a list of suitable candidates for gubernatorial elections through consultation processes
- Comprises 51 members, elected from different occupational/cultural/civil society groups registered with the Pattani Metropolis Permanent Secretary

→ Policy recommendation and implementation monitoring

---→ Oversight

*Proposal of the **"Pattani Metropolis"** special form of local administration in the southern border provinces*

Later, the Civil Society Council of the Southernmost Thailand, with the support of the Reform Assembly, continued to drive this self-governance model. It organised a total of 124 "Southern Border Self-Governance" public policy forums, of which 110 were held in the four southern border provinces and 14 were organised for specific groups, between September 2012 and mid-March 2013 (Romadon Panjor, 2013, pp. 1 – 6).

14 Specific Forums

- Community leaders
- Local politicians
- Academics
- Civil society organisations
- Local politicians
- Buddhists
- Religious leaders
- Police
- Community leaders
- Dissenters
- Women

110 General Forums

Songkhla: 10
Pattani: 35
Narathiwat: 39
Yala: 25
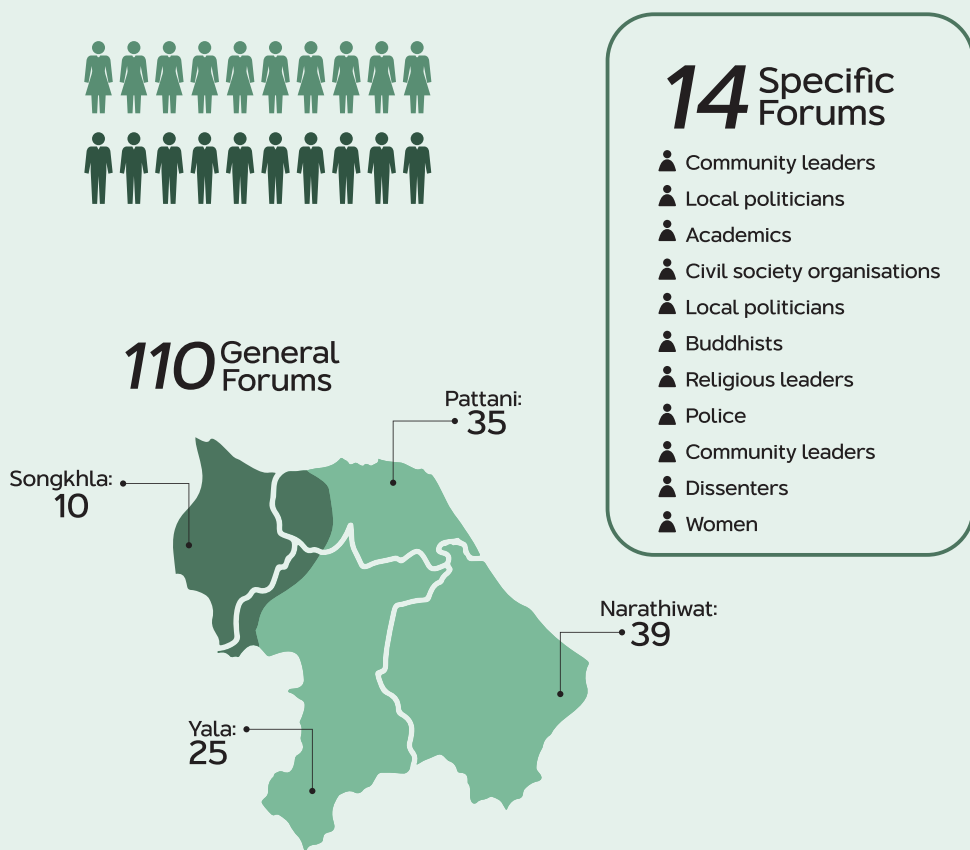
*Number of **"Southern Border Self-Governance"** public policy forums by the Civil Society Council of the Southernmost Thailand (Romadon Panjor, 2013, p. 7)*

The organisers proposed six alternative forms of government as follows (Romadon Panjor, 2013, pp. 17-18):

Options	Brief Descriptions
1) SBPAC	The current model: the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre under the responsibility of an appointed secretary-general, with an appointed governor overseeing each province, and local administration organisations in place at provincial, municipal and sub-district levels.
2) Bureau	Bureau of Southern Border Provinces, equivalent in status to a ministry and headed by a minister, with all of the provincial governors acting as permanent secretaries, and all of the local administrative organisations in place.
3) Double-tier Triple-province	Each province is under the responsibility of a governor directly elected by the people, while all the local administrative organisations are kept in place.
4) Single-tier Triple-province	Each province is under the responsibility of a governor directly elected by the people, while all the local administrative organisations are abolished.
5) Double-tier Metropolis	All the southern border provinces are combined into a large area under the responsibility of a single governor directly elected by the people, while all the local administrative organisations are kept in place.
6) Single-tier Metropolis	All the southern border provinces are combined into a large area under the responsibility of a single governor directly elected by the people, while all the local administrative organisations are abolished.

The most popular choice was #1 SPBAC (32.2 per cent), followed by #3 double-tier triple-province (19.3 per cent), #6 single-tier metropolis (15.8 per cent), #2 bureau (10.1 per cent), #6 other options (6 per cent), and #4 single-tier triple-province (5.9 per cent). In addition, the survey results showed that 51.8 per cent of respondents chose #3-6, which included proposals for the election of provincial governors, indicating the desire of the people to have the right to vote for the high-level administrators in the region (Romadon Panjor, 2013, pp. 31-32).

This report also made an important recommendation that the people who participated in the forum were of the opinion that more space should be opened up for such forums and that the people's proposals should be given sufficient weight to determine the direction of the peace process. The negotiating parties should take the issue of a comprehensive restructuring of politics and governance into consideration based on public consultations, especially regarding respect for the identity and way of life of people of all ethnicities and religions, leaders who represent the people, and opening political opportunities for all groups, especially Buddhists and Chinese minorities in the region, including the role of women (Romadon Panjor, 2013, pp. 45-47).
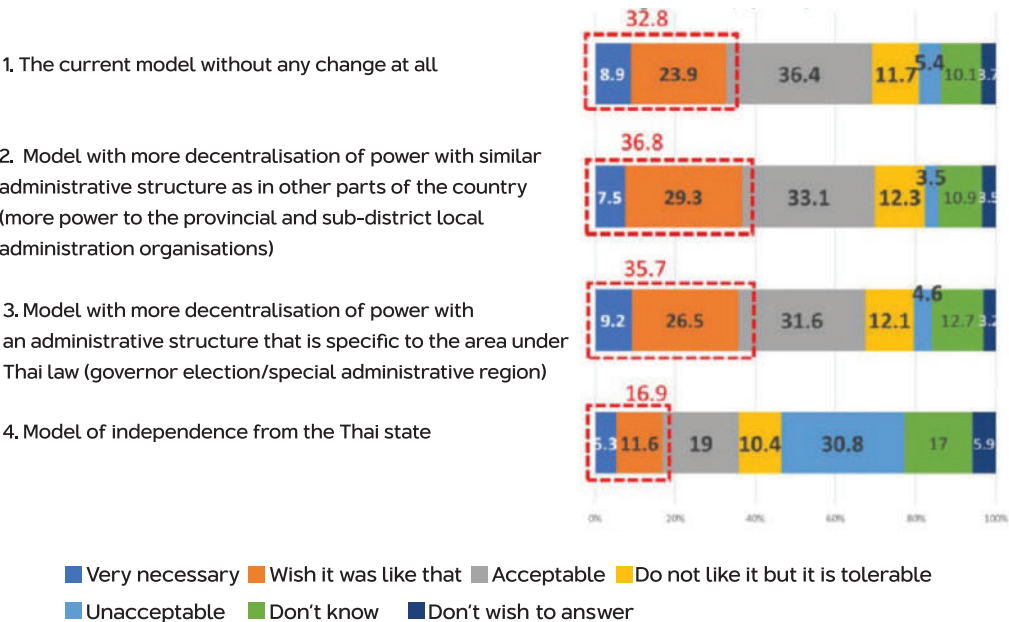
Other politicians and scholars have also presented forms of administration appropriate for the southernmost region, such as the "Nakhon Pattani (Pattani City)" proposal of General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh and the "Monthon Thesaphiban" proposal of Prof. Dr. Prawase Wasi, but these proposals have not been taken seriously. In a 2019 report by the Civil Society Council of Southernmost Thailand, it was proposed to organise a study and learn about the issue of a "form of decentralisation appropriate to areas with special cultural identities and cultural diversity" and as a solution for peace talks. It was also proposed to use existing mechanisms in the region, such as the Leadership Council, Peace Council, the Shura Council and Kampong Takwa, to follow the lessons of peacebuilding (p. 10). It was also proposed to experiment with the restructuring of some agencies of state power to pilot the development of greater decentralisation (The Group of Eight Civil Society Organisations Network, 2019, p. 3).[3]

In a survey conducted by the Peace Survey Academic Network in 2023, the majority of respondents (36.8 per cent) wanted to see more decentralised administration with an administrative structure like the rest of the country, such as an increase in the power of the PAOs and SAOs. 35.7 per cent of respondents proposed greater decentralisation with region-specific administrative structures under Thai law, such as elected governors or special administrative regions. Although the second choice, the proportion was very close to the first. The least popular choice (16.9 per cent) was independence from Thailand but it is noteworthy that 22.9 per cent of respondents said 'don't know' or asked not to answer about this choice because it was a relatively sensitive question. No one can guess

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[3] The Group of Eight Civil Society Organisations Networks comprises Civil Society Council of the Southernmost Thailand, Buddhists Network for Peace, Weaving Peace Together, Peace Agenda of Women (PAOW), Child Protection Network (CPN), the Local Engagement to advocate for Peace Project (LEAP), Project on Collecting Recommendations from Religious Leaders, and Project on Dialogue of Politicians.

the true opinion of these silent voices but the researchers noted that the numbers
responding "asked not to answer" and "don't know" decreased from the previous
survey, reflecting that respondents felt a greater freedom to express their opinion
on this question. Another observation is that a large number of respondents
(30.8 per cent) said they could not accept the region becoming independent of
Thailand (pp. 30-31).

Opinions on Different Models of Administration

1. The current model without any change at all

2. Model with more decentralisation of power with similar
administrative structure as in other parts of the country
(more power to the provincial and sub-district local
administration organisations)

3. Model with more decentralisation of power with
an administrative structure that is specific to the area under
Thai law (governor election/special administrative region)

4. Model of independence from the Thai state

■ Very necessary ■ Wish it was like that ■ Acceptable ■ Do not like it but it is tolerable
■ Unacceptable ■ Don't know ■ Don't wish to answer

*Results of the 7th opinion poll on Forms of governance
by the Peace Survey Academic Network*

The Peace Survey Academic Network (2023, p. 24) proposed that since people see decentralisation as an approach to solving problems and have a high level of confidence in national politicians, parliament should be used as a safe space to discuss the problem of conflict and enact relevant legislation, such as enacting a peace law for the southernmost region, abolishing martial law and reforming the bureaucratic system to be transparent and fair.

In line with the results of the Peace Survey above, the Area-based Inter-agency Coordination Working Group (Sor Lor 3) (2021, p. 5) has also proposed special forms of administration in which provincial governors are elected, like those in Bangkok and Pattaya. In addition, it has proposed an economic development plan in the form of economic areas in the southern border provinces because the candidates for election have a better understanding of the context and perception of the problems in the region than those from outside the region. Equality needs to be taken into account. The equality of people in society is fundamental. There may also be a multicultural dimension. For example, if a provincial governor is a Malay Muslim, the group of administrators must have a proportion of other faiths to serve as well, so that equality and justice in a diverse society can be ensured. However, there are still some who do not agree with the election of governors and district chiefs due to concerns that politics in the area are still not mature, which may cause vote-buying and may lead to other problems. For this reason, Sor Lor 3, therefore, proposed a study of the feasibility of having elected governors and district chiefs, as well as adjusting the legal mechanisms to clearly indicate where governors or district chiefs in the region come from according to regulations and in line with the Thai Constitution, taking into account in principle the interests of the people and not creating additional conflict in the region.

The Duayjai Group implemented a project to promote people's participation in peacebuilding in the southern border provinces by holding seven public consultation forums online and ten in communities between August 2023 and February 2024, with a total of 1,138 participants. With regard to the form of administration, the report points out that the conflict in the southern border provinces/Patani has its roots in political problems between ethnic groups. As a result, some groups have different political ideologies. The parties in the conflict have different concepts, modes and powers to govern spaces. The recommendations from the public consultations concluded in essence that the people had a desire to change the form of government and administration of the region, which may include calls for decentralisation, increased local autonomy, or other structural changes to meet the needs of the people. Other suggestions include calling for political and administrative structures to be consistent with the identities of the region and suggesting amendments to the constitution to accommodate local needs. In addition, it was proposed that the process of selecting regional administrators should be the right of the people. Public participation in the design and management of space in all dimensions, budgetary, economic and legal, must take into consideration the local context and religions, as well as the encouragement of dialogue and the creation of safe spaces for exchanges that are free, frank and inclusive to all groups on issues concerning the forms of administration and common design mechanisms that are in line with the needs of the people (Duayjai Group, 2024, pp. 34, 42, 54).

3.2.2 Acceptance of identities, culture and coexistence in a pluralistic society

Protracted violent conflict has negatively affected relations between people of different ethnicities, religions and cultures in the southern border region. Many civil society organisations have also been aware of this problem and called for the restoration of good relations and the promotion of greater coexistence among people of different cultures. The PAOW has reflected that the prolonged violence in the region has resulted in distrust and division among people in southern communities, which has become more apparent over recent years. Safety concerns have led Buddhists to migrate or leave the region, and the PAOW sees the need to build an understanding of multiculturalism, rather than cultural and religious assimilation. People in each culture should be able to maintain their own identity, which, despite differences, enjoy understanding and respect (Peace Agenda of Women et.al., 2018, pp. 10-11). The Civil Society Council of the Southernmost Thailand has suggested to politicians that people should be encouraged to have knowledge and understanding of different cultures and encourage more intercultural activities (The Group of Eight Civil Society Organisations Network 2019, p. 3).

The PAOW sees that the state must have clear policies and allocate budgets to promote the value of coexistence in a multicultural society and support community participation, especially promoting multicultural education within communities in the school system and educational institutions. In addition, officials at the operational level must be trained to have a greater understanding of religion, culture, language and local identities on the multicultural Deep South. Women need to play a stronger role in cultural work and represent cross-cultural communication (Peace Agenda of Women et al, 2018, pp. 9-11). Civic Women, for their part, had a proposal in line with the PAOW, with the additional proposal for the state to declare important days of other religions in the region as special holidays. Buddhists have asked the state to declare the day of the Thai festival, which falls on the fifteenth day of the tenth lunar month of every year, as a special holiday in the five southern border provinces, as well as Chinese New Year's day and Hari Raya (Eid al-Fitr), as a concrete way to promote cultural diversity (Network of Civic Women for Peace et al, 2023, p.12).

The Weaving Peace Together group (2018), which consists of those in the Buddhist network, has three proposals on multicultural issues. The first is creating activities to promote multiculturalism by introducing a curriculum on 'cultural skills' with the support of the Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn

Anthropology Centre to be disseminated more widely through collaboration with various agencies in the region. In addition, the drafting of multicultural policies through the initiative of the Ministry of Culture should establish working groups with the participation of various sectors to study the multicultural policies in use in various countries and survey the situation of coexistence in Thai society among people of diverse religions and ethnicity. Second, the government makes clear its stance and treats all religious and ethnic communities equally, and cooperate in setting clear policies, plans and guidelines for solving problems. If there are any doubts or misunderstandings in the policies and operations of the government in matters related to religious or cultural affairs, agencies are asked to work together to clarify any doubts that arise. This is to build trust between the state and communities and among communities themselves. Third, a formal demographic survey should be conducted, asking the Ministry of Interior to cooperate with the relevant authorities to conduct a population and housing census, especially a survey of the religions of the population in the region, in parallel with a study of the factors of the rise and fall of population in different groups to achieve an accurate and clear understanding, especially with regard to the decline in the Buddhist population in the region (The Weaving Peace Together group, 2018, pp. 12-14).

The report of a public consultation forum organised by the Duayjai Group in 2023 - 2024 on identity and culture issues shows that identities in the region are controlled and used as tools that have driven the conflict. Assimilation becomes encroachment against other identities. The narrative history in the area is distorted and becomes blurred. It causes feelings of suspicion and a sense of being second-class citizens. In the southern border provinces, the Malay presence is seen as a security threat, often turning

the expression of identity into something to fear. Therefore, it creates feelings of doubt or reluctance to express oneself. In the face of this problem, five recommendations were made:(1) Identities in diverse arenas should be promoted by preserving and restoring them as an enduring characteristic of the region; (2) Encourage society to understand that regional identities are specific and diverse, and promote and support them to become social capital; (3) Allow free expression of the Malay identity with respect and pride; (4) Encourage constructive communication and create positive perceptions of external society; and (5) raise awareness of the value of humanity that proudly includes identity, origins and individuality (Duayjai Group, 2024, p. 36).

Language is an important element and plays an important role in preserving and promoting the identities of the people in the Deep South. Through a process of listening to the opinions of various groups, especially groups of religious and cultural leaders, the Area-based Inter-agency Coordination Working Group [Sor Lor 3] (2021) reported a proposal by Islamic religious leaders on the use of the Malay language, recommending the addition of the Malay language and Jawi script as official languages, and to upgrade Malay as a second language which can be used in official documents — not only in the three southern border provinces, but can also be used in Southeast Asia. It also includes a proposal to have road signs in Malay. However, a group of Buddhist leaders expressed the view that the main official language, both spoken and written, should still be Thai. Malay can only be used as an indigenous language or in communication with government agencies for personal purposes (Area-based Inter-agency Coordination Working Group, 2021, pp. 22 – 24).

### 3.2.3 Human rights, justice and law enforcement

A. Review of the enforcement of special laws

Several civil society organisations have called for the review or revocation of special laws currently in force in the southern border provinces. The Civil Society Council of the Southernmost Thailand (2019, p.7) called for a review of the use of special laws in the region to create policy proposals for the enforcement of laws that do not violate human rights and promote the peace process. The Peace Survey Academic Network (2023) sees that violations of the human rights continue to occur under a number of special legal measures, such as Martial Law and the Emergency Decree on Public Administration in Emergency Situations (Emergency Decree). Martial law gives the military authorities the power to detain suspects for up to seven days without a court warrant. The Emergency Decree allows military police officers to arrest suspects, but they must have an arrest warrant under the Emergency Decree issued by the court and suspects must be detained in a facility which is not a prison for no more than 30 days. Permission to extend detention must be requested from the court every seven days. The five main violations of human rights are: villagers are tortured by state agents during detention (46.9 per cent of respondents to a questionnaire chose this violation); Muslim women are not allowed to wear the hijab (44.7 per cent); villagers are randomly searched and photographed at checkpoints without any reason given (36.7 per cent); the authorities cordon villages (33.9 per cent); and the expression of opinions or participation in public events both in the community and online are prohibited, blocked and threatened (27.6 per cent). Laws that allow military personnel to violate human rights are tantamount to structural violence. Data from Deep South Watch (as cited in Peace Survey Academic Network, 2023, pp. 19-20), shows that the statistics on cordon-and-search operations and arrests by state security personnel clearly

increased from 2017 to 2022, totalling 383 incidents. Kampong Takwa (2018, p. 1) calls for the revocation of the Emergency Decree to be replaced by regular law. It was also suggested that arrests should be made known to relatives, that investigations be conducted transparently, that the judicial process be conducted in accordance with international principles and that compensation be prompt and appropriate.

However, many Buddhists in the region are concerned that the lifting of special laws could affect their safety. Therefore, there is a proposal to hold a public forum to seriously discuss the enforcement of special laws, as well as to evaluate the renewal of special laws with representatives from various sectors, not just the security agencies (Kampong Takwa, 2018, p. 2).

The Duayjai Group, an organisation that provides assistance to affected people and campaigns on human rights violations in the context of the unrest in the southern border provinces, has produced several reports related to various rights violations occurring in the region, such as torture, extrajudicial killings and other deprivation of rights and freedoms, including DNA testing of children, etc. These are often carried out under special laws. There are, therefore, proposals to review or abolish enforcement of these laws that facilitate torture and other cruel,
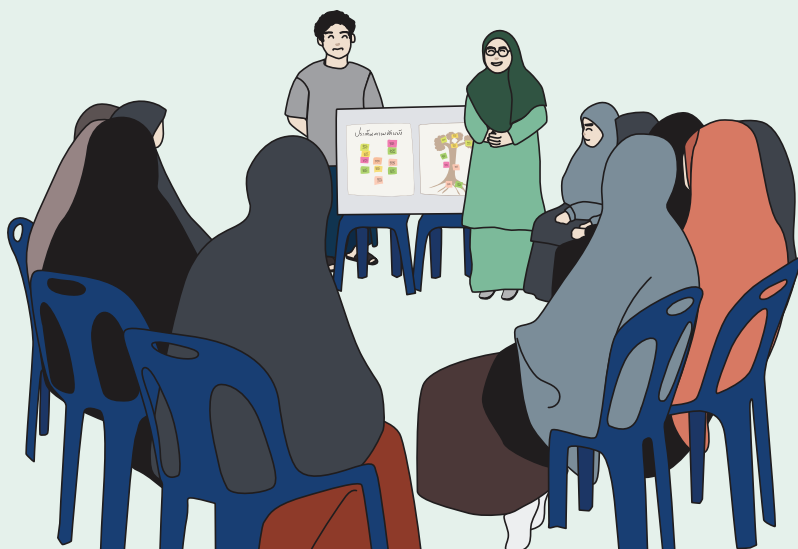
inhuman or degrading treatment and deprive people of their rights and freedoms. There are also proposals to conduct a comprehensive review of existing laws, especially those that impede the peace process, and to revoke or amend the special laws affecting human rights, in collaboration with legal experts, human rights organisations and affected communities, to consider the impact and necessity of the special laws before deciding to revoke or amend them. There are also proposals to make domestic legislation consistent with the Convention Against Torture, to amend laws or regulations that impede the prevention of torture, such as those that prohibit detainees from meeting relatives and lawyers, and laws or regulations that require torture cases to be referred for investigation to the Office of the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) or the Office of the Public Sector Anti-Corruption Commission (PACC) (Duayjai Group, 2019, p. 52; Duayjai Group et al, 2016, pp. 90-91)

B. Equitable law enforcement

The PAOW proposes that the state must scrutinise and monitor the work of its leaders. Officials at local, provincial and national level must respect the international principles of non-discrimination and provide legal justice in which all citizens will receive equal justice under the law without ethnic, linguistic or religious prejudice. For example, vehicle searches at various checkpoints should follow standards and should not discriminate. Justice should be given to all parties, stigmatisation should be reduced, accusations should not be made without evidence, and transparency should enable monitoring at every step. In particular, the procedures for searches, arrests and detention must be based on solid evidence, not merely on speculation or random searches, and channels should be developed to access the judicial process that are fair to the accused, including facilitation at all stages of entering the judicial process. Justice centres should be opened throughout the region to reassure all sectors of the public, both victims of unrest and those accused (Peace Agenda of Women et al, 2018, p. 8).

On the issue of law enforcement, the Duayjai Group has recommendations from consultation forums and reports on the human rights situation, such as proposing to regularly review the criminal justice system to identify and address bias or discrimination and to ensure that law enforcement agencies strictly comply with the law to promote transparency and accountability in their actions; establishment of an independent supervisory body to investigate allegations of misconduct and human rights violations within law enforcement agencies; calls for an end to the prosecution of individuals engaged in activities to express their opinions on various issues, and for the use of necessary measures to ensure their rights to freedom of opinion and expression in all forms; and the repeal of criminal penalties for defamation (Duayjai Group, 2020, p. B; 2024, pp. 49-50).

C. Facilitating justice for those suffering loss

Providing justice to those suffering loss and those affected by violence is an important factor in ensuring lasting peace in the southern border provinces. This process is one important part of "transitional justice." The Patani (2023) believes that the state must cleanse its history of wrongs in instigating violence against the Malay people of Patani, in particular, the death of 85 protesters in front of the Tak Bai Police Station on 25 October 2004. The fact that no official has yet been held accountable for this incident is evidence that a culture of impunity still exists in Thai society. The state is trying to use compensation in the form of money to silence the voice of the people, but the Thai state should deal with this matter in a transparent and fair manner, otherwise, it will be difficult to build a just and lasting peace.

The Duayjai Group has made suggestions on compensation for those suffering loss in several reports, both in relation to compensation for those affected by extrajudicial killings or killings outside the judicial process, for the impact on families of ex-detainees under special law enforcement, and

compensation related to sexuality. The recommendations are as follows: (1) the state should have a holistic compensation policy, with various forms of psychological compensation, including individual counselling, family compensation, and economic compensation, and not just compensation in the form of a lump sum; (2) the government or regional health authorities should be the agencies that provide continuous psychological and physical support to affected families at both the central and community levels; (3) there should be a fund for complete and comprehensive forms of relief for affected families; (4) a committee tasked with determining the status of survivors should consist of technical experts, including doctors and mental health practitioners, civil society organisations, legal professionals or government specialists, and survivors of violence in conflict situations. It should have appropriate gender proportions; (5) there should be an appropriate law on compensation; (6) there should be guarantees that compensation or reparations programmes will help create social harmony and not give rise to divisions in the community between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries; (7) the government must work with people's organisations to fill the gap so that women affected by violence in conflict areas, particularly gender-based violence, can be protected from violence, and have access to compensation (Duayjai Group, 2019, pp. 125-126; 2022a, pp. 94-96; 2022b, pp. 71-72).

D. Violence against women and rights violations against vulnerable groups

In the midst of violent conflict, there is a dimension that is often hidden and not clearly visible: violence against women. The state should deal with this through at least three important measures: (1) have female investigators stationed at every police station to make women more comfortable in providing information about violence, especially sexual assault cases, thus better protecting women's human dignity; (2) expand counselling centres to empower women affected

by domestic violence. Civil society has already initiated a pilot at the Office of the Islamic Committee of Narathiwat Province, which should be implemented in other provinces where provincial offices of the Islamic Committee exist, together with adequate financial support and resources; and (3) establish a fund to end violence against children and women to serve as a fund assisting children and women who have been subjected to domestic violence and sexual abuse (Network of Civic Women for Peace et al, 2019, p. 8).

Apart from women, children are also affected by civil unrest and human rights violations through the impact of violent incidents on both their physical well-being and their lives. Law enforcement against children, especially forced DNA testing, taking children into custody for interrogation, military operations in schools, and searches and activities in schools can cause feelings of distrust in children. In light of this situation, the Duayjai Group has made recommendations to protect children. For example, the state must made operate in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child that Thailand has signed, especially in cases where children are suspects or witnesses of incidents, and in particular, in compliance with the Juvenile and Family Court and Procedure Act B.E. 2553 (2010). The state should take steps to end DNA testing of children without exception, and the state should carefully consider cases of activities of well-armed soldiers in tadika schools (Muslim kindergartens), for example (Duayjai Group, 2018, pp. 6, 9, 14, 17).

E. Establishing mechanisms to monitor, assess the impact of, and promote human rights

On many occasions when some violent incidents or situations could lead to human rights violations, there is often a lack of monitoring bodies that society can trust. The Civil Society Council of the Southernmost Thailand (2019, p.7) has proposed the creation of mechanisms drawn from the government and civil society sectors to monitor and assess the impact of justice issues and human rights violations by all parties to the conflict. The Peace Survey Academic Network (2023) has proposed the establishment of a committee composed of individuals from many parties to investigate the facts of incidents of violence and provide a mechanism to monitor operations to prevent further human rights violations, in particular the summoning of suspects or persons subject to arrest warrants, as well as reform of the justice system and methods of investigation to prove innocence/guilt so as to prevent human rights violations as the perpetration of another form of violence (pp. 21-22).

There are also proposals of the Duayjai Group (2024) from public consultation forums on the promotion of human rights, such as comprehensive human rights training for military personnel, emphasising respect for human rights principles and the importance of complying with international standards, as well as the creation of ongoing human rights education mechanisms within military agencies, incorporating case studies and practical scenarios to increase understanding and implementation (p. 49).

3.2.4 Local economic development and resource management

Peace and public order are fundamental and important conditions for economic development in the Deep South. The Peace Survey Academic Network (2023, p. 24) proposes to put economic development ahead of security in peacebuilding in the south. If there is peace, it will generate investment and employment opportunities. The growth of community enterprises should be promoted. Creative activities should be promoted, and local identities preserved to bring about an "edible peace". In the past, economic and resource management has not been a process, in which villagers could participate as they should. This has given rise to conflict in the region. Civil society has the following proposals:

A. Public participation in the development and management of natural resources

The Civil Society Council of the Southernmost Thailand (2017, p.18) proposes that government agencies must establish a comprehensive process of public participation in the development and management of natural resources in the region, which must begin with joint thinking, joint action and joint decision-making, leading to real joint monitoring of government operations. The government should regulate the role of transnational corporations and private companies to ensure a balanced use of resources and to avoid destroying nature. The policies of state development projects should be reviewed in order to create a "People's Development Strategy" to reduce conflicts

over resource that exclude listening to the voice of the people, thereby increasing the conditions for structural conflicts and problems of resource use in various fields such as industrial zones, local fisheries, etc. (Civil Society Council of the Southernmost Thailand, 2019, p. 10).

Kampong Takwa (2018, pp. 1-2) proposes a mechanism at the community level to set up a working group with participation from various sectors, namely civil servants, educational institutions, NGOs, experts and community networks, to establish community organisations and a process to develop activities that are in line with the needs of the community in terms of economics, religion, culture and resource management, with a formal budget process and transparent evaluation. The state should provide opportunities and support for communities to fully create their own development processes, such as community planning and local resource management, as well as having the right to receive a budget for self-management and problem-solving. The concept of Kampong Takwa should be realised and community guided by Islamic principles established. The community can be the foundation for the use of religious principles in development. In addition, the community should be required to develop an organisational system to carry out activities in economics, education, investment, welfare, etc., which are effective in achieving sustainable development.

Women's groups have also called for the right to participate in development. The PAOW proposes that the state respect the people's rights to manage resources, land and their community rights, as well as to heed their voices, opinions, needs, identity and community ways. Women must participate
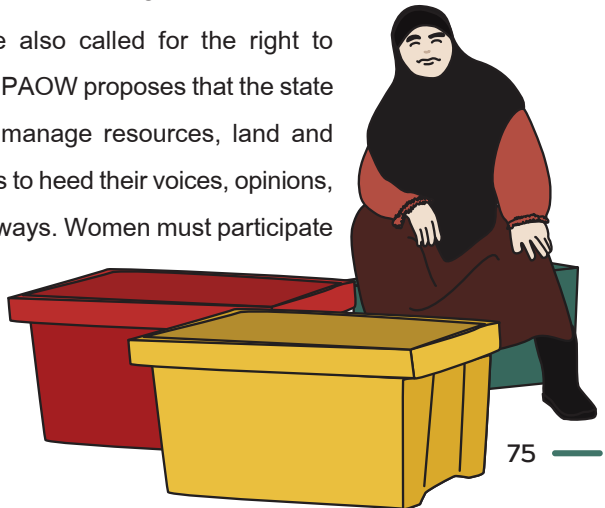
in setting policies on natural resources and the environment at all levels (Peace Agenda of Women et al, 2018, p. 8). Civic Women has suggested that the state should listen to the people regarding water management by the Royal Irrigation Department. In the past, there was a lack of involvement, which resulted in damage to natural water systems, leading to many fields being abandoned. The group also suggested that the public, including local fishermen, should be involved in planning the development of coastal marine resources (Network of Civic Women for Peace, 2019, p. 11).

The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies & The Patani (2019, p. 18) propose that the state should consult communities so that development projects would respond to their needs. In addition, communities should take part in resources management, which will help strengthen good relations between the state and the people.

The Saiburi River Basin Network Group, together with Pearmsak Makarabhirom et al (2019, pp. 11, 14, 16), held a public forum in 2014 to develop policy recommendations on the management of resources and environment in six areas i.e. land, forestry, water, abandoned fields, fisheries, the coast and coastal erosion to effectively manage natural resources and the environment in the southern border provinces and promote public participation. The report contains policy recommendations for solving problems in managing each type of resource. For example, it is proposed that forest management in state-led development should be flexible to meet the needs of the region, be in line with the ecological landscape, and benefits to the region in order to reduce the impact on resources and reduce conflicts between the state and communities as well as between communities and the people themselves. It is proposed to appoint a multi-sectoral working group to scrutinise projects to identify problems and formulate proposals to find solutions to development unsuitable to the local

context and ecosystem as well as negatively affecting land of the people and communities. It is proposed that the SBPAC develop a process for holding public hearings to engage people in the rehabilitation of abandoned fields in the southern border provinces. And it is proposed that abandoned fields resulting from monopolistic land purchases should be put to good use, asking the state to coordinate with landowners to allow farmers and the poor to use unused land for farming without paying rent or at cheap rents, which are subsidised by the state.

In addition, the Chana Rak Thin Network and Greenpeace have proposed that in the implementation of large-scale development projects, such as the Chana Industrial Estate Project, the state should evaluate options that promote community capacity and design industrial estates so that they produce as few emissions as possible. Sustainable development should have three important characteristics: development based on resources, development based on religious and cultural practices, and people's participation in the design and choice of their own development approach. In addition, Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA), Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) and Environmental Health Impact Assessments (EHIA) should be carried out.   Data on pollution levels should be used to assess the suitability of industrial estate projects or any other projects so as not to affect the traditional way of life and livelihoods of Chana people, which are important for food security and the economy of local communities. Children and youth should also be encouraged to participate in development, for example by promoting the inclusion of information and promotional activities and knowledge about community resources in study materials, allowing youth to participate in expressing opinions on development guidelines (Greenpeace, 2023, p. 64).

C. Promotion of food security and sustainable use of natural resources

The Civil Society Council of the Southernmost Thailand (2019) proposes the creation of mechanisms and processes in civil society to promote the sustainable preservation, development and use of natural resources and ensure food safety and security, to encourage communities to practice sustainable agriculture to ensure food security and safety, to create bioeconomic systems, and to develop self-reliant economy connected to peacebuilding (p. 6). In addition, the Civil Society Council has proposed to politicians to protect people's food security and safeguard natural resources for sustainability, to promote organic agriculture and biochemical agricultural products, and to guard against the use of chemical products in the region, which have an impact on the health of humans, animals and the environment. This will require strong law enforcement (The Group of Eight Civil Society Organisations Network, 2019, p. 3). Women's groups proposed to conserve and restore the region's resources as they serve as a staple source of food and livelihood for women and the communities (Network of Civic Women for Peace et al, 2023b).

D. Strengthening the people's economic potential

The use of innovation to build capacity and develop creative economy is an issue that many civil society organisations have addressed. The Peace Survey Academic Network (2023, pp. 33-34) proposes that the development of the creative economy should be focused on the social, cultural and identity capital of the region to create positive peace and enhance economic status of the people. Opening spaces for the new generation to raise their voices and express their ability in public spaces louder than violence will create energy in the economy. Tourism, food and culture can be soft power that attracts tourists from Malaysia and other neighbouring countries. The Civil Society Council of the Southernmost Thailand (2019, p. 6) proposes setting up a fund to build a basic economy and upgrade quality community products.

As for civil society organisations that promote the role of women, the Peace Agenda of Women (PAOW) group (2018, p.9) has proposed that the capacity of women to work should be enhanced so that they can earn income and solve the problem of poverty. The Network of Civic Women for Peace et al. (2023b) proposes that the state support large-scale technologies, such as rice milling machines and tractors, by allowing villagers to their own allocation system with the state providing budget and technical support. It is also proposed to develop a strong grassroots economy by developing community enterprises and occupational groups and by encouraging villagers to access sources of capital with special rights such as waiving or reducing trademark registration fees, such as those regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), halal certificate etc. The state should also provide a market for goods both

domestically and in neighbouring markets, raising prices by adding value to agricultural products and controlling the prices of consumer goods used in daily life. The Thai Women Empowerment Fund should be a source of funding that is made easy for women to access to promote employment. In addition, there should be a fund that helps women develop their potential and also promotes equality and women's participation in peacebuilding in the southern border provinces.

The Duayjai Group's public consultation forums pointed out that the problem of access to capital is a major obstacle to development in the region, especially among small entrepreneurs who are start-ups or SMEs. Therefore, there are proposals to promote the economy in various areas. These include: (1) the government should design and create funding sources that are easily accessible and in accordance with Islamic principles, and should have funding sources to support new entrepreneurs, both start-ups and SMEs; (2) tourism should be promoted to drive the economy and public transportation should be developed to promote tourism in the region; (3) more agricultural businesses should be encouraged, especially fisheries and agricultural sectors related to religious matters such as cattle and goat farming; (4) halal businesses should be supported; (5) a supportive, moral and sustainable economy should be built. There are also proposals on labour development such as the development of skills and knowledge connected to the labour market and creating jobs in line with the needs of the labour market in the region together with promoting innovation and technology in the community to drive the local economy. Moreover, with regard to goods production, there is a recommendation to support the integration

of business networks in communities and small businesses to develop skills to keep up with changes in the domestic and international markets, supply chain management and agricultural product logistics to reduce production costs and improve marketing efficiency to increase the value of agricultural products and the income of people in the agricultural sector (Duayjai Group, 2024, pp. 46-47).

However, the Buddhist Network's proposal reflects the economic problems, especially faced by small businesses, with Buddhists feeling that their livelihoods are more difficult and restricted because they are unable to produce halal products and they also lack access to financial means. Buddhists should be supported to be able to access financing and be able to distribute more products to the market, especially markets outside the region (Butsayamat Issadun, n.d.). In addition, a Buddhist Youth Group calls for equal rights to occupations, especially the opportunity to enter civil service. At present, the ability to use Malay language is specified as one of the qualifications for candidates, which becomes an obstacle for Buddhists. Employment opportunities will help Buddhists stay in the region with dignity (Kanokphorn Choopan et al, n.d., p. 4). Another proposal of the Buddhist Group is that the state should support economic activities that promote peaceful coexistence and take into account the creation of social relationships for people in the region, such as promoting cooperative enterprises that Buddhists and Muslims operate together at the community level, which will bring benefits both in terms of meeting the basic needs of the people and promoting peaceful coexistence at the same time (Weaving Peace Together, 2018, pp. 14-15).

3.2.5 Education

A. Lack of educational opportunities

The fundamental problem of children and youth in the southern border provinces is the lack of educational opportunities. According to the Peace Survey Academic Network (2023, p. 17), the lack of public education can be considered one of the structural violence. Of the 1,312 respondents in 2023, most of the sample group, 405 (30.9 per cent), had completed primary education, followed by 331 (25.2 per cent) with an upper secondary education, 213 (16.2 per cent) with a lower secondary education, 149 (11.4 per cent) with a bachelor's degree, 135 (10.3 per cent) with a vocational certificate/higher vocational certificate, and 5 (0.4 per cent) with a master's degree. Seventy four (5.4 per cent) did not enter formal education. It can be seen that more than 60 per cent of respondents have a lower secondary education or less, which is lower than the current basic education level. The level of education may be one factor that is reflected in the income of local people, which is still relatively low. A total of 441 respondents (33.6 per cent) has a monthly income of about 5,001-10,000 baht. Most people in the Deep South are low-income earners and are still facing economic difficulties.

The Network of Civic Women for Peace et al. (2023b) propose that the state help reduce educational expenses to reduce the burden on parents and increase the opportunity for more children and young people to access education. It proposes the establishment of a "mother-to-child payback system" to increase welfare for mothers, such as maternity leave of at least three months, maternity benefits, welfare for newborn children, provision of childcare facilities at work,

etc. (Network of Civic Women for Peace et al. 2019, pp. 10-11). For its part, the Child Protection Network for the Southern Border Provinces and Youth Network propose to promote children's access to education. In addition to the state's policy of 12-year free schooling, other measures should also be taken, such as support for scholarships and travel expenses, as well as educational support for the children of those affected by the unrest, which will ease the burden on the families of those affected (Child Protection Network, 2023, p. 1; Fasai Association et al, 2024, p. 3). In addition, the public consultation forums of the Duayjai Group (2024, p. 21) have a recommendation for a system of support for higher education, which covers living costs and necessary study expenses.

B. Improving the quality of education

Data from the National Economic and Social Development Board shows that the quality of education on the southernmost region is still among the lowest in the country. The Education Index shows Narathiwat Province in last place at 77th, while Pattani and Yala are ranked 76th and 70th respectively (Peace Survey Academic Network, 2023, p. 31). Civic Women proposes to start supporting learning from birth by a policy to create Parent Management Training to create a strong family institution. All families with children aged 3-15 must undergo a training curriculum in a parent school with possibly "1 Community 1 Parent School" operated at the Subdistrict Health Promoting Hospitals or the Subdistrict Administrative Organisations with trained psychologists (Network of Civic Women for Peace et al, 2019, p. 9). In addition, the Civic Women group proposes to appoint early childhood teachers at an appropriate rate to create early childhood curriculum. Emphasis is placed on building executive function (EF) skills to enable children to control their thoughts, emotions and actions, and build a good brain through happy play using the PLEARN (Play and Learn) principle. Competitive examinations at the early childhood and primary levels should be abolished.

The state should turn to promoting children's unique abilities based on multiple intelligences, should encourage children and young people to love reading supported by teachers, parents, guardians and the community by creating a living reading space in every community for children and young people to exchange with each other, and should appoint psychology and guidance teachers in every school and create professional teachers (Network of Civic Women for Peace et al. 2019, p. 10).

The Duayjai Group's public consultation process also reflected on many problems related to the quality of education, such as budget management issues for personnel and infrastructure, the quality of teaching personnel, measurement and evaluation, etc. For this reason, there is a recommendation to decentralise personnel and budget management authority so that education can be designed to suit the specific context of the region. The management of the education system in the region, both curriculum and personnel, should be standardised, with a system to check standards for teaching and learning the curriculum that ensures equal access to education for students. There should be a dedicated committee to systematically supervise education in the southern border provinces in both secular and religious curriculums at different levels (Duayjai Group, 2024, pp. 20-21, 38-40).

C. Providing education in line with the people's identities and promoting cultural diversity in the education system

Educational management that aligns with the cultural identities of people in the region will play an important role in helping to manage and resolve conflicts. Forty point six per cent of respondents in the Peace Survey in 2018 said aligning the education system with the way of life and culture of people in the region was necessary if we want to solve problems in the long term. The survey results reflect that the proportion of Muslims who have completed secular education is lower than that of Buddhists, Christians and others. This is consistent with the results of another survey that found that a lower proportion of those who speak Malay in the home have completed the secular education stream than those who speak southern Thai, central Thai and a mixture of local Malay and Thai. This data reflects educational gaps linked to ethnic and religious identities. The Peace Survey report also cited UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report 2017-2018, which found that 50 per cent of primary school students in Thailand do not study in the language that the children use at home, which affects the results of their studies. The state should, therefore, embrace diverse identities and cultural trajectories by reflecting them through the state education system in a concrete way (Peace Survey Academic Network, 2023, p. 31).

This point aligns with educational proposals from the public consultation project by the Duayjai Group (2024, p. 45), which suggests that curriculum development should be specifically appropriate for the locality and should allow communities or those involved in education to determine the model that they themselves want. Higher education institutions should integrate religious education into all fields of education, such as medicine, nursing, political science and business. It is also proposed that tadika education should be under the supervision of the Islamic Committee and have a dedicated agency to oversee the educational system and curriculum, and work with the Private Education Commission to provide a curriculum that is age-appropriate for students, and which meets the needs of the community.

The Civic Women group proposes that the state should eliminate policies and regulations that cause cultural and ethnic discrimination, such as the banning of hijab in some schools. In fact, children's right to education and the right to practice religious beliefs are protected in the constitution (Network of Civic Women for Peace et al, 2019, p. 7). The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies & The Patani (2019, p. 18) view that the state should promote ethnic diversity by allowing the teaching of local languages and history in schools. Multiculturalism should be a natural process, not ordered from above, which is seen as a form of assimilation.

The Weaving Peace Together group (2018, p. 14) and the Buddhists Network for Peace (2018) have proposed that the state promote multicultural education in the education system and encourage public activities and creative activities within the communities. The proposal to the Ministry of Education is as follows: (1) improve the curriculum

and textbooks to include courses and content related to multiculturalism, cultural and ethnic diversity, as well as human rights principles (especially cultural rights) and dealing with conflict in a peaceful way, and with content that should be more up-to-date and deeper than the current textbooks; (2) design creative teaching and learning of subjects or content related to multiculturalism with creative ideas, as well as encourage more learning outside classroom and interaction between youth of different religions and cultures. This is to cultivate greater understanding of multiculturalism among children, young people and the general public and allow them to have the opportunity to learn about the diverse ways of life of people in order to reduce distrust among different communities.

In addition, the Civil Society Council of the Southernmost Thailand (2019, p. 9) has proposed the promotion of learning about peacebuilding in educational institutions, such as peace studies and coexistence in a multicultural society, from primary school through secondary school to university. Organising exchange forums supported by academic institutions will play an important role in building peace in the southern border provinces.

D. The educational environment and safety of educational institutions

Another concern and challenge related to education in the southern border provinces is the educational environment and safety of educational institutions. Data from the Southern Border Provinces Child Protection Network shows that there were bombing and arson attacks on over 400 schools between 2004 and 2019 because they were seen as representative of the state. Many of the attacks targeted

state security forces, including those deployed on school grounds to protect teachers and students. Violence has damaged schools, including assaults on students and teachers. At the same time, security agencies often enter schools, especially tadika schools, to search and oversee them during classes while in uniform and carrying weapons, which frightens students and educational personnel and makes them feel unsafe. Based on these concerns, it was suggested that the "Safe School Declaration" be adopted in Thailand as a way to prevent educational institutions from being used as military bases during armed conflict. Data should be collected and monitoring mechanisms should be in place to provide assistance when violence occurs in an educational institution. The state needs to provide guarantee that schools, students and educational personnel are safe. Schools should be safe spaces for everyone, and security agencies should consider cultural and religious appropriateness in the local context while conducting activities in schools and should not use school as training grounds (Duayjai Group, 2024, p. 40; 2022, p. 35; Southern Border Provinces Child Protection Network, 2020, p. 1).

There are also proposals to improve the learning environment and atmosphere for children, both in physical terms, such as buildings and premises, and an atmosphere that respects freedoms and personal rights of children, such as hairstyles and dress codes, as well as with an awareness of children's mental health throughout the educational period (Duayjai Group, 2024, p. 40; Southern Border Provinces Child Protection Network, 2020, p. 1).

### 3.2.6 Improving the quality of life of the people

The quality of life and social problems are issues that have been suggested by civil society. Drug problem is still seen as being at a very serious level. The Peace Survey Academic Network (2023, p. 22) proposes a review of the effectiveness of tackling drug abuse and a mechanism to verify the facts of violent incidents should be urgently established. The results of the 2018 survey reflect that drug problem is considered the most serious problem that 70.9 per cent of the public deems necessary to address if we want to end violence in the long term. People of all genders, religions and languages agree on this. A substantial number of people perceive that drug syndicates are involved in violence in the region, apart from state organisations and insurgents. It reflects that violence in the region is so complex that it is difficult to sort out and this contributes to the prolongation of the situation. The PAOW group proposed that the police should be stricter than before on arresting drug manufacturers and that there should be a platform to tackle drug problems directly. Family activities and creative platforms should be provided in the region to reduce drug addiction among children and young people (Peace Agenda of Women et al, 2018, p. 6). The Civic Women group also proposes support for the participation of women's groups and civil society in drug prevention and rehabilitation of drug users. The state should provide budgetary support as well as psychological treatment and necessities to women and children whose family heads are addicted and affected by drugs (Network of Civic Women for Peace et al, 2023b).

Civic Women also has proposals to promote public health with measures to promote hygiene and an environment that is conducive to the physical and mental health. Promoting psychological treatment for those affected by violence should be proactive, ongoing, inclusive and much more efficient (Network of Civic Women for Peace et al, 2023b, p. 9). The Civil Society Council of the Southernmost Provinces (2019, p. 9) proposes that women's capacity building in holistic health care should be promoted and that public health services should be compatible with local culture (The Group of Eight Civil Society Organisations Network, 2019, p.3).

4 Epilogue
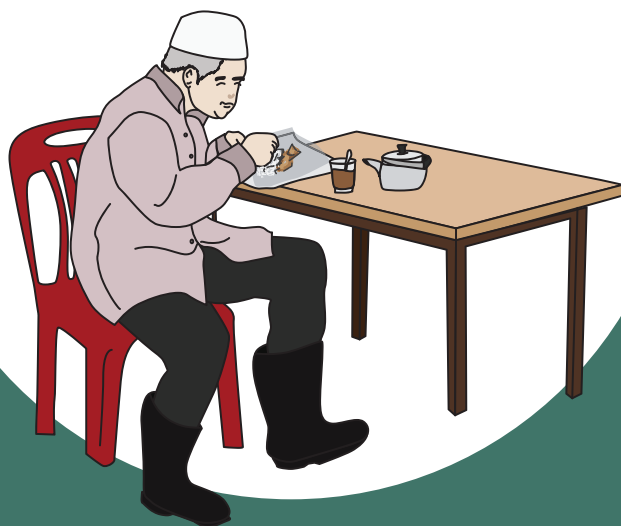
An Agenda for Peace:
Reviewing Proposals of Civil Society Organisations
on Peacebuilding in Southern Thailand

4. Epilogue

Public participation is important for making peace agreements sustainable. Therefore, peace talks should not be limited to the government and the Patani movement alone. Public consultation is an important process that has been laid out as part of the Joint Comprehensive Plan towards Peace (JCPP), a negotiating framework to which the Thai government and BRN have agreed in principle, although the JCPP framework has not yet been signed (as of November 20244).

This research report compiles proposals from 14 civil society organisations over the past decade in the hope that this information will be useful for public consultations which are expected to occur in the future. The data in the report is gathered from the beginning of formal peace talks in 2013 to the beginning of 2024. The proposals are divided into two main parts: **proposals for the peace talks process and substantive proposals for resolving violent conflict.**

Regarding the peace talks process, there are four major proposals:

1) Improving the peace process. The main proposal is to adjust the strategy for resolving the southern conflict with peace talks as the core of conflict resolution, by having civilians who are not government officials as representatives in the peace dialogue panel, reducing violence and creating physical safe spaces,

increasing the role of third parties in bolstering the peace process, strengthening the unity of state policies in resolving conflicts on the southernmost region and developing mechanisms to coordinate and drive the peace talks more effectively.

2) Promoting stakeholder participation in peace process. There are proposals to create a multi-level mechanism to encourage the participation of various stakeholders, to hold public consultations, to integrate gender lens, gender equality and recognition of the diversity of people's identity in the peace process and to support capacity building and knowledge building about peacebuilding among different stakeholders.

3) Ensuring of freedom of expression. In the past, some groups who came out to express their political opinions about the future of Patani have been prosecuted by the government, such as activists who campaigned for the right to determine their own destiny through a legal referendum on independence. This issue is therefore extremely important in guaranteeing safety to build the confidence of those who will be involved in the peace process, especially public consultations.

4) Improving public communication about the peace process. In the past, public awareness of the peace process has been very low, especially among people outside the southern border region. Therefore, there are proposals to raise public awareness and understanding of the peace process through developing the effectiveness of the media, developing a network of public communicators and calling on the two sides in the peace talks to communicate more about the progress of the talks to the public.

Regarding the substantive proposals for resolving violent conflict, there are six major proposals:

1) Seeking a suitable form of governance for the southernmost region. There have been proposals for different models of governance from civil society, politicians, academics, and other sectors. These should form a useful basis for study in order to seek a suitable form of governance for the southernmost provinces in the future.

2) Acceptance of identities, culture and coexistence in a multicultural society. This proposal concerns accepting the cultural diversity in the southern border region and allowing different groups of people to be able to freely express their cultural identities as an important basis for promoting multiculturalism in the Deep South, which must be based on accepting different identities. It should not be an attempt to assimilate the culture of a minority into the culture of the majority.

3) Human rights, justice and law enforcement. There are proposals to review the enforcement of special laws in the three southern border provinces, which at present are Martial Law, the 2005 Decree on Public Administration in Emergency Situation and the 2008 Internal Security Act. In addition, there are proposals on equal enforcement of the law, facilitating justice for those who have suffered loss, and eliminating violence against women and violations of the rights of vulnerable groups, including the establishment of mechanisms for monitoring and assessing the impact and promoting human rights principles.

4) Economic development and local resource management. There are proposals for more people to participate in the development and management of natural resources and for promoting food security and sustainable use of natural resources, including strengthening the economic skills of the people.

5) Education. Major educational problems have been identified, such as a lack of educational opportunities, the quality of education, how education

is aligned with local cultural identities, cultural diversity in the education system
and the creation of a safe environment in educational institutions.

6) Developing the quality of life of the people. Dealing with the drug
problem remains a priority in the mind of a number of people. There is also
discussion of promoting people's well-being and ahealthcare system that is
in line with the way of life of the people in the area.

Civil Society Policy Proposals: Agreements and Differences

In peace negotiations, discussions on proposals that are points of
agreement among many parties will cause less resistance and friction.
Implementing these proposals can be achieved more easily and will contribute
to confidence building in the peace process. Hence, seeking issues where society
has a common consensus first should be useful for advancing the peace process.

From a review of the proposals of civil society, it can be seen that there
are at least four issues that are points of agreement among various organisations.
**The first issue is the reduction of violence and creation of a physical safe
space.** Women's groups and respondents of the Peace Survey, civil society
groups with close ties to the state and groups campaigning for self-determination
who have close ties with the Patani Liberation Front together with Buddhist
groups who are the minority in the region — all these various groups have
proposals that may differ in detail, but have common points of agreement.
For example, the Peace Agenda of Women proposes "safe public spaces"
focusing on five top priority sites: markets, streets, schools, mosques/temples,
and Village Defence Volunteer posts. The Patani proposes reducing the number
of soldiers and checkpoints in communities to make people feel safe and reduce
tension within the communities. The Buddhist Network for Peace and the Weaving

Peace Together group have proposed that all forces end violence against Buddhists and end the eviction of Buddhists from the region, and want to provide a safe space for children, women, monks, and Buddhists. The start of negotiations on creating physical safe spaces for all parties should therefore be an important point of agreement, which could help build confidence in the peace process as a whole.

The second point is the promotion of the participation of stakeholders in the peace talks. This proposal has been made by the Insider Peacebuilders Platform (IPP) since 2014, and other organisations such as the Civil Society Council of the Southernmost Thailand, The Patani, respondents of the Peace Survey, the Area-based Inter-agency Coordination Working Group (Sor Lor 3), and Civic Women, which have proposed support for the creation of a process for stakeholders to participate in designing political solutions through the peace process. The IPP has proposed the creation of a mechanism to support the peace process and a multi-track peace process. The Civil Society Council of the Southernmost Thailand has proposed support for the creation of a civil society mechanism as a safety net to support peace talks together with a variety of women's groups, youth groups, groups from all religions, cultural groups, academic groups, politicians and government agencies. In 2023, the Peace Survey Academic Network proposed the establishment of a joint committee involving the government, the BRN and civil society to hold various forms of public consultation. Civic Women made a similar proposal by adding academics to join in co-designing a public consultation process and determine the issues to be introduced to public consultations.

The third point is freedom of expression. Many civil society organisations have spoken about creating a safe space for expressing opinions without intimidation. This idea has been discussed in reports by PAOW, the Civil

Society Council of the Southernmost Thailand, The Patani, and the Peace Survey Academic Network. The PAOW report, released in the period after the 2014 coup, reflected that activists working on sensitive issues in the region faced suspicion, distrust, surveillance, prejudice, or in some cases intimidation and harassment from both the security agencies and Malay Muslim insurgents and called for the state to open up space for civil society to work safely and independently. A 2017 report by the Civil Society Council of Southernmost Thailand also called for the state to allow freedom of expression without intimidation and harassment for the expression of political ideas or beliefs as appropriate within the framework of the law on matters of historical, ethnic and religious identity and the expression of a variety of identities. The Patani, whose members are facing prosecution for their activism over the "independence" referendum in 2023, reflected an atmosphere they perceive as lacking freedom of political expression, especially on the issue of self-determination, autonomy and democracy in Thailand.

The fourth point is communicating the peace process to the public. This issue has been discussed by several groups such as PAOW, IPP, the Weaving Peace Together group, The Patani, the Peace Survey Network, the Buddhist youth network and youth groups, etc. PAOW suggested that the media should provide impartial and comprehensive information, especially on the progress of the peace talks. The Buddhist youth network and youth groups have proposed that the government have a policy for the mainstream media to allocate more space and time to cover stories about the situation on the southern border region and the progress of the peace process. The Weaving Peace Together group proposed that the Thai peace dialogue panel focus on promoting a broad public understanding of the peace process in order to narrow the communication gap on the dialogue process. The Patani has proposed

that the BRN communicate more with the public and develop an organisational strategy for communication with the international community. It can be seen that building awareness and understanding among the public is an important factor in the success of the peace process. If some groups of people see that they themselves are not informed and not participating in expressing their opinions on the negotiations leading up to a peace agreement, there may be a negative reaction later, which may cause the talks or peace agreement to collapse.

However, there are still many issues where people have differing opinions that need to be resolved and seek common ground through the peace process, especially through public consultations. It is hoped that the public consultations will allow all stakeholders to share their views and provide a platform to seek common ground among people with different ideas, ideologies, social backgrounds and cultures. At least three key **differences** may be addressed.

First, appropriate form of governance for the region. It may be said that civil society organisations have similar opinions that there is a need to create a new form of governance on the southern border provinces where people have different cultural identities, including the Civil Society Council of the Southernmost Thailand, feedback from the Peace Survey Academic Network, the Sor Lor 3 and the Duayjai Group. The Civil Society Council of the Southernmost Thailand held 124 forums in 2012-2013 to ask people for their opinion on the appropriate form of governance on the southern border provinces. Most people at that time (32.2 per cent) wanted to use the form of governance that already existed, namely the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC) and appointed provincial governors. The Peace Survey in 2023 showed that most people (36.8 per cent) wanted to see more decentralised governance with a governance structure like other parts of the country, and 35.7 per cent of the people suggested

more decentralisation with a locally specific governance structure under Thai law. The Sor Lor 3 had a proposal related to a special form of governance with the election of provincial governors, like the system of governance of Bangkok and Pattaya. There are proposals for the election of governors and district chiefs, but some do not agree with the election of governors and district chiefs due to concerns that politics in the region is not yet mature and this may give rise to vote-buying. Data from public consultations held by the Duayjai Group shows that the public wants to change the form of governance and administration of the region, which may include calls for decentralisation and increased local autonomy, but no clear model has yet been proposed.

Buddhist groups, who are a minority in the region, will be somewhat concerned about establishing an autonomous region, because they fear that their way of life will be affected if they have to live under a local government in a region where 80 per cent of the population is Malay Muslim. There are concerns as to whether the introduction of Islamic law, specifically in relation to criminal prosecutions, will have impact on non-Muslims in the southernmost region.

The issue of the form of governance is considered as the heart of resolving the conflict in the Deep South. It is an issue where there are many differences of opinion and there must be a process of dialogue with the whole of society both in the southernmost region and perhaps also with those living in other parts of Thailand. This issue is not something that can be agreed only between the government and the representatives of the movement who are at the negotiating table.

Second, identity, culture and "multiculturalism." This issue is at the heart of the conflict in the Deep South and involves both vertical and horizontal relationships. The vertical relationship is about the state and the Malay Muslims, who are a minority in the country. The state is trying to use the concept of *phahuwattanatham,* or "multiculturalism" as a concept to encourage Malay Muslims to accept coexistence with the larger society and not exclusively living in a monocultural society in their own region. But the state has not made it clear whether and how it would accept and promote ethnic Malay cultural identity. Therefore, the concept of *phahuwattanatham* is seen as assimilation by other means. The Thai state has previously used assimilation policy to create homogenous society under the overarching idea of Thainess. This idea has been opposed by a number of Malay Muslims who want to preserve their own ethnic and religious identity. They still feel that the state has consistently attempted to suppress their identity, especially through the education system. Therefore, there are calls for the recognition and promotion of the identities of the Malay Muslims in the region.

At the same time, this issue has also created tension in the horizontal relationship between Malay Muslims and people of different ethnicities and religions on the southernmost region, especially Thai Buddhists. There are some Thai Buddhists who are afraid of the expression of Malay Muslim identity, such as gatherings of men dressed in Malay costume at Saiburi District, Pattani at the celebration of Hari Raya (Eid al-Fitr). This concern of Thai Buddhists is also reflected through the Sor Lor 3. While some members have proposed adding Malay and Jawi script as official languages and upgrading Malay as a second language, Buddhist leaders rejected the proposal and maintained that the official language should still be Thai.

On the one hand, the civil society sector, such as PAOW, has proposed reviving intercultural relationship that have been severely affected by the violent conflict over the past two decades and called for the promotion of an understanding of multiculturalism in the Deep South. According to universal values, *phahuwatthanatham,* or multiculturalism is a principle that should be encouraged, but the term has been used by the government as a tool of assimilation as already mentioned. This makes it more difficult and complicated to build acceptance of this campaign in the region. To separate this issue from the Thai state, it may be necessary to substitute other terms to create acceptance among Malay Muslim groups, such as *kan san samphan kham watthanatham,* or "cross-cultural bonding". Movement on this issue should start with the state expressing equal acceptance and promotion of cultural identities of all groups in order to achieve acceptance of coexistence in a society of diverse cultures. Issues of tension related to identity, culture and the promotion of multiculturalism are also reflected in the management of education in the region, with various types of educational institutions.

Third, the imposition of special laws in the southern border region. Currently, three special laws are in force in the southern border region. Martial Law has been declared throughout Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat provinces. This law gives military authorities the power to detain suspects for up to seven days without a court warrant. The Emergency Decree is still in force in 18 out of 33 districts in the three southernmost provinces.[4] The Emergency Decree allows

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[4] Districts where the Emergency Decree has been revoked in the three southern border provinces are Su-ngai Kolok, Waeng, Sukhirin and Yi-ngo in Narathiwat; Mai Kaen, Mae Lan, Thung Yang Daeng, Yaring, Mayo, Kapho and Panare in Pattani; and Betong, Kabang, Krong Pinang and Raman in Yala province.

military police officers to arrest suspects, but they must have an arrest warrant under the Emergency Decree issued by the courts and detention must be in a non-prison facility for up to 30 days. In the remaining area, the Internal Security Act has been declared in 15 districts in the three southern border provinces and four districts in Songkhla Province (Na Thawi, Saba Yoi, Thepha and Chana). The main measure used is Article 21, which allows those who have committed offences that affect internal security to attend training for a period of up to six months as an alternative to being prosecuted. The ISOC director is authorised to submit the case to the public prosecutor to request the court to hand down an order suspending the right to criminal prosecution if the person is deemed to have "acted after being misled or not knowing what they were doing" and there is the opportunity for them to reform themselves which will be beneficial to maintaining internal security. Many civil society groups, especially those representing Malay Muslims, have called for the revocation of the special laws, particularly Martial Law and the Emergency Decree, because they are seen as conditions that open the room for human rights violations, such as torture during detention. But Thai Buddhist groups are concerned that the revocation of the special laws will affect their safety. Therefore, this requires comprehensive consultation with stakeholders to avoid opposition from any one group.

This research emphasises the proposals that civil society has put forward over the past decade that could provide a basis for thinking about public hearings towards resolving problems through the peace process, especially the public consultations that are expected in the near future. In a conflict that has caused tens of thousands of injuries and deaths and a massive loss of property, the wounds left in people's minds require time and a process to heal. Seeking common ground to lead to lasting peace is something that may not be easy to achieve. All parties must be ready to forgive, to overcome past conflicts, and to move forward to design a shared future. Starting first with issues of commonality will strengthen and create confidence in the peace process and will lead to debates on other more difficult issues later. While the peace process is something that takes time, the lessons of violent conflicts in many countries around the world show that ending violent conflict through a peace process is more sustainable than military repression. The peace process is not just about ending physical violence, it is also a process that turns conflict into peace, which requires understanding and cooperation from people in the whole society - both in the southernmost provinces and people in other regions across the country.

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Institute for Peace Studies, Prince of Songkla University &
Peace Resource Collaborative Foundation 2024