“Human Rights and Peace Audit Exercises on ‘Partitions’ as a Method to Resolve Ethno-Nationalist Conflicts in South Asia”
Phase II

Project supported by: International Development Research Centre (IDRC)
Reference: Grant no 105546
Implemented By: South Asia Forum for Human Rights (SAFHR)
Contents

1.0.0 Basic Problem
1.1.1 The Research Problem
1.2.1 Objectives
1.3.1 Methodology
1.4.2 Timelines

2.0.0 Project Activities
2.1.1 Mapping Peace Processes in South Asia: Conceptual & Comparative Frameworks
2.1.2 Survey
2.1.3 Chronologies of Conflict & Peace Processes
2.1.4 Field Studies: Human Rights & Peace Audits
2.1.5 Cross Border Dialogues

2.2.0 Implementation & Management:
2.2.1 Mapping
2.2.2 Survey
2.2.3 Chronologies
2.2.4 Field Studies
2.2.4 a. Selection & Design
2.2.4 b. Implementation
2.2.4 c. Core Group
2.2.5 Cross Border Dialogues

3.0.0 Project Outcomes
Publications & Social Processes

3.1.1 Mapping Peace Processes: Conceptual & Comparative Frameworks
Publication:

3.1.2 SAFHR Monographs/ Papers
• “People, Nation and State: Chronicles of struggles: Chittagong Hill Tracts, Kashmir, Naga Hills and Sri Lanka” edited by Tapan K Bose, SAFHR 2012
• “Gender & Ethno-Nationalist Struggles: Narratives of Power & Instrumentalization” Rita Manchanda, SAFHR 2012
• “When Home is the Edge of the Nation: Dialogue with ‘Border’ people of Rajasthan, West Bengal and Bangladesh” by Rita Manchanda, Tapan Bose, Sahana Ghosh, Bani Gill, SAFHR, February 2012

3.1.3 Articles & Papers
• “Expanding the Middle Space in the Naga Peace Process” Rita Manchanda and Tapan Bose Economic & Political Weekly, December 31, 2011, vol XLVI No 53; pp 51-60
3.1. 4 Field Studies 
(Northeast)


Part I “Negotiating Sovereignty, Integration and Unity: Expanding ‘middle space’ in Naga Peace Process” Rita Manchanda, Tapan Bose

Part II “The Mizo Accord - Replicating the Indian State: Auditing 25 years of ‘Peace’ in Mizoram” Sajal Nag


- “Partition as Method of Resolving Ethno-nationalist Conflicts in South Asia: The Case of the Chittagong Hill Tracts” Amena Mohsin with Delwar Hussain, Sage (forthcoming: Auditing Peace Processes series)

4.0.0 PROJECT OUTPUTS

4. 1.1 & 4 Research Milestones I
   Mapping & Field Studies

4. 1.5 Research Milestones II
   Cross Border Dialogues

4.2.0 Capacity Building
4.2.1/4 Mapping & Field Studies
4.1.5 Cross Border Dialogues

4.3.0 Policy & Practice
4.3.1-4 Mapping, Monographs & Field Studies
4.3.5 Cross Border Dialogues

4.4.0 Research Importance & Contribution

5.00 Top Highlights
1.0.0 Basic Problem

1.1.0 The Research Problem
Globally, the dominant policy cum scholarly discourse has been sceptical and even hostile to conceding the partitioning of sovereignty into two states. However ‘internal self determination’ articulated in the form of federal arrangements, and the devolution of political power through the constitutional mechanism of special “regional or territorial autonomy”, is held up as the most effective way of protecting the political, social, economic and cultural rights of nationalities / minorities. The SAFHR peace audits of the South Asian states’ praxis of peacemaking critically interrogate from a rights based perspective the capacity of such statist division based “peace” accords to resolve ethno- nationalist self determination conflicts. Our contention is that such peace making via division based accords, is aimed at non violent pacification and enabling the ethnic elite, the ‘rebels’ to becoming stakeholders in electoral democratic processes for controlling power in federal or autonomous units. Such peacemaking is oriented towards reproducing mirror images of the state’s structure of authority and hierarchical institutions, rather than creating conditions for a flourishing political, social and cultural diversity. These are status quo strategies.

Phase-I: ‘Auditing Partitions’ (2005-2008) had interrogated Partition theory and practice and held up as paradigmatic the Great Partition of 1947 and its violent disruptions. around the magisterial assertion that ‘Partition’ based strategies for resolving ‘ethno nationalist’ conflicts are flawed and ineffective and displace and divert the grievances at the root of the conflict and prove unstable and undemocratic. They treat conflict as a matter of ethnicity and not as basically rooted in a democracy deficit. Our conceptual hypothesis remained that the roots of oppression/ grievances are likely to be located in issues of land - resources, justice, and marginalised people’s access to entitlements and rights, but that they get subsumed/ displaced in an elite directed oppositional consciousness constructed around identity issues. Our emphasis on ethnic elite driven identity movements aimed at wresting power and control remained a dominant line of analysis, i.e. a largely functionalist and constructivist approach to ethnicity. But subsequent to the field studies the explanatory framework has been expanded to accommodate the compelling impulses of communitarian societies as underlying ethno-nationalist assertions. Modern state building models fail to take cognisance of the persisting hold of communitarian socio-politics.

Integrationist Project: In the multi-ethnic, multi religious, multi cultural and multi regional state system of South Asia, the revolt of ethno-nationalist communities points to gaps in the state’s integrationist project. These states are still consolidating a nation - state identity, and negotiating and re-negotiating the role and status of nations, communities and elites within a quasi settled bounded territory. Viewed from a statist perspective, these ethno-nationalist conflicts can be conceptualized as tumultuous gaps in the state’s integrationist project. But from the struggle groups’ perspective they can be conceptualized as citizen’s articulating socio-economic and regional grievances via the vehicle of politicized ethnic identities.

In resolving what in all likelihood becomes militarised conflicts, our understanding is that there is a commonality in the pattern of the South Asian states’ praxis of peace making. It is located in the region’s post colonial institutions and culture notwithstanding the differences in the formal political structure of democracy or military autocracy. Moreover, the context of these post colonial states under conditions of globalization has altered with their coercive and discursive role as protector of global capital and natural resources easing out the state welfare
role. With many of these areas rich in strategic resources, the state's peace and development discourse in these ‘disturbed’ areas approximates to ‘pacification’.

**Rights based peace audit:** It brings to the centre the perspective of the conflict affected people to critically reflect on the capacity of the state’s peacemaking strategies to empower the struggle group, to examine why so many peace accords are faltering and assess the limits and strengths of ‘success’ stories and how to do better. The research framework contends that such top down accords are rarely concerned with transforming unequal relations, delivering justice, participation and inclusion, or promoting access to people’s entitlements to education, housing, health services and livelihood, especially of minorities and women. It is even a moot question whether they deliver on security as the targets of violence change. Our research problem suggests that in such peace processes, there is no imperative for democratic inclusion or democratic expansion of the political agenda and institutions, in either the state or the putative autonomous unit, i.e. beyond the expansion of elite power sharing arrangements. Generally, the accord process is cynically focused on a compromise that will enable the cessation of violence, particularly that directed against the state and pave the way for the moderate ‘counter elite’ to come to power.

Our hypothesis posits that division/partition based peace processes producing ethnic homelands often result in homogenization and further shrinkage of plural spaces. Such accords in creating exclusivist territorial autonomies in what are usually multi ethnic spaces produce new ethnic assertions, and new violent contestations. In particular, ethno nationalist struggles are totalizing and are hostile to gender and minorities. The valorisation of an exclusivist tradition and custom in these identity based conflicts finds reflection in the text of these ‘peace’ accords which emphasise customary laws and practices. It is argued that a reinforced patriarchal nexus of the post conflict autonomous entity and society oppressively enforces specific socio-cultural roles for women in the private sphere, crimping the possibility of their engagement in a democratic public sphere.

Arguably, in critically interrogating the capacity of peace making via territorially focused federal-autonomous arrangements, we run the risk of promoting the “conservative” political theory of a powerful unitary state with consequences that are evident in Sri Lanka. On the contrary, the objective of our study is to identify political and legal mechanisms as well as such enabling interventionist processes as, for example, the role of ‘civil society’ associations in making the process more participatory, inclusive and accountable. The studies explore whether the involvement of ‘civil society’ in such peace processes could make such peace making something other than a status quo exercise. Particularly visible in the civil society space are women’s groups. There is wide social sanction to their agency as peace activists in the public sphere, and in expanding the constituency for peace. However the process of accord making and the post conflict re-imaging of state - autonomous unit, invariably excludes women. However, it is argued that the conflict and post accord dynamics creates new contexts for expanding sites of resistance that promise a more transformatory politics within these struggles.

The policy objective is to explore how such peace praxis can be transformed to enable them to become a means for taking the process of democratization to its logical end, that is, empowering oppressed communities. Our research thesis posits the possibility of the role of ‘civil society’ in transforming the asymmetric dynamics of such accords between the state and its disaffected unit, providing strategic depth and enabling accountability.
1.2.0 Objectives

1.2.1 Overall Objective:
Building an empirically rooted comprehensive knowledge base of the nature and the strengths and weaknesses of the praxis of peace making in the region and consolidating a methodology of a people’s audit of its consequences, with a view to distilling prescriptive policy lessons

- To sensitize decision makers on the imperative of inclusive politics, incorporating gendered concerns, democratizing institutions beyond power realignments and placing social justice, equity and human rights accountability on the peace agenda
- To empower civil society, and the media on the why, where and how to intervene to shore up the lacunae inherent in this type of peace making non-inclusion of human rights and accountability for violations during the period of conflict.
- To foster a trans-national research community capable of capturing the paradoxes of ‘border making accords’, which accentuates the border versus core perspectives that becomes the ground for resurgence of conflict at a later date.

1.2.2 Specific Objectives:

- Interrogate the ‘success’ of the integrationist enterprise of these postcolonial states in accommodating ‘plural assertions’ through ‘partition’ based solutions like the “one unit” policy of Pakistan and unitary governments in Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

- Consolidate a normative structure of a popular audit of the praxis of peace making through objective evaluation the of the core issues that led to the conflict, the trajectory of the conflict, responses of the state and non-state parties, peace making and post peace achievements in the rehabilitation of the displaced, social and economic development and human rights.

- Empirically examine the consequences for recurring identity conflicts of ‘partition’ based peace strategies in multicultural and plural societies for example the tribal areas and the central government of Pakistan, the emergence of Sindhi, Baluch and Pushtun (NWFP) in Pakistan, Tamil Nationalism in Sri Lanka and the Madhesi identity politics in Nepal.

- Explore the implications of competing narratives of nation, community and borders by bringing in the perspectives of non dominant groups, ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities, indigenous peoples, women, refugees and migrants and border communities.

- Examine the significance of the role of civil society in the praxis of peace making in the region in building a more democratic and stable peace a case study of Nepal and Bangladesh.

- Critically evaluate the limits of the agenda setting capacity of protagonists –focused on territorial autonomies and ‘nation states in the making’ and explore non territorial autonomies like affirmative action, preferential quota for minorities and constitutional guaranty for freedom of religion.
1.3.0 Methodology
As specified in the original proposal, the research comprised both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. It was a field of inquiry cutting across several disciplines and subject matter. The aim was to develop an in-depth understanding of the reasons that govern the behaviour of the people and the governments. The field studies investigated the why and how of decision making, not just what, where and when. It essentially relied on four methods of information gathering:

- **Analysis of documents and other materials**
  A focused study and analysis of literature on the areas and the issues under study. History will remain the basic entry point and a basic referent, but a conscious attempt will be made to avoid a 'high politics’ framing of the agenda. The processual linchpin of the audit is the long gaze in the genealogy of peace making, not to pass historical judgment but to point towards future directions.

- **Questionnaires and Roundtable workshop.**
  The next step of the research process will primarily focus on eliciting information from target population. The researchers may use structured questionnaires to get in-depth information from selected communities, particularly in the border zones. There will be roundtable workshops. The purpose of the roundtable is to bring together not only people who were directly involved in the conflict, media persons, policy makers who were involved in the management of the process for the government, but also NGOs, women’s groups and community based organisation.

- **Focus Group studies and in-depth interviews.**
  The third step will consist of focus group studies—one in the conflict affected area, the other of security forces and the third of the media community. In addition we may where necessary also identify such groups as conflict displaced persons. These group studies will rely on participatory methodology, involving researchers and representatives of local administration and NGOs working in the areas.

- **Examining the hypothesis**
  The fourth step will involve the examination of the fundamental hypothesis that “division based settlements are flawed in ending conflict and securing democracy”. This step will involve analysing the data gathered through the studies and interactions, so as to develop an understanding of the range of knowledge, attitudes, and practices, as well as the logic of the actors involved in the conflict and the peace process; comprehending the genesis of the conflicts and the logic of coping strategies; describing the perceptions of the people about the causes of the conflict, possible solutions and their assessment of the peace that was made or is in the process of being made.

 [See Implementation & Management Section]

1.4.0 Timelines
Start Date .................. February 3, 2009

End date ................... August 2, 2011

Extension .................. August 3 to February 3, 2012
2.0.0 Project Activities

Carrying over the conceptual framework and thematic concerns articulated in Phase I (2005-8), Phase II (2009-2011/12) expanded the research focus on a rights based audit of the states’ praxis of resolving ethno-nationalist conflicts via ‘partition/division/devolution based peace accords. Activities spanned the 30 month period of the Project. In view of delays in delivery schedule, an extension of six months was negotiated with the IDRC team.

2.1.1 Mapping Peace Processes in South Asia: Conceptual & Comparative Frameworks

The desk based mapping of South Asian states’ praxis of peace making in ethno-nationalist conflicts was designed as complementary to the empirical situational studies, providing an overall explanatory context and ideational coherence to a multi-country research project with multiple research products. It was informed by the same hypothesis, rights based perspectives and values that guided the field studies, and was derived from Phase I of the research project (2007-2008). The mapping exercise was oriented towards developing conceptual frameworks and comparative analysis. The grim reality of stalled or faltering peace processes and the compromised nature of even the ‘successful’ accords prompted us to question whether the method of peace making itself was the problem, or could the problem be ‘fixed’ by better implementation of the Accord? The Research Project posited that where peace processes and peace accords minister to conflict manifestations than causes, reinforce rather than challenge inter group divisions, attend to the interest of armed groups but neglect less vocal and more vulnerable constituencies and fail to deliver quality of life changes to many inhabitants - there is need for a critical peace impact assessment, and even revision.

In assessing the ‘success’ of peacemaking from a human rights and peace audit perspective, our emphasis was on the quality of democracy and the horizontal distribution of political power, the fostering of a culture of pluralism, the ensuring of rights to security, justice and equity, and access to entitlements to education, housing, health services and livelihood, especially of the poor, the minorities and women. A statist perspective privileges stability and national integration as the core values. The mapping exercise as well as the field studies brought from the margins to the centre the perspectives and expectations of the people of the conflict affected area and their understanding of the impact on their lives of such top down peace processes.

2.1.2 Survey: A Quantitative Survey structured around a Master Questionnaire common to all the field studies was included as a part of the methodology of the field based peace audits at the Interim meeting of Project stakeholders in Kathmandu July 2010. The adoption of a complementary quantitative research tool, though as a subordinate component, was intended to lend robustness to the subjectivity of our qualitative research methodologies. Also the use of a ‘Master Questionnaire’ would yield information comparable across 5 violent conflicts - post accord situations to consolidate our comparative and conceptual analysis.

2.1.3 Chronologies of Conflict & Peace Processes: SAFHR research team as a by-product of the Mapping Exercise developed chronologies (and some bibliographies) of the ‘national narratives’ of these self determination movements, the dynamics of state praxis and peoples’ struggles from a rights based perspective. They include Tamil ‘nationalist’ assertion, Sri Lanka
‘ethnic conflict’, Sind & Mohajir ethno-nationalist assertions, Darjeeling Gorkha national movement, Kashmir, Assam, the Naga, Madhes, and CHT struggles & peace processes. Several have been uploaded onto SAFHR’s website, four have been brought out in the form of a monograph. The chronologies segment provided an opportunity to address some significant gaps in the development of a robust mapping of conflicts and peace processes. The chronologies were conceived as important entry points to unravelling the dense complexities of these situational conflicts and peace processes.

2.1.4 Field Studies: Human Rights & Peace Audits
Four field based multi country audits of the states’ praxis of resolving conflicts deemed ‘ethno-nationalist’ via territorially focused division based peace processes. The emphasis is on a rights based peace audit bringing to the centre the subjectivity of the people of the conflict affected area and auditing the gap between peace as made by the elite (ruling elite and the counter elite) and people’s aspirations; auditing the successes and limitations of the consequences of the states’ praxis of peace making. Peace audit exercises empirically test the basis of the hypothesis posited in Phase I regarding ‘partition’ based peace processes.

The four situational studies identified by the advisory core group were: Northeast Accords {Assam-Bodo Accords; Mizo Accords & Naga Accords }, Sri Lanka ‘ethnic conflict’ peace processes {Thimpu to 2002-5}; Bangladesh - Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord ; Pakistan Managing & Containing conflicts: Sind & Balochistan. Earlier, between 1999-2003 SAFHR had organised ‘round table’ audits of four peace accords bringing to the table multi layered stakeholders, policy makers, generals, public intellectuals, civil society groups including women’s associations. The peace audits on Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord, Naga Peace Process, Sri Lanka Peace Processes and Balochistan served as important building blocks.

2.1.5 Cross Border Dialogues .... 3
Eastern Dialogue-I (India-Bangladesh border) was held in Behrampur, India on Nov 13-14, 2010 and Dhaka, Bangladesh in Jan 28-29 2011. SAFHR’s partners were Masum (Manob Odhikar Suraksha Manch-Kolkata) and Ain O Sailesh Kendra (Dhaka). The Western Border II (India-Pakistan) was held in April 9-10 in Barmer, Rajasthan in association with the Society for Upliftment of Rural Economy (SURE). The Sind Dialogue segment of the Western Border Dialogue eventually had to be abandoned because of delays in securing visas and security concerns.

The agenda explored the impact of the drawing of the border on peoples’ physical security, livelihood, social, cultural and religious rights, freedom of movement and sense of belonging, identity and citizenship rights. The perspective was that of the people of the borderlands. The Dialogues brought together members of the local elected bodies, party leaders, lawyers, doctors, educationists, human rights and development activists, NGOs and journalists from the border districts.

2.2.0 Implementation & Management:

2.2.1 Mapping
Initially, the plan was for the SAFHR’s Delhi research team to pursue a desk based mapping in tandem with the concurrent field studies, systematically incorporating inputs from the
empirically based field audits, and reshaping and consolidating the conceptual and comparative analysis as well as providing feedback for the ongoing audits. However, delays in the delivery schedules of the field studies, as well as the imperative to provide an ideational and processual scaffolding for the disparate field studies, obliged us to fast track this component of the research project. SAFHR Desk based team had a jump start in that we could build upon SAFHR earlier experiments in peace audits of the states’ praxis in containing/ resolving conflicts in the CHT, Nagaland, Sri Lanka and Balochistan (1999-2003). Here the methodology of the audit peace audits was structured around a ‘round table’ process that brought together stakeholders – (ex) policy makers and generals, ideologues of self determination movements, public intellectuals, academics, media, lawyers and other professionals and ‘civil society’ representatives including women. [See for SAFHR peace audit reports: www. safhr.org]

The early draft paper titled ‘Mapping Exercise: Towards Theorization & Comparative Analysis (July 2010) analytically demonstrated myriad ways in which the stand alone field studies created a dense and coherent fabric. Also, it provided a holistic frame for Lead Researchers to open the windows on their specific field studies. As the same conceptual framework and methodology underpins the field studies and the desk based analysis, the paper provided an opportunity to explore comparative frameworks of analysis. Also the subsequent inclusion of a Survey component in the research methodology of the field studies, structured around a Master Questionnaire, invited comparative insights and consolidated (and challenged) our conceptual analysis. Unfortunately protracted delays in the completion of the field studies resulted in the ‘Overview’ not being able to do real justice to the richness of the findings of the peace audits and the complexity of analysis. It meant weaving in the findings on the run, as it were, rather than interacting as a coordinated research team enriching each other’s work. This is despite the sustained efforts on the part of the Delhi based research coordination team to interact (periodically face to face and continuously electronically) and provide real time feedback.

There were moments of exciting intellectual synergy and synthesis during the collective peer review meetings especially, the Interim Kathmandu meeting (July 2010) and the ‘Regional Symposium’ (May 2011) but that momentum could not sustained. It resulted in more responsibility devolving on the SAFHR Research team to develop conceptual and comparative analysis as evinced in the ‘Overview’ publication.

Gender as a crosscutting theme was emphasised from the outset and built into the value framework of the studies and the methodology. The segmented emphasis on “Gender and Ethno-nationalists Struggles” in the final publication, is reflective of both its significance and our inability to sufficiently and seamlessly integrate gender perspectives in our analyses. It was by developing an exclusive (and separate) focus that we were able to explore gender as a category of analysis and new ways of reading ethno-nationalist conflicts and their resolution by acquiescing to ‘homeland of one’s own.

2.2.2 Survey:
Design & Implementation: At the Kathmandu consultation in July 2010, despite some misgivings, Lead Researchers of the Field Studies and the Advisory Core Group members agreed to include a quantitative research component in the form of a random sample based survey to complement the qualitative analyses. Sanjay Kumar of the Centre for Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) who has substantive experience in designing election surveys, and more recently, the quantitatively based study of ‘State of Democracy in South Asia’ was contracted to develop the Master Questionnaire and provide the Training Guidelines for Conducting Survey,
Manual for Field Investigators, Code Book and Notes for Translators. The random sample survey was designed to cover about 250 respondents per field study using the standard questionnaire consolidated on the basis of feedback from the Kathmandu meeting as well as SAFHR’s Delhi research team.

Actual Survey covered a total of 872 respondents: Chittagong Hill Tracts- 258, Madhes - 297, Assam-Bodo - 152, Mizoram - 85, Nagaland – 80. They were further divided by Age, Gender, Language and Locality (urban-rural). In the case of Mizoram and Nagaland, there was some anxiety in view of the limited sample size and the high proportion of ‘N.A.’ resulting in missing data and distortions. In order to offset distorted interpretations, it was felt advisable to draw upon relevant findings of the 660 plus random sample base of CSDS – Lokniti Election Surveys 2008 for Mizoram and Nagaland. Also, in the case of Mizoram, there was an additional factor, the majority Mi-Zo tribes of Mizoram were in a numerical minority in the Mizoram Survey. Perhaps, with the intention of privileging the views of the non dominant communities in Mizoram, the Mizo Survey profile has a much greater numerical predominance of the Chakmas - 30 respondents, Bru- 35 while the majority Mizo ethnic tribes- 20 respondents (MiZo tribes pop: 87%). It meant a large proportionate of ‘N.A’ answers to questions around the 1986 accord.

High risk areas: In Balochistan, because of the volatile situation and the weaknesses in the delivery capacity of the then lead co-ordinator of the field work (subsequently dropped) no field Survey was conducted. In Bodoland endemic violence in the area resulted in postponement and delays in the Survey schedule.

Methodological challenges: Few field studies of violence and peacemaking from a non statist, individual perspective combine quantitative with qualitative research. This is largely because of the formidable difficulties involved in capturing violence and the post conflict ‘aftermath’ at the micro level using surveys based on random samples of individuals. At issue are the formidable challenges in capturing violence that occurs in non linear cycles where times of violence and peace do not necessarily represent opposite sides of the continuum but rather co-exist often simultaneously.

Moreover research on violence is informed by silences, especially gendered silences. The invisibilizing or separation of violence in the private sphere from ‘real’ violence in the public sphere produces distortions as evident in our findings. Quantitative survey based analysis confronts huge challenges in capturing gendered data as evident in the SAFHR survey findings which show very limited gendered variation and high proportion of ‘NA’/ Can’t Say, i.e. ‘missing data. Missing data is one of the most striking aspects of such Surveys. There is the obvious constraint of ‘fear’, especially for those in minority like situations.

Ethical Issues: For the field investigators, there are security risks and ethical questions about surveying the ‘other’ or of being partisan. In the CHT, the situation is so polarised between tribal and Bengali settlers that field investigators from the hills felt it necessary to leave out the Bengali settlers. In the Bodo survey, the displaced Santhals in the camps were altogether left out and the minority Nepali community bypassed because non Nepali surveyors were unacceptable.

What Value: There is the fundamental limitation that in situations highly polarised by conflict, a random sample based survey segmented to accommodate the different communities co-existing in the multi-ethnic space, will only reproduce the expected stereotypes of community response as evinced in the Bodo or Mizo Survey. In short, what value does it add? In the Mizo Survey, it challenged the myth of Mizoram’s unity of state and society to reveal a more fragmented polity and a not so coherent society as presumed. But the disproportionate profile of the minorities in the Survey respondents relative to population made for distortions and
necessary qualifications. Also the limited sample size required us to draw upon other similar Surveys (e.g. CSDS Election Surveys) to corroborate our analysis.

It should be noted that our lead researchers for the field studies had limited experience in conducting a survey or analysing quantitative research data. Indeed, these historians, political scientists and international relations scholars were wary of the value of quantitative analysis as a complement to the qualitative analysis. The CHT study took the lead in the research experiment of successfully rooting the quantitative survey data in the qualitative analysis. On the whole, the Survey proved of value but if we were to do the study again, it would remain an important component but designed somewhat differently and Lead Researchers would be better supported.

2.2.3. Chronologies
All field studies as an integral aspect of the research methodology were expected to develop chronologies of conflict and peace processes from the rights based perspectives that inform the project. In addition, SAFHR Delhi based research team was to develop other chronologies. These chronologies were meant to go beyond the conventional articulation of basic ‘high table’ events and developments to include subaltern perspectives and rights based concerns. Eventually, it devolved on the SAFHR Team to rewrite the chronologies. Consequently, while several of the chronologies have been uploaded on our website, SAFHR has published four more fully developed chronologies. Inevitably, some compromises have had to be made regarding a common structure, crisp and elegant presentation and there is some unevenness in style and content. However, they remain important resources, and exciting experiments in developing rights based chronologies to be built upon.

2.2.4 Field Studies
2.2.4 a) Selection & Design:
Dropping Sri Lanka: The Research Proposal had identified four field based empirical research studies. However, in view of the highly volatile situation created by Eelam War V, the physically high risk environment, coupled with the punitive curbs on freedom of expression, at a meeting of the Core Group in Kathmandu April 2009, it was decided to drop the field based study on the politics of ethno-nationalist conflict/peace making in Sri Lanka.

Selecting Nepal: Madhes Movement & The Federal Question: had not been included in the original research design, because the Maoist conflict in Nepal could not be classified as ethno-nationalism. Nepal was a unique example of a contemporary class-based struggle. However, in the post conflict phase, ethnicity and identity politics have emerged as a very important axis of conflict redefining its political dynamics and likely to make or break the emergence of a ‘new Nepal and the peace process. It was felt that the Nepal study would provide an exciting research opportunity to explore the moment of transition and constitution making, the emergence of the federal question, especially the multiplying demands of Madhesh ethnic assertions and examine the limits and strengths of ‘federalism’ to deliver pluralism, representation and participation, and equity and justice to Nepal’s institutionally excluded and marginalised.

Pakistan: For both conceptual and practical reasons, it was decided that the field based study would focus only on Baluchistan and not Sind as well. Sind, would be engaged with in the Mapping exercise. Balochistan was an exception in that despite six decades of cycles of violent conflict, the Pakistan state had not considered negotiating a peace accord.
Northeast: Northeast often styled as India’s laboratory of peace making through accords - would be a study in contrasting aspect of the state’s praxis of peace making by way of conceding ‘a home of one’s own’. The Mizo Exception is conventionally lauded as a ‘successful’ peace process. The Bodo peace accords demonstrate the flaws in such peace making, its implications for ethnic cleansing and the of prompting more ethnic based community assertions and relentless cycle of homelands; the Naga peace process and the genealogy of peace accords paradigmatically represents the effective limits of both the Indian state’s militarist counter insurgency strategy and the much lauded peacemaking strategy of ‘Integration through Reorganisation’. The Naga conflict and peace process has a singular significance in that it is the hub of the regional conflict system of Northeast India with outreach across international borders to Burma, Bangladesh and China. A durable peace would have a major impact on the durable disorder in the Northeast. The Naga peace ‘model’ would have major demonstration effect for effective transformation of ethnic and indigenous peoples struggles.

Research Methodology: While these field audit -studies were to be developed as stand alone research works, they were held together by our hypothesis of a common problematique as well as a common research structure of an audit. There was the shared understanding of some basic concepts, normative markers for framing more or less common questions to provide for sufficient consistency for comparative analysis. Expectedly questions would have to be fine-tuned in relation to the local context. The research methodology relied largely on a qualitative analysis but included a vital quantitative component in the form of a field survey. Methodology of field based audit study was organised around a four tier structure, Literature Survey, Chronology and Bibliography, the Survey, Focus Group Discussions and Interviews, and Round Table/ Town Hall meetings with public intellectuals, the media, policy makers, women’s groups, social organisations. Finally some policy recommendations were to be distilled.

Delivery Schedules were structured around a 20 month field research-report writing timeline.

Human Resources: A hands on Lead Researcher with recognised expertise in the area, intellectual sharpness, and an understanding of the rights based perspective guiding the audit – would be responsible for the field study. She/he would guide a team of young field researchers. Select Consultants were to provide support especially in the case of Balochistan and Nepal. A multi-disciplinary research team was envisaged. Criteria for selection favoured scholar activists with access to a pool of young researchers. Also, it was desirable that the Lead Researcher have expertise and proximity to the area, but have the capacity to maintain some distance, i.e. an ‘outsider’ but preferably located close to the area, not parachute in. The profile of the human resources deployed included Lead Researcher & Research Team/ Surveyors + Consultant + Core Group. It was hoped that some of the self avowed inadequacies of the first round of Lead Researchers (Madhes & Balochistan) would be offset by the inputs of consultants and the core group.

2.2.4 b) Implementation:
The ‘start off’ process of the Field Studies was mired in false starts and delays. Core Group members who were expected to lead select studies were unable because of personal reasons (Rubina Saigol: Balochistan) and competing professional commitments imposing long distance
guidance (Balveer Arora: Naga–Mizo). Also, our determination not to compromise on the quality of the field studies narrowed our choices and eventually led us mid-way to drop two of the selected Researchers (Ahmad Salim: Balochistan and Tula Narayan Shah: Madhes). Fortunately, on Balochistan, we were able to find a very fine young academic activist, Alia Amir Ali, who had completed an impressive MPhil on the Baloch question and had remarkable access to Baloch movement. For the Nepal study, Tapan Bose with his depth of understanding of the Nepal situation was persuaded to take on the study with SAFHR (Kathmandu) coordinator Som Niroula, a trained demographer. As regards the Northeast triptych, the Dhulikhel peer review process raised some questions about Sajal Nag’s Naga study, a large historical treatise, and in itself of interest, but not very relevant to the peace audit exercise. It was felt that it did not bring much that was fresh to the audit table. This contrasted with his study of the Mizo accord which was held to be much more relevant and with important insights. Indeed, on hindsight, it was not advisable to have clubbed the Naga Mizo peace processes. Also, in the Bodo peace audit, it was deeply regretted that Monirul Hussain a fine scholar could not find the time to do justice to the study and the Bodo peace audit remains an exciting but unfinished work.

Fortunately, in the case of the Naga study Tapan Bose and Rita Manchanda could step forward and draw upon their four decade long scholarly and activist engagement with the dynamics of the Naga question. Also it draws upon SAFHR’s earlier 1999 experiment in auditing the Naga peace process and the study of Women in the Naga Peace Process (2004). Given our concern to foreground people’s understanding of the movement and the peace process, there was substantive reliance on focus group discussions, and in particular a series of intensive ‘round table’ meetings in Dimapur, Kohima, Senapati and Ukhrul in March 2011.

It has to be acknowledged that some of our established senior scholars have got alienated from practices of doing field based work and did not make as much use of the field opportunity of revisiting their areas of early field work. Of course there were impressive exceptions. Younger Lead researchers proved committed, innovative and robust in their intellectual engagement.

**Ethical Questions:** Researching the ‘other’, especially when the researcher has the privileged position of class and community brings with it a whole set of ethical problems. Amena Mohsin and Alia Amirali reflect on some of these dilemmas and challenges in their filed studies. Aware of the need for the Lead researcher to have access and familiarity but some distance from the community, we sought out such scholar-activists. The ‘minority within a minority’ was a possibility – a Muslim and a Bengali settler in the northeast were our options, but the ‘outsider’ perspective ran the risk of bringing in prejudicial distortions especially in view of the personal experience of the xenophobic and exclusionary practices of the dominant ethnic community.

**Consultants & Core Group:** Our three tier human resource structure of Researchers + Consultant + Core Group did not work as well as had been hoped, though the Core group’s contribution was more active and useful especially at the Interim and Peer Review meetings and the contribution of some of the Discussants/Peer Reviewers on the studies were particularly useful. At the Interim Review meeting in Kathmandu July 2010, deficiencies in the capacity of the Balochistan and Nepal field studies was evident. Also there were concerns about the Naga study.

Eventually new Lead Researchers and teams were found with the necessary background and expertise to jump start the field audit process. The Delhi team had to step into the breach beyond troubleshooting, to contributing substantive inputs on content and analysis and even developing a parallel study in the case of Naga conflict to ensure that an acceptable quality was
Delays resulted in a drastic revision of the timelines - shortened field research period and required reorganizations of work plans, more intense engagement involving multiple field researchers for a shorter period. It also obliged some creative financial management. The IDRC team proved understanding and prompt in making what adjustments were possible within the agreed parameters.

Despite all these challenges, the research project was able to draw in some very fine scholar activists from multiple disciplines - Political Science: Monirul Hussain (Bodoland) and Tapan Bose (Madhesh-Nepal); History: Sajal Nag (Mizoram), International Relations: Amena Mohsin (CHT), Rita Manchanda (Nagaland) and Anthropology: Alia Amir Ali (Balochsitan). On the whole these are path breaking studies that look likely to redefine the policy research on conflict resolution and peace building in South Asia.

The intellectual and policy excitement generated by the audit idea and the quality of execution is borne out by the fact that SAGE is bringing out a multi-volume series on Auditing Peace Processes. Unfortunately the Assam-Bodo study remains unfinished. Monirul Hussain’s study has huge potential. Our refusal to compromise on finished quality has obliged us to hold back on Hussian’s Bodo study and Sajal Nag’s Naga study.

**From Field Study Monographs to Books:** In consultation with the IDRC team, in view of the interest of publishers, it was decided to turn around the peace audit/ study reports into ‘books’. This has entailed more time and on three texts professional editors have worked closely with the authors to reposition the monograph reports as Manuscripts for publication.

### 2.2.4. c) Core Group

**Advisory Core Group: ‘kick off’ Session: Kathmandu, April 10-11, 2009**

‘Core Group’ Advisory consolidated at the Kathmandu Regional Conference March 12-15, 2009. It would advise and guide the broad formulation and operationalization of the research agenda for the second phase. In some cases Core Group members were expected to take on the actual responsibility of directing and undertaking aspects of the field research, which unfortunately did not materialise. The Core Group endorsed the need for robust empirical research to be the basis for speaking to a larger theoretical and policy discourse on partition based settlements of ‘ethnic’ conflicts. Also, consolidated was the consensus that popular accountability should animate the research audit of these peace accords, and crosscutting themes such as gender and minority rights was emphasised.

Efforts to position the Core Group as a body for regular feedback and advice (even with provision for honorarium) was not successful. However what was effective was their very constructive and intellectually enriching participation when structured meetings were convened or when the draft study /or segment was sent.

**Interim Review: Kathmandu meeting July 19-20, 2010**

It brought together the Lead Researchers of the different field studies of the multi country project along with the Advisory Core Group, select experts and the Survey architect. The Kathmandu meeting was an opportunity to present a holistic conceptual frame as presented in the draft paper ‘Mapping Exercise: Towards Theorization & Comparative frameworks’. A particular focus of the Kathmandu meeting was the ‘Survey’ and the eventual finalization of its modalities, and budgetary support.
As expected of a review meeting, it took stock of the first round of field work done, assessed the practicalities of the schedule of delivery of ‘milestones’, clarified research methodology components and discussed challenges of doing research in volatile situations.

Regional Symposium Dhulikhel May 14-15, 2011
The Regional Symposium had been planned as the culmination of the research project, a presentation of the field studies to a wider peer audience for final feedback and revision before concluding the Project. [The Project had not provided for Publication] Unfortunately, the Regional Symposium had to be scaled down because the field studies were still unfinished. However, SAFHR Project Director was anxious that without the pressure of an interim delivery deadline, the timeline schedules would be irretrievably delayed. With a first draft in hand and initial feedback from select discussants, there would be a renewed momentum to complete and revise the texts of the field studies after May. The August deadline to wrap up the various components of the study would still be overshot but with some lead time the field studies would be completed. Also, it would provide an opportunity to assess the quality of the peace audits and consider the feasibility of follow up plans for conversations with publishers.

The design of a comprehensive peer review was further short changed because the first drafts of the field studies were available only a couple of days before the Dhulikhel meeting so there was insufficient time for discussants and commentators to do justice. To kick start the process of folding the field studies into a Conceptual and Comparative framework, a structure of mapping peace processes was presented in the Overview paper ‘Some Propositions & Some Preliminary Empirical Findings’. It was derived from the desk based mapping exercise as well as the first draft of the field studies. However, feedback on distilling a theory was received with some misgivings, especially from the post modernist invitees at the Regional Seminar expressing reservations about developing a grand theory. But there was an enthusiastic consensus that the material should be the basis for conceptual framing and comparative analysis. The absence of a couple of key members of the core group especially Prof Balveer Arora was strongly felt as he had been insistent about taking the empirical analysis a step further towards theorization. Also, the sudden absence of our lead researcher on the Bodo peace accords was unsettling. Indeed the Bodo study remains unfinished, and it is all the more disappointing because it showed valuable insights and policy lessons, which have been incorporated in the Overview.

The Dhulikhel seminar provided a peer forum for presenting the Border Dialogues and Recommendations, and evoked significant interest in expanding and consolidating the idea, further. Also, the Dhulikhel review identified lacunae, in particular, several advisory group members were disappointed at the weak exploration of gender as a cross cutting theme of analysis, except in the CHT study.

2.2.5 Cross Border Dialogues: Implementation & Management:

Each dialogue comprised two phases – i) Round Table Dialogue and ii) structured visit to a few border villages and local interactions there. The initial design of a face to face structured cross border interaction had to be modified in favour of consecutive dialogues to be held on both sides of the border. The heightened security concerns of the competitive state system of South Asia has further securitised borders and made movement of ‘outsiders’ (co-citizens) more restricted and the possibility of cross border interactions even more difficult. Also, borderlands are areas
of ambiguity, of loyalty and belonging, swarming with intelligence personnel, and suspicion and distrust are never far away.

In the case of the Bengal border, the consecutive West Bengal and Dhaka dialogues did make for an ‘indirect’ interaction, especially as we were able to bring over the dynamic Director of our West Bengal partner who had facilitated the Behrampur Dialogue. It provided for cross border resonances and prompted the recommendation for joint strategizing e.g. institutionalising cross border interaction of local elected bodies Panchayat/ upazilla members. As for the Western border, the Barmer Dialogue was not followed by its Sind counterpart leaving a significant gap in our Borderlands action research and it is expected that the Sind dialogue will be held soon in view of the significant interest amongst our Pakistan partners.

It should be emphasised that our entry into the borderlands was made possible by our partners who shared our vision. Indeed, the Dialogues would not have happened without the credibility of our partners based on their work amongst the border people and their ability to negotiate and manage the border anxieties of the authorities, especially in Bangladesh. In Rajasthan, overcoming the communal, class (and ego) divides proved quite formidable. Here SAFHR was able to draw upon its links with Pakistan-India Peoples’ Forum for Peace and Democracy for credibility.

Our interactions with officials of the Border Security Forces in Delhi (both serving and retired) provided important perspectives, insights and access to some documentation. Unfortunately, cooperation was not extended by the Indian army, despite requests.

Gender as an intersectional perspective remained a peripheral ‘add on’ at the Dialogue table despite the presence of women educationists, human rights activists and local body representatives. However, the visits to the border villages and interaction with women local body leaders yielded valuable insights and understanding.

3.0.0 Project Outputs

3.1.1 Mapping Peace Processes: Conceptual & Comparative Frameworks

Publications:


This Overview volume sets out the conceptual terrain of the peace audit studies, explores the comparative understanding drawn from the audit exercises, examines possibilities of re-conceptualising peacemaking from a rights based perspective and probes the possibility of how peace accords might deliver inclusive, non exploitative and just peace. A tour d horizon of South Asia showed stunted, flawed and even collapsing peace processes. Indeed the starting point of our mapping exercise was that the mere deployment of the word 'peace' should not insulate from critical scrutiny peace process that are of questionable durability and produce a poor quality of peace

In setting out to map the region’s conflicts and peace processes, the underlying assumption was that there was an identifiable pattern latent in the states’ praxis of resolving
ethno-nationalist conflicts via ‘partition’ or division based accords. Our focus is in consonance with the global trend of acquiescing to autonomy settlements as a means of dealing with the nation and its discontents, or self-determination struggles of territorially based minority groups asserting nationhood based on their ‘unique history’. ‘Internal partitions’, or the devolution of political power through the constitutional mechanism of regional or territorial autonomy, have been held up as the most effective way of protecting the political, social, economic and cultural rights of minorities and nations. However, our hypothesis questioned how enabling are these territorially focused ethnically delimited autonomies and federal arrangements of Democracy and Pluralism.

**Contested Nationalisms: Three Clusters:** In mapping the postcolonial nation and its discontents in the region of South Asia, for analytical purposes the ‘self determination’ movements were grouped in three clusters. The *first cluster* comprise self determination struggles that challenge the terms of the merger e.g. Jammu & Kashmir, Balochistan, NWFP, Naga hills, CHT, Manipur, etc. The *second cluster of discontents* involves disaffection with the social contract, derogation of constitutional guarantees and the widening of the democracy deficit by a highly centralizing and homogenizing state. Demands are raised for the sharing of sovereignty between the Central authority and the disaffected /contesting group. e.g. movements in Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Assam, Mizoram, Sindh, CHT, Sri Lanka Tamils and Madhes in Nepal. The *third cluster* encompasses the outcrop of demands of ‘a home of one’s own’ or the playing out of the logic of relentless reproduction of minority demands for ‘ethnic homelands’. In a political culture in which entitlements are to be wrested by group identity assertions, it is expected that - in Pakistan the Mohajirs should lay claim to being Pakistan’s fifth nationality; Saraiki’s should assert linguistic nationalism; Pashtuns in Balochistan demand a separate province ‘southern Pakhtunwah’; Muslims in Sri Lanka want recognition as a third ethnicity in the island’s ethnically polarised polity; the Tharus and Dalits in Nepal demand autonomies within Madhes federal unit; and the Bodos, Gorkhas, Hmars, Brus, Chakmas, Kukis and Eastern Nagas in Northeast India demand ethnic homelands.

Our understanding of such self determination struggles suggests that while the mobilization of oppositional consciousness may be expressed ethnically the re-generation of identity politics in the multinational states of South Asia has its roots in our majoritarian states’ mistrust of democracy and diversity. In South Asia ethno-nationalist struggles represent a powerful idiom of resistance in states with oppressive structures of power and totalizing ‘nationalist’ ideologies. Our research hypothesis posited that the process of peace making via such division based accords create ethnic homelands, that end not by conferring rights on people, but by shifting the locus of struggle from the domain of peoples struggles to elite power sharing negotiations, that enable the co-optation of counter elite. The states’ praxis of peace making demonstrates that peace accords which conventionally are projected as an instrument for accommodating a marginalized /discriminate minority – end up becoming acts of violence and domination over people. The mapping study demonstrates that such ethnic elite driven identity based projects are totalising and exclusionary rendering particularly vulnerable, women (the reproducers and nurturers of ethno-cultural identity) and minorities/outsiders.

The mapping exercise is human rights based assessment which places at the centre the people from the conflict affected areas, and their subjectivity of the movement, their expectations, and their understanding of the consequences of such peacemaking. They are empirically based audits of ‘top down’ and essentially statist peacemaking processes that encourage local communities to think critically about the quality of peace (and peacemaking)
which they have experienced. The audit methodology widens the range of actors and informants beyond governing bodies, political parties and militant groups to include less well heard voices – especially, women, vulnerable groups, refugees/displaced peoples, non dominant minorities. The experience of peace from their perspective may be quite different.

Our objective in this critical scrutiny of peacemaking and the auditing of the workings of peace accords is to challenge such methods of peacemaking as well as the established methods of studying conflict and peacemaking which unfortunately attaches greater value to cessation of violence and political stability than on empowerment of the people, improvement of human rights situation and realisation of human security. To push the boundaries on how we conceptualise peace as a part of the problem which results in our low level of ambition in designing peace accords. Recognising that much of the problem lies in the top down, exclusionary way peace is made, the peace audit structure emphasises the role of civil society groups in making the process more participatory, inclusive and accountable and broadening the agenda beyond power sharing to including issues of social justice and democratic voice.

We argue that in such division based peace processes there is little imperative for democratic inclusion or democratic expansion of the political agenda and institutions, in either the state or the newly created autonomous unit. Unless the nature of the state and the structure of power are fundamentally challenged and unequal power relations transformed, such peace processes become exercises in power sharing that end up consolidating a statist status quo. Peace building gets reduced to pacification that foregrounds stability, state hegemony, prosperity and power sharing with the counter elite. Peace accords address the immediate contest for power. In question is not only the capacity but even the intention of such peace processes to place on the agenda the basic issues driving and sustaining the peoples struggle, let alone the aspiration to foster social and cultural pluralism and promote the long term objective of empowering democracy and instituting justice at the grassroots level.

The comparative analysis demonstrates that ‘Peace Accords’ are status quo exercises that result in strengthening state, weakening the movement. It is the state that determines when and with whom and on what it will negotiate and invariably, it reinforces controversy over the legitimacy of the negotiating group to speak for all and plays one faction against the other (Bodo: excluded NDFB; Naga: excluded NSCN (K); CHT: UPDF). Often while violence against state and state agencies ceases, the targets of violence shifts driving new cycles of endemic violence. Indexed as promoting the state’s integrationist project, the workings of peace accords showed that the encounter with modernity and state penetration creates an expanding middle space and post colonial middle class which has consequences for the self determination demand often anchored in traditional elite structures and multiplying stakeholders who have an interest in the existing state.

The mapping exercise surprisingly demonstrated that the creation of ‘homelands of one’s own’ far from expanding democratic representation actually resulted in a shrinkage of democracy (e.g. CHT, Bodo, Darjeeling autonomous councils are nominated/interim bodies – elections have not been held because of contentions over electoral rolls). Also there is a shrinkage of space for minorities in these ethnic homelands and women who are pushed out of public space in the name of upholding a reconstituted patriarchal notion of custom, tradition and national identity. The workings of even such successful peace accords such as the Mizo exception demonstrate the exclusionary dynamics of ethnic accords in disabling pluralism and fostering xenophobia. Autonomous units are not necessarily democratic.
The mapping exercise encompasses a significant repository from which to develop comparative insights into peace enhancing schemes that worked in one location and may have applicability in another. Indeed one of our underlying interests in developing comparative analysis has been to challenge the partitioned academies of South Asia’s knowledge institutions and bridge the peace research and policy divide in the region.

Whilst the field based peace audit studies have a dedicated focus on South Asia, the overview volume is of global relevance as the themes, the conceptual frameworks, the analytical structures and the methodology of audit have application for peace processes elsewhere.

3.1.2 SAFHR Monographs/ Papers publications

  [being uploaded on SAFHR website: www.safhr.org Text: Annexure II]

This monograph comprises chronologies of four intrastate conflicts - the Naga (India), Jumma (Bangladesh), Tamil (Sri Lanka) and Kashmiri (India and Pakistan). The four chronicles of people’s struggles present a pattern of the state’s praxis, contentious politics and post conflict situations. The chronologies attempt to analyse the growth of “national narratives” from a rights based perspective foregrounding the perceptions of the people caught up in the swirl of history and flow of major events. Moments of history traverse high table to subaltern events, developments of human rights significance, peoples’ struggles and the consequences of peace making. The Naga (northeast India) and the Jumma (southeast Bangladesh) peoples self determination movements are struggles of indigenous/ tribal societies confronted with the assimilationist juggernaut of the modern state. The Kashmiris and Lankan Tamils do not see themselves as tribes or minorities. They claim to be nations demanding parity within or as another state.

- “Gender & Ethno-Nationalist Struggles: Narratives of Power & Instrumentalization”
  Rita Manchanda, SAFHR 2012
  [slightly modified version of text in ‘Overview’ volume, Sage forthcoming Not for IDRC Public Space till discussed with SAGE: Text: Annexure III]

This monograph explores gendered dimensions of peace processes in the resolution of ethno-nationalist struggles in South Asia and in particular, the consequences in the post conflict ‘aftermath’ for enabling women’s rights and entitlements. It examines the proposition that ethno-nationalist struggles are totalizing and therefore tend to be hostile to women and minorities. In the relationship between gender and ethno-nationalist struggles, in these narratives of power, women are instrumentalized. The essay examines the possibility of an emancipatory democratic politics in such identity based mobilizations. It probes sites of contestation and agency, particularly moments of strategic alliance building among women of majority-minority communities in the CHT, or between women and marginalized communities/ethnic groups in the case of Nepal and Afghanistan. The essay teases out the contradictions between collective rights and individual rights and the need to reconcile the two. It interrogates what the
valorization of customary laws and traditional practices in the reconstruction of post war societies means for women’s life enhancing choices.

A majority of peace accords settling identity based indigenous or ethno-nationalist conflicts provide that in the newly constituted autonomous entity or state, customary laws and practices will govern land ownership rights and social and political relations. Also the dominant neo-liberal paradigm of peace accords in the name of transitional justice mechanisms valorises traditional community justice structures and practices with consequences for women and other vulnerable groups. Manchanda’s analysis examines why it is necessary to bring in a gender perspective when inscribing customary laws and practices in peace accords and the reconstruction of conflict disrupted societies. Such guarantees can prove socially very oppressive for women as has been the experience of women in these ‘ethnic homelands’ or special autonomies. She demonstrates why women need to be wary not only of the patriarchal state at the meta level, but even more so at the micro level of the ethnic community, where they may be even less able to oppose their local patriarchies. Manchanda adds a necessary caveat that women’s struggles are integrally embedded in the overall democratic struggle which such ethno-nationalist movements symbolise. The possibility of locating an emancipating democratic agenda in such ethno-nationalist projects depends upon steering a fine balance between upholding ethnic identity, valorizing community traditions and customary rights, while enabling women’s choices and rights.

3.1.3 Articles & Papers

• “Expanding the Middle Space in the Naga Peace Process” Rita Manchanda and Tapan Bose Economic & Political Weekly, December 31, 2011, vol XLVI No 53; pp51-60
[link ..... http://epw.in/epw/user/viewAbstract.jsp]

The essay focuses on 14 years of the Indo- Naga ceasefire - sans political resolution- from the subjectivity of the Naga people’s experience. It explores the shifting dynamics of the three pillars that have defined the demands of the Naga nationalist movement - ‘Integration’, ‘Unity’ and ‘Sovereignty’ in the context of a ceasefire which is being normalised as ‘peace’, the weakening of the national movement and a generation growing up that has not bled under the boot of India’s military suppression and is open to the rhetoric of development. Particularly, the ceasefire has produced the new context of an expanding non partisan middle space in the erstwhile polarised tribal politics of the Naga struggle; state and market penetration has seen the emergence of the growth of a social grouping that can be characterised as the ‘new middle class which is using that middle space to explore new ideas and new initiatives for resolving the old problems of ‘unity’ and integration which has grid locked the Naga politics. On the basis of a series of ‘round table’ interactions in the Naga Hills, the essay probes the impact of this growing ‘professional’ middle class on the Naga nationalist movement which is rooted in traditional tribal institutions and tribal elite authority structures and its implications for reshaping the vision of a Naga nation.

• “Why Peace Accords Falter? A Conceptual and Comparative Mapping of South Asian States’ Praxis of Peacemaking” SCEP Paper: ICRIER (to be completed)
[Link to be provided eventually]
3.1.4 Field Studies
Publications:


[Not for IDRC Public Space; Complete MS text: Annexure VI]

Part I
Negotiating Sovereignty, Integration and Unity
Expanding ‘middle space’ in Naga Peace Process …Rita Manchanda, Tapan Bose

Scholars and activists of conflict resolution and peace making are inevitably drawn to the study of the genealogy of Naga peace accords – 1947, 1960, 1975 and 1997. The Naga national movement is the oldest self determination conflicts in independent India. It paradigmatically represents the limits of the Indian state’s militarist counter insurgency strategy and its grand peacemaking strategy of ‘Integration through Territorial Reorganisation’. The Naga conflict and peace process has a singular significance in that it is the hub of the regional conflict system of Northeast India with outreach to Myanmar, Bangladesh and China. The possibility of the latest of the Naga peace processes, ushered by the 1997 ceasefire, delivering a durable peace would have a major impact on the durable disorder which the Naga insurgent groups have variously stoked through strategic alliances and material support over 60 years.

The study is a penetrating exploration of the consequences of a protracted ceasefire and a stalled political resolution which produces the conditions for the state’s policy of ‘pacification’ appeasement and development as peace. The study posits that the context of the ‘peace process’ is unfolding at a time of significant internal shifts in social stratification. It probes the structural disequilibrium between the end generation of the colonial spawned modern ‘national’ political elite (represented by Phizo and Muivah) and the post colonial newly emerging Naga middle class professional elite, arising from the deep penetration of the Indian state and market? The political economy that has produced the new ‘middle class’ is very different from the jhum economy of a communitarian society with common lands that required and sustained the tribes and the tribal culture. The study argues that this small but powerful educated professional grouping, which straddles both the traditional tribal institutions and the modern socio-economic structures, is expanding the Naga public sphere and reshaping its politics. New initiatives such as the dynamic Forum for Naga Reconciliation and the Committee on Alternative Arrangement for the Naga Hills of Manipur are associated with these women and men.

The study makes a powerful argument for scholars and policy makers on the Northeast to free explanatory frameworks from constructs that explain the waxing and waning of self determination movements as derived from ‘tribalism’ and re-tribalism. It contends that the emerging divisions may be less tribal and more geographic with those excluded demanding rights entitlements and inclusion. The study follows the outcrop of such new demands as the Eastern Nagas demand of Frontier Nagaland state and the Southern Nagas demand of an Alternative Arrangement. There is “a geo-political” framing that transcends tribal lines. Such demarches as the Alternative Arrangement initiative, although not contrary to the commitment to
a ‘national’ discourse of ‘Integration’, nonetheless are a product of the growing self awareness of the Nagas of Manipur of the differential experience of empowerment of the Nagas within Nagaland and those outside.

The co authors boldly explore the political implications of these developments on the politics of bargaining and leverage of the NSCN collective leadership at the peace table? By bringing to the centre the perspectives of Naga social organisations, educationists, students and women’s groups, the study lays bare the weakening of the Naga movement and the disillusionment over the peace dividend. Equally, the study emphasises the awareness amongst the more prescient elite that Th Muivah was by far the Nagas best bet to negotiate the toughest deal with India. For the government to squander the chance to conclude a just peace would be to condemn the Northeast to continuing cycles of violence. The ghosts of 1960 ans 1975 accords are at the peace table.

Part II
The Mizo Accord - Replicating the Indian State:
Auditing 25 years of ‘Peace’ in Mizoram ... Sajal Nag

The Mizo study, critically audits 25 years of the working of the Mizo Accord that swapped independence for statehood and enabled the insurgent group to lay down arms and make the transition to democratic electoral politics. Mizo state leaders including those who led the insurgency project extolled ‘Brand Mizo’ as an imitable example to other insurgent populations. Indeed, the identification of the MNF’s leaders with the Indian state is the measure of the success of the Accord in transforming rebel leaders into the state’s representatives.

The study questions the generally celebratory public discourse on the ‘Brand Mizo’, especially the assumptions of Mizo state- society’s success in subsuming existing identities under an overarching one, effectively countering competitive ethnic mobilizations that have vitiated so many northeast peace processes. Prof Nag argues that the cohesive Zo-Christian society comes at a cost of oppressive hegemony, enforced homogenization and exclusion. In Mizoram, the post accord ‘state’ building project is oriented towards realizing self-governance and autonomy aimed at freeing and liberating the Zo/Mizo Christian people and their territory from the ‘other’ (the ‘Vais’ foreigners and that includes the co-habiting Chakmas, Brus, Chins and non tribal Indians). The watchful eyes of the state, the church and organizations like the Young Mizo Association (Y.M.A) systematically and structurally ‘police’ the ‘errant’ social behavior of women and the other ‘marginals’ meting out instant punishment to violations of dress code, sexual norms of the patriarchal Zo-Christian code, alcohol consumption and drug abuse. The state and church endorse these exclusionary and disciplinary activities of Mizo social organizations.

The field study affirms that the recurrence of armed insurgency is highly unlikely, but draws attention to the direct violence against the Brus and the generalised latent violence of a society brutalised by the long legacy of violent conflict. It is manifest in the widespread social practice of moral vigilantism of Mizo social organizations with punitive consequences. The distinctive feature of Zo/Mizo society is the state cum church sanction to ‘community policing’ by Mizo social organisations like the YMA which target errant women and ‘outsiders’ as ‘Zu Zuars’ (liquor sellers, vendors), drug peddlers.
Nag tracks the patriarchal push back of women from public space in the name of reclaiming, reconstituting and valorising the customary and traditional ideals and values of the Mi-Zo society. Multi-layers of gendered oppression – i.e. the timeless gendered practices of Zo/Mizo society, impact of colonialism & Christianity and the gendered vulnerabilities resulting from the ‘village grouping’ counter insurgency strategy – have all combined to reinforce the patriarchal push back of women (and the ‘others’) from public space of power and authority.

The study questions the dominant wisdom in liberal democracies that federalization of the polity to devolve power to smaller and marginal communities is a desirable and effective policy option for protecting the political, social, economic and cultural right of marginal communities and minorities. The Mizo peace audit suggests that the accord ends violence involving state and state institutions, but it may not end insecurity because the logic of the ethicisation of politics is new exclusions and new vulnerable minorities. The targets of violence shift. In case of Mizoram there is targeting of ethnic communities branded as ‘outsiders’ especially, the Brus, and Chakmas. The Hmars, a Zo tribe had enthusiastically joined the MNFled struggle hoping that the vision of a Greater Mizoram would see the unification of the divided Hmar tribes. But the Mizo Accord orphaned them, resulting in new autonomy demands.

  Tapan Bose with Som Prasad Niroula, Sage (forthcoming: Auditing Peace Processes series)
  [Not for IDRC Public Space: Complete MS Text: Annexure VII]

The study is focused on the emergence of a federal movement in a unitary polity in a Post Conflict – Peace Process Transition and the possibilities of federalism establishing a just and inclusive society and polity. Nepal’s post war peace building project has been overshadowed by contentious "identity" or "federal" politics which have stalled the constitutional process of laying the foundations of a new Nepal and threaten new cycles of even greater generalized violence. Whereas as the axis of the Maoist led revolutionary agenda had been between the monarchy and democratic forces, the emergence of the ethno-regional question is bringing to the centre the issue of institutionalised exclusion on the basis of ethnicity, caste, and region and contesting the hegemony of the Caste Hill Hindu Elite (CHHE).

The demand for federalism tops the agenda of more than 60 hitherto marginalized ethnic, linguistic and regional groups in Nepal, especially the Madhesis. Their conceptualization of federalism goes far beyond structural decentralization of government and aims at changing the foundational concept of Nepali nation and its official history of the Gorkhali kings "unification of Nepal" and the responsibility of the upper caste Hindu elite of the hill region to define the Nepali "nation", language and culture. "Federalism" has come to symbolize resistance against that history and the struggle for a new Nepal as a federation of equal partners sharing equal responsibility to uphold the dignity, integrity and sovereignty of Nepal. It has divided Nepali society on class, caste, ethnic, linguistic and regional lines vitiating the fragile consensus that buoyed the earlier constitutional commitment to federalism.
Bose’s study seeks to historically locate in Nepali state structures of governance the institutionalised exclusion and marginalisation of the janajati and madhesi groups, reinforced by their inclusion and degradation in the Hindu caste system. Nepal’s political movements - democratic (Jana Andolans) and revolutionary (Peoples War) mobilized these excluded groups and betrayed their federal aspirations, resulting in violent divisions.

The critical question it examines are whether federal restructuring of Nepal on the basis of regional, ethnic and linguistic identities could address the substantive objectives of social justice, equality, gender justice and rights of the oppressed communities like the Dalits. What would be the status of the minorities within the provinces created on the basis of the identity of the "majority" regional and ethnic communities? Whether spatial distribution of territory and devolution of power to "autonomous regions" is the most effective form of resolution of ethno-nationalist conflict challenging the territorial integrity of nation states from within? Is this compatible with sustainable and inclusive democracy? Whether federal arrangements would enable plural democratic rights and gender justice, especially for minorities within minorities and women who are the visible signifiers of community identity.

With the Madhes as the epicentre of the federal demand the study unravels the construction of the dominant “Madheshi” identity and the demand for “One Madhesh Province”, and the process of radicalization of Madhesh politics after the establishment of the CA, the study examines the possibility of the new "Madhesh" being able to accommodate the competing histories and claims of Tharus, Muslims and the Dalits. Madhesh identity politics is not separatist but integrationist. It is oriented towards reworking their status, power and belonging in a re-imagined plural Nepal that challenges upper caste hill dominated Kathmandu centric polity and society.

In the case of Nepal, it is not a powerful state that makes ‘peace’ but a weak beleaguered state, thus shifting the power balance towards other political actors, including external actors e.g. India, the UN and the EU. The Madhes study starkly reminds us how elite driven ethnic politics are and the multiple fault lines of minorities within minorities in a multi ethnic space. Here the upper caste Hindu led demand for ‘One madhes One prades’ is seen by the co-habiting Tharus, Dalits and Muslims as a recipe for replacing one hegemony by another. As the Madhes parties fail to leverage their presence in government to deliver on federalism, they are taking on more hard line positions with consequences for a narrower definition of Madhesi.


**Balochistan:** The study accosts why during 60 years of the turbulent resistance politics of Baloch national assertion and five cycles of violent confrontation, the Pakistan state in both its military and civilian avatars, did not consider negotiating a peace accord. The Pakistani state’s strategies of managing the cycles of chronic conflict that mark Baloch–Pakistan relations are singular in SAFHR’s audits of the states’ praxis of resolving or containing ethno-nationalist conflicts in South Asia, in that the Pakistan state has yet to use constitutional and federal
arrangements to accommodate disruptive Baloch ‘national’ assertion within its borders. The use of military force has been the state’s predominant strategy to quell Baloch nationalism, a strategy that in recent years has taken the gruesome form of thousands of enforced disappearances and kill-and-dump operations by state agencies.

The Baloch case is singular not only in comparison with other South Asian states, but also within Pakistan where the state has responded, politically to a host of other ethnic-nationalist assertions within its borders—namely, Sindhi, Bengali, Muhajir, Pakhtun, Saraiki, Kashmiri and Gilgit-Baltistani, among others. As Alia Amirali analyses the Baloch exception provides an understanding of why states choose not to make peace, also the Baloch case offers deeper insights into the internal dynamics of the workings of the Pakistani state. There is the early history of Pakistan state’s ‘overdeveloped’ military–bureaucratic structure characteristic of many post colonial states, but in the case of Pakistan despite the subsequent shifts in the political economy of the Pakistani state and the emergence of a vocal political class, the preponderance of the military has persisted with the army emerging as a dominant interest group with autonomous economic, geo-strategic and political stakes.

Amirali argues that the Pakistan state’s reluctance to forge a formal peace accord with Baloch nationalists can be explained by a convergence of powerful national and international forces that have an interest in maintaining the current status quo in Balochistan. There is the military-bureaucratic oligarchy’s refusal to forego the economic, strategic and political benefits it currently enjoys. This is reinforced by the civilian leadership’s unwillingness to challenge military hegemony. Compounding this is Balochistan’s geo-strategic location and the state’s insecurity related to the exploitation of internal grievances by ‘hostile states’ which have a presence in neighbouring Afghanistan. Also, the multiplicity of competing factions within the Baloch national movement has complicated the possibility of arriving at a negotiated settlement.

The competition of interests between military and civilian institutions is particularly acute in Balochistan as reflected in the competing and contradictory policies of the state towards Balochistan. For example, on the one hand the federal government uses the proverbial ‘carrot’ in the form of the Balochistan Aghaz e Huqooq package and the 18th Amendment, while the military and its intelligence agencies intensify the use of the ‘stick’ in Balochistan. Indeed the offer of a political and economic package, is itself a departure. Amirali drawing upon her substantive access to Baloch student organisations and the movement, focuses on the resurgence of the Baloch V and tracks the shift from a federalist to a separatist movement.

The study argues that the Baloch movement from being a series of tribal rebellions has become an ethnic national movement. The tensions and antagonistic influences between tribe and nation remain and are mirrored in the shift in the socio-economic profile of the leaders/elite of the contemporary Baloch movement. For example many of the ‘Disappeared’ belong not to the traditional elite but come from the urban, educated lower and middle classes. They have been ‘de-tribalized owing to urbanisation and their integration in modern state and private institutions. The study explores the impact of the nascent ‘middle class’ and the youth bulge on the emergence of the Baloch ethno-nationalist movement.
The study critically interrogates the Pakistan state’s projection of the Baloch national movement as led by feudal ‘Sardars’ and suggests that while tribal affiliations with the traditional centres of opposition –Marri, Mengal (and Bugti) persist, a younger generation exposed to the brutal repression has got politically radicalized. A sharp polarization has emerged between the moderates and the radicals-be it the political parties or the armed groups.

Unpacking the changing context of Baloch V insurgency, the study examines the socio-economic changes that have accompanied state penetration in Balochistan, the military oppression, the militarization of neighbouring Pakhtun areas and the influx of Afghan refugees particularly in the wake of 9/11 and the US invasion of Afghanistan. Drawing attention to the political economy of Balochistan, the study reminds us of its burden of strategic resources and location which pulls in external powers. Complicating further the dynamics of the conflict is the changed population mix, especially following the Afghan refugee influx. The Baloch - Pashtun conflict has been instrumentalized by the state. Identity politics has produced demands for a three way division of Balochistan. The Pashtuns are demanding southern Khyber Pakhtunwah. The xenophobic backlash has led to an exodus of non dominant minorities, including the Hindus, the Hazaras etc.

- “Partition as Method of Resolving Ethno-nationalist Conflicts in South Asia: The Case of the Chittagong Hill Tracts” Amena Mohsin with Delwar Hussain, Sage (forthcoming: Auditing Peace Processes series)

The CHT field study consciously locates the audit of the CHT peace accord within a wider ideological and material context of deconstructing the myth of nation making, and the conflicts surrounding nation/state formation and peace making via such accords. Amena Mohsin brings to the CHT audit study her depth of academic engagement on the conflict-peace making dynamics of a politicised ethnicity claiming plural space vis a vis the relentless coercive hegemony of the state’s homogenising project of making the nation/identity congruent with state-territory. She positions the CHT conflict-peace accord in the long trajectory of Bangladesh’s earlier ‘freedom’ struggle for political economic cultural rights and above all pluralism, yet when it constitutes the dominant mainstream through the process of yet another nationalism and state formation, its new constitution proclaims all are ‘Bengalis’, there are no adivasis. With 98 percent of the population Bengali, it did not require bengalization of the state project, yet the new ruling elite squeezed out the possibility of plural space. It is in that context that Moshin (with Hussain) audits the possibility of the CHT accord building peace within the context of the possibility of a pluralist democratic structure.

Moshin’s study is singular amongst the audit studies in that there is a self consciousness of being the ‘other’ (a Bengali) researching the hill peoples with the ethical baggage that entails. But what gives an edge to Mohsin’s long term involvement with the CHT is her own experience of being the ‘other’, a Bengali in West Pakistan. That complexity of perspective adds richness to the analysis as Mohsin revisits the hill tracts 14 years after the Accord brought to an end two decades of violent conflict. She argued that while the moment of negotiating the accord was empowering and democracy expanding for the marginalized hill peoples, the government(s) of Bangladesh has remained uncompromising on the question of hegemony of the Bengali majority
state structure, both institutionally and ideologically. The CHT ‘Executive Accord’ has been held hostage by Bangladesh’s two feuding political parties. The Bangladesh National Party had opposed the Accord, however when in power, it did not abrogate it. The Awami League even when it has an absolute majority, has failed to fulfil the promise of giving the Accord a constitutional guarantee. In the accord trade off, the PCJSS abandoned its demand for recognition of the hill peoples as adivashis and indigenous peoples, but the government only conceded that it was a ‘tribal inhabited area’.

On the key questions of demilitarisation, land claims, control over natural resources and self rule, the audit demonstrates that the Accord by sidestepping the crucial question of the status of Bengali settlers in the CHT, has compromised the possibility of implementing its provisions. The unresolved structural tension over competing claims on land between the (undocumented) tribes and the (documented) Bengali settlers and two different land systems (collective rights vs individual rights) has postponed the institution of a Land Survey and Land commission and entrenched endemic violence around land grabbing incidents. It provides justification for not demilitarising the CHT. Further, the splintering of the armed groups into rival factions and ensuing turf wars has reinforced violence, making it more unpredictable and further justifying the continuing presence of the military in the hills. Consequently, at the basic level of security the accord pulls up short with 91.5% of the respondents of the SAFHR Survey saying that the law and order situation has deteriorated. People feel less rather than more safe post accord.

The study contends that rather than post conflict, it should be seen as the second stage of the conflict, more protracted and unpredictable with multiple fault lines and multiple actors and with gender implications for women’s freedom of movement. Alongside the erstwhile fault line of state / Bengali settlers vs Jumma/ hill tribes divide, are inter factional and intra hill peoples divides that have fractionalized tribal society. The study tracks how the construct of an umbrella Jumma unity constituted in opposition to the hegemonic and oppressive Bengali majority state has got vitiated post accord with growing intra-tribal anxieties over Chakma hegemony.

Mohsin contends that the top down non transparent process of the accord negotiations was disempowering of what is an asymmetric power relationship, as the PCJSS was kept isolated in Dhaka from its support base in the hills, with the many civil society groups e.g. Pahardi Chatro Parishad (Students Federation), Hill Women’s Federation unable to impact on the process. Indeed the Accord moment precipitated a vertical split of the PCJSS and the movement with the majority of the civil society groups joining the anti accord United People’s Democratic Front.

The centrepiece of the Accord was creation of self rule institutions – the Hill District Councils and the Regional Hill Councils, but post accord, has seen the emergence of an overlapping three tier system of governance and administration. The autonomous functioning of the Councils has been undermined because from the start elections to these bodies has got deadlocked over the contentious issue of electoral rolls and the inclusion of Bengali settlers. The Councils remain interim nominated bodies and their authority especially over control of resources is severely compromised vis a vis other institutions of authority. Post accord, has produced greater centralization of power with the strengthening of the central Ministry of CHT Affairs and analogously, even the CHT Development Board continues to be headed by a non tribal. Arguably, the militarization of the CHT provides a cover for the rapacious exploitation of the
forests and mineral wealth of the CHT. It draws attention to the nature of the neo-liberal state which in a globalized economy has a certain agenda in mind for the resource rich CHT. The post accord phase has spawned a new elite especially among the Chakmas who are partners in the new development opportunities and job openings in the state and NGO sectors. A new social divide of the rich and poor has emerged.

Mohsin suggests that the accord though flawed and limited, has nonetheless created a new context in the CHT where the hill people and the splintered political forces, state agencies and Bengalis settlers and NGOs and Corporations are negotiating their interests and priorities. Post accord people still pin their hopes on the accord. It remains a platform for action, with even the anti accordists returning and demanding that it be implemented fully.

This is one study that integrates a gender perspective in its analysis exploring the differential impact on women and men. It suggests that post accord a new more empowering notion of womanhood in the CHT has emerged. This has been catalysed by the activities of NGOs, which have brought women from all the communities together in the workplace. A manifestation of this social change is women petitioning the Chakma Raja for rights to property.

### 3.1.5. Cross Border Dialogues:

**Publications**

- “When Home is the Edge of the Nation: Dialogue with ‘Border’ people of Rajasthan, West Bengal and Bangladesh” by Rita Manchanda, Tapan Bose, Sahana Ghosh, Bani Gill, SAFHR, February 2012
  
  [IDRC Public Space]

  “Border Dialogues” Special Issue of Seminar Magazine [forthcoming : Note: The Issue includes several additional articles which Rita Manchanda subsequently solicited around the common theme of balancing human rights/ humanitarian concerns and state security]

  [Eventually … Link to be sent to IDRC]

**Seminar:** SAFHR & Centre for Comparative Politics and Political Theory, SIS  
**Topic:**  
Eastern & Western Border Dialogues: Bangladesh-West Bengal & Rajasthan-Sindh:  
‘Balancing state security imperatives with human security needs’  
Jawaharlal University, July 11, 2011

### 3.2.5 Social Processes:

Dialogue interaction is itself an ‘output’ leading to awareness and enabling change. Although face to face cross border interaction was inhibited by visa restrictions, ‘indirect’ interaction provide opportunity for comparison and contrast e.g. the commonality of an ambivalent attitude to ‘legality’ and social tolerance of quasi legal behaviour. Comparative analysis showed wide disparity in the hierarchy of importance between Dhaka and Delhi regarding borderlands, explained by the physical proximity of all of Bangladesh territorially to the border. Also it exposed the distortions engendered by ‘nationalist’ prejudices even on something as material as
body counts on the border—more Indian or more Bangladeshi. However, even when limited to Rajasthan, (sans Sind) the Dialogue in the act of enabling diverse stakeholders to come together provided a rare opportunity for transcending several divisions—spatially by bringing border peoples of Bikaner, Jaisalmer, Barmer, and non-borderland Jodhpur (and the exclusion of Ganaganagar); refugees and host; communal and class lines.

4.0.0 PROJECT OUTCOMES

4.1.1 & 4 Research Milestones - I

Mapping & Field Studies

Critical Perspectives on Co-option of Conflict Resolution & Peace Studies Research into Statist Peacemaking Schemes
Both conceptually and methodologically CR & Peace Studies research tends to reinforce peacemaking as a status quo exercise oriented towards restoring ‘normalcy’, stability and integration. Our rights based peace audits demonstrated the importance of bringing in critical perspectives and valuing the perspectives of the people affected by the conflict about the impact of the policies and practices flowing from top down peacemaking.

--Implicit in the conceptualization of SAFHR’s peace audits is the need to problematize the notion of ‘peace’. The narrow acceptance of peace as restoration of status quo sows the seed for new discord. By not making the root causes of the conflict part of the negotiating agenda, by displacing the issues of democracy, accountability and social justice—peace processes find themselves in a deep paradox Denuded of its popular content the peace agenda loses peoples' support alienates civil society involvement.

‘Power Sharing Accords: Displacing Aspirations & Sidestepping Grievances Driving Conflict
‘Partition’ based Peace Accords, conventionally projected as instruments for accommodating a marginalized and discriminated ‘minority’ or nationality—run the risk of becoming acts of violence and domination over the diverse peoples living in the ‘homeland’ area, especially those belonging to vulnerable groups and ‘other’ non dominant minority communities. The empirically based audits demonstrated that resolving such identity based ethno-nationalist movements via special autonomies and asymmetric federal arrangements that create ethnic homelands are likely not to confer rights on people, but to shift the locus of struggle from the domain of peoples’ struggles to elite power sharing negotiations.

--State authority in empowering the ethnic “counter elite” produces a broader and more complex elite stratification but it is contingent on the rebel circle of power becoming a mirror image of the state system. Our research posits that there cannot be a transformation of socio-economic political relations in one corner of the nation state, while hegemonic and hierarchical structures and a homogenous ideology continue to characterize the nature of the state as before.

Status Quo Accords: Integrationist not Secessionist
Peacemaking perched on devolving power and power sharing arrangements that accommodate the counter elite may be described as adding new layers to the onion of South Asian states. Such peacemaking ends up reinforcing the state core, not challenging it. Apologists for unitary state
structures, decry federal arrangements and devolution of power as precipitating secession. The
audits showed that the states’ enactment of peace accords that subsume peoples’ aspirations for
self determination by acquiescing to autonomies are likely to produce more integration and
consolidation of the state core.
--Our empirical findings showed that the state finds it easier to deal with this ethnic/ identity
based opposition than other (especially class based) more broad based confrontations in which
oppression cuts across caste, region, ethnicity, gender, language and religion. Elite directed
ethno-nationalist movements do not challenge the fundamentals of the prevailing superstructure
but seek to be part of it.

**Strengthening Governments, Weakening Movements**
In such asymmetric peace processes between a constituted state and armed movements for self
determination, it is the state that chooses when and with whom to talk in these asymmetric peace
processes. Till the Mizo Accord (1986) the South Asia accord model empowered the moderate
civilian adjunct of the movement (or even creating a civic organisation). The Mizo Accord was
with Laldenga who headed the Mizo National Front. In the genealogy of Naga accords, the 1960
accord negotiations were held with Naga Peoples Convention a non-militant organisation of
Naga civil society actors, the formation of which was facilitated by the Indian state. However the
1997 Ceasefire and political talks are with the armed group who are mobilising wider sections of
Naga civil society in support of the peace process. Similarly, the transition is visible in Bodo
-- state designed peace processes seem either to deliberately exclude, or unable to include all
stakeholders predicated a crisis of unity and legitimacy (e.g. Bodo peace agreement with BLT
excluded NGFB; Naga with NSCN I-M excluded NSCN –K and NNC).
-- In the accord making process, there is no political will or processual structure that enables
rival perspectives (political opposition) or rival claimants to be involved making for a more
enduring peace. It is a curious pattern, intentional or unintentional, that crucial stakeholders,
especially possible ‘spoilers’ are excluded or bypassed (e.g. CHT:Bengali settlers; Balochistan
(Package) : non Baloch minorities)
-- Accords sow discord, precipitating splits and entrenching cycles of endemic violence which
are abetted and manipulated by state agencies that squander the possibility of an enduring peace
for short term gains of weakening further the ‘rebel’ negotiators at the table. State agencies
manipulate and even abet these turf wars (CHT: JSS vs UPDF)
-- peace making processes, especially protracted processes, inevitably isolate the leaders from
their support base the armed groups. Moreover, familiarity and proximity tears away the national
mystique surrounding the ‘national’ guerrillas and the moral ground slips away. The immediate
peace dividend gets hollowed out. Rampant extortion: multiple tax regimes (justified by the state
not financing the rebel camps) alienate the people.
-- The decline in the popularity of the armed groups is sharply evident in the SAFHR Survey
figures. Across the five conflicts surveys conducted, the accord process resulted in a sharp shift
in bargaining power of the parties involved, with a majority 51% of the respondents recording a
decline, as against 26% who did not.
--State emerged stronger in peace making that approximated to pacification and peace as
development with huge cash flows and economic packages which prop up the state (state
government) and the empowered counter elite’s patronage networks.
--The power asymmetry that marks these accords between two unequal parties predicates that the
dynamics works against the contesting group. Some 32% of the respondents recognized that their
leaders (the armed groups) had lost their bargaining power and 16% felt the government gaining
in credibility. This relative decline was especially marked in the case of the CHT, Madhes and
Bodoland. Across these five peace processes, 17% of the people believed the government to be
more pro-people, 19% the armed groups, 19% felt both were equally committed, while nearly
29% remained alienated from both.

**Weak Governments Failing to Deliver Produce More Violence**

Weak governments are tempted to conclude accords but when they fail to deliver, it produces
more violence and extremism as has been the pattern across the region – CHT: Bangladesh,
Rajiv Gandhi: Longowal Accord Punjab: India, Madhes Accords: Nepal and LTTE: UNP
Agreement: Sri Lanka

**Shifts in social stratification: expanding ‘middle class’; ‘middle space’**

Too often peace accords focus on resolving a conflict situation as if it were static, whereas the
changing dynamics posit opportunities, contradictions and new complexities. Modernity, state
penetration and the market produced changes in internal social stratification of these indigenous
tribal, feudal, communitarian societies. The audits showed that the peace processes were
unfolding at a time of significant shifts in internal social stratification with widening tension
between the colonial ‘national’ (Naga, CHT, Baloch) elite that has dominated the politics of the
national movement and the nascent post colonial modern professional middle class elite. Once
mono-ethnic communities have over the years, become multi-ethnic societies. In these societies
emerging out of conflict demographic shifts have transformed the urban—rural profile and
produced a youth bulge of unemployed restive young men and women. All these have major
consequences for ethno-nationalist movements that often are rooted in traditional tribal/feudal
structures. It can be a social force for strengthening the status quo (Nagaland) or a source of new
ideas for resolving old problems; it can be a means of transcending narrow tribal/feudal loyalties
and forging pan ethno-nationalist identities and separatism (Balochistan), or it can create new
contexts of opportunities and axis of competition (CHT).

--In the case of the CHT the accord process has created a new context of anxiety as well as
opportunity for growing aspirations, especially for young women and men. The ‘peace’ hiatus
has enabled the growth of a social grouping that could be called the ‘new middle class’; similarly
the protracted ceasefire in Nagaland has seen the expansion of this social group of women and
men who straddle both the structures of traditional authority and access the modern rungs of
education, professional achievement and money- introducing into these societies class division.

**Democracy Enabling: Democracy Disabling**

--Empowering ‘counter elite’: At the core of peace making via accords is the devolving of power
to self-governing bodies in ethnically/linguistically demarcated territorial units and the
empowering of the ethnic/regional elite through democratic elections. However, the peace audits
showed that the dynamics of such peacemaking actually results in frustrating democratic
aspirations and shrinking democracy. Bodo, CHT and Darjeeling-Gorkhland accords all set up
self governing councils in autonomous units. But as in the case of the CHT, interim nominated
hill district and Regional Council exist even 14 years after, effectively disempowering the
council and empowering the central government’s Ministry of CHT Affairs. The sidestepping of
the status of Bengali settler (now more than 40% of the pop) means that contestations over revising the electoral rolls have stymied elections.

-- Democratic value is not an integral part of the accord discourse or its prioritization. Essentially, these are discourses of power not a moment for remedial justice, restructuring power relations and expanding participation. The nature of the structure of power in the state remains fundamentally unchanged, though elite circles of power are expanded to include the counter elite. The autonomous unit reproduces the flaws of the nation state. It is not a response to the demand for plural politics and more just and inclusive societies. This is exemplified in the changing dynamics of Madhes movement - when the dominant Yadav have no concern for redressing the land dispossession of the co-habiting Tharus or rooting out the social stigmatization of the Dalits - the unified demand of one madhes one Pradesh would splinter.

--Shrinkage of representation ‘Minorities’: Accords guarantee protection of the non dominant ‘minorities’ but cap representation. In the Bodo case, in the 8 districts demarcated as Bodoland, the demographics at the ground level have dramatically shifted, so much so that in several areas the Bodos are in a minority. Not only does this have consequences for holding elections, but the structure of power institutionalized by the peace accord is heavily weighted in favour of the Bodo tribes 5:1, disadvantaging non Bodo ‘minorities’.

--Absent elected third tier self governing bodies: Autonomous Councils created under India’s VI Schedule are not covered under the Act extending Panchayati Raj Institutions which represent the lowest tier of democracy. It would have enabled non dominant minorities clustered in a Panchayat unit to be elected in a first past the post electoral system. The substitute village defence committees are nominated bodies and vulnerable to capture by ex armed cadres.

--Shrinkage of representation Women:
“Token” reservation in the representative Council bodies is the only recognition of women’s active public role and contribution to these movements. Post conflict, especially in indigenous struggles, tribal tradition that bars women’s participation in the public sphere is reified and exploited to bar educated, and professionally far better qualified women from claiming access to the traditional (Tribal Village Council) or to ‘modern’ representative institutions (autonomous councils, village development boards, municipal and town Hall bodies, state legislative assembly, and parliament). In Nagaland, the Courts have upheld 33% reservations for women in the metropolitan and town council elections in Mokokchung district but opposition by Naga male elite has blocked and suspended the election process.

The ‘post conflict’ experience in these ethnically determined autonomous units as captured in our peace audits sees the pushback of women out of the public sphere back into the private sphere governed by tradition and custom. In political movements articulated through identity conflicts, re-constituted notions of tradition and customary practices are played out on women and women’s bodies as the reproducer of the community. Women are assigned a specific role in the private sphere that delegitimizes their post movement engagement in the public sphere of politics.

Exclusionary Dynamics: Disabling of Pluralism: New Ethnic Assertions & Contestations
The peace audits substantiated the research project’s contention that the logic of identity centred politics or ethnically and regionally determined homelands is the production of homogeneity and more exclusion. Such identity projects are hegemonic in vision and implementation and tend to be hostile to non dominant groups, including women who are configured in the ‘nationalist’ narrative as symbolizing the uniqueness of the community’s identity. The audits demonstrated
that such totalizing politics produce exclusionary tendencies in what is rarely a mono ethnic space; that they are disabling of pluralism and render more vulnerable non dominant minorities, producing reactive ethnic assertions, and new contestations for homelands of one’s own. Mirror image identity movements emerged in turn to claim on the basis of unique histories and cultures, exclusive rights and entitlements. Citizenship as the basis of equal rights gets hollowed out.

--The trajectory of such ‘ethno-national’ movements showed that at their peak, these popular and populous self determination movements tended to be broad based drawing in many disparate groups (and women) to coalesce around an oppositional consciousness pitted against the hegemonic and homogenising power of the state.

--As Sajal Nag in the Naga study explored, discord and ethnic cleansing has been the fall out of such peace making. The somewhat enforced uniform identity that a struggling movement constitutes ( CHT: Jumma peoples embracing 13 hill tribes; Mizo drawing in Zo, Hmar, Kuki-Chin tribes; Assam movement which included Bodos; Baloch: pan ethnic-nationalist identity), tends post accord to fragment especially when a new hegemony threatens to displace the previous one (CHT: Chakma; Assam: Ahomiya; Madhes: Yadav; Bodoland: Bodos ). Often, the moment of accord, acts as a catalyst for minority communities whose interests are sacrificed at the peace table

--Homelands delimited on the basis of ethnicity invite ethnic clearing of territory. Commonly, post accord, as the peace audits showed, the violence does not end, but the locus and targets of violence shifts and the militarism of conflict gets reinforced. Post accord societies remain polarized and insecure societies.

Privileging of customary laws and traditions: Women & Local patriarchies
Many of these peace accords include special guarantees for protecting and promoting customary laws and tradition practices. However, as the field studies demonstrated, the workings of such guarantees and the privileging of customary laws and practices can confine women to live under regressive social systems and multiple insecurities, unless guarantees for respecting international (CEDAW) norms and standards are incorporated in the Agreements.

-- In these ethnically determined autonomous spaces women are even less able to challenge their local patriarchies as post conflict they are constantly pushed back into and kept within the limited niches of their ethnic, caste or tribal communities. Our research demonstrated that such totalizing ethno nationalist movements in reclaiming and valorizing a ‘unique’ history, culture and society assign a particular role to women. Mizoram, projected as the ‘success’ story of accords demonstrated the consequences for women and vulnerable ‘outsider’ communities of the consolidation of a cohesive Mizo identity. The result is an enforcing of social conformism especially in relation to women and exclusionary politics as regards minorities and ‘outsiders’ via the agency of violent vigilante social organizations, sanctioned by church and state.

--Community based dispute settlement mechanisms especially regarding family law disputes are an integral aspect of legal system of these self governing councils/states. Indeed, the position of the traditional ‘chiefs’ often is based on their authority in these arbitration systems, especially as the continuing basis of their social influence dependent on the existence of a communitarian agriculture has disappeared. Such arbitration mediation systems tend to trivialize crimes against women, including violations of women’s bodily integrity.

Peace Dividends: top down peace accords
The audit findings demonstrate that such peace processes are perched on a high table structure which invariably excludes important stakeholders, particularly the civil society, women, youth and other minorities who were directly or indirectly involved in the conflict. The study shows why peace negotiations should include multiple stakeholders and be multilayered.

The audit exercises had showed that the benefits of a peace accord agreed at the elite level failed to materialize at the local level. Indeed the flaw in these top down peace accords lay in the disjuncture between a ‘peace’ deal negotiated by ‘national’ and ‘counter elite’ at the high table and the struggle group’s aspirations and expectations.

A ‘peace’ that in the interest of containing the violence glosses over systemic and gross human rights violations will not satisfy the ‘victim’s’ basic need for justice; it will not uproot impunity, establish the rule of law and instil in the social consciousness ‘never again’. A ‘peace’ that does not address the root causes of conflict of structural inequalities and injustices is unlikely to end the cycles of violence and militarization.

Peace as Development: Growing Poverty

It is striking that the post ceasefire /post conflict aftermath witnesses an increase in poverty. For instance in India, whereas at the national level poverty declined, in the Northeast states (the recipients of substantive central funds), poverty increased. In the case of Northeast, Indian Planning Commission figures show that between 2004-5 to 2009-10 the people below the poverty line increased in Assam from 34.4 percent to 37.9 percent, Mizoram 15.4 to 21.1 percent, Manipur 37.9 to 47.1 percent and Nagaland from 8.8 to 20.9 percent.

This increase in poverty is not only weighed more towards the rural areas where the majority of the population live but there is a noticeable feminization of poverty. In contrast with the pre war period, a large number of women headed households become the primary source of the family income, but women tend to be the most neglected in post conflict economic reconstruction activities. They labour under the disadvantage of unequal access to land, water bodies and other natural resources. Also as men return from conflict and pre conflict gender attitudes are resumed, and women are pushed out of formal employment. Despite their involvement and contribution during the conflict, it is the male combatants who are targeted for formal employment and training.

Generating employment is a top priority. Expectedly the state sector swells becoming the major employer as evident in India’s conflict affected states. In Mizoram, more than two decades after a stable peace, the state sector jobs accounts for 3950 per 100,000 population, in Nagaland 3920 per 100,000, in Jammu and Kashmir 3585 per 100,000.

Wresting back local control over resources has been an integral part of the demands of these self determination movements, but the aftermath is more likely to see the co-option of the new empowered ethnic elite who are found presiding over predatory development projects, as evident in Nagaland, and in CHT. {CHT Development Board still headed by a non tribal}

Land question at the crux of so many of these struggles as for example in the CHT, remains deadlocked as the structural contradiction of the competing claims of the settlers and the hill peoples gets sidestepped.

Post accord militarization & Insecurity:

The targets of violence shifts, multiple fault lines make for an even more complex security situation. Militarizations post accord takes multiple forms including, valorizations of military as
opposed to civilian contribution to the movement, militarization of development and persisting militarized control of civilan institutions of authority.

**Civil Society: Making a Difference?**
The studies indicated that the involvement of civil society held the possibility of broadening the agenda beyond power sharing to become the means of establishing popular accountability and take the process of democratization to its logical end, that is, empowering oppressed communities.

-- Post ceasefire, as the middle space expanded civil society actors emerged as powerful bulwarks of the peace process, monitoring ceasefires, creating awareness and mobilizing popular consensus in support of the peace, holding accountable both the government and the movement’s leaders and cadres, building reconciliation.

-- Analogously, we argue that the degree of freedom of the armed groups and the state is limited by the capacity of ‘civil society’ to provide legitimacy in an asymmetric political process. Both the government and the ‘rebel’ group compete to control that middle space, especially as it expands in the time of ceasefire. ‘Rebel’ leaders and the state have demonstrated their power and efficacy in co-opting and taming civil society.

-- In the Naga case civil society involvement has been most noticeable and dynamic especially in the expanding non partisan middle space opened up by the ceasefire. However, while the armed insurgents may consult with the Naga social associations, they may be responsive to working with Naga civil society on reconciliation, they may even restrain the cadres high handed ‘taxation’ practices, but the rebel/ ‘nationalist’ leadership will not be directed by the Naga social organizations, they will not encourage a participatory, accountable dialogue process.

### 4.1.5 Research Milestones II

**Cross Border Dialogues**

-- The Dialogues fostered the capacity to conceptually link the local everyday lives of the border peoples with the large national and regional developments and strategic decisions, which in securitizing the border has made more difficult their lives but in enhancing the importance of stable borders has increased the allocation of special development funds. The multi layering of security concerns (post Kargil border alertness, ‘cold start’ doctrine’, global ‘war on terror’ discovery of strategic resources in the western border sector has reinforced vulnerability complex. “But India in fencing out Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, has produced a fencing in of its own citizens”.

The Dialogues explored the tension between the state imperative to entrench difference and the borderlands as a zone of mixing and ambiguity “In the borderlands, our states do their utmost, through strategies of militarization and bureaucratic and social controls to entrench difference and securitize the border. But the socio-economic fluidity of the borderland fosters, irrepressibly, multiple linkages and interactions, albeit ‘irregular’, and in criminalizing the natural flow of exchanges, destabilizes the very notion of ‘illegality’. Such ‘unnatural’ securitized borders predicate transgressions. They suck in the security forces into regimes of violence and corruption, and render the poor and women, and children vulnerable to even greater exploitation.”

For peoples living in the margins of the state vulnerable to competing nationalist ideologies, what do centrist notions of citizenship, nation and state mean? The Cross Border
Dialogues represent a sharp contrast, on the Indian side the constant imperative to assert claims to citizenship which bring entitlements from the state; and on the other side it is not to the state that the poor and deprived look but to NGOs.

Documenting discrimination and denial of fundamental rights to border peoples revealed institutional exclusion from recruitment into police –security forces

There is social sanction to regimes of quasi legality, transgression of the border for running cattle across many recognised cattle corridors is carried out with great openness. Not so the trafficking of women. Here too, when apprehended, it is the women victim who is arrested, the trafficker invariably negotiates a deal.

This is a border, especially the eastern border, where there is no ‘no man’s land’, and fencing of the border has resulted in privately owned cultivated fields and fishing bodies from 100 metres to even 15 km outside the patrolled fence with highly restricted access. For a subsistence borderland, this has a very damaging effect on peoples security of livelihood.

On the Rajasthan side there is the impact of the regular bi-annual military exercises, the consequences of ‘high security alerts’ on the border. Overnight a settled community finds itself swamped by soldiers, fields and wells overrun by tanks. What does it mean for women whose daily livelihood routines require them to fetch water and collect fuel.

There is the increasing incidence of women and children as cross border ‘carriers’ of smuggled goods in the higher risk securitized environment, a possible reflection of their desperation and vulnerability

Developments on the border become a proxy for whipping up anti Indian sentiment. This is reflected in the Bangladesh Press exclusively projecting the BSF killings Bangladeshi transgressors and invisiblizing the BSF’s killing of Indian citizens.

Violence on the border is contingent on ‘un-natural’ blocking of cross border flows of goods peoples, ideas. The inevitability of border crossings, which criminalised will reinforce violence, greater vulnerabilities and dangerous illegalities.

### 4.2.0 Capacity Building

#### 4.2.1 & 4 Mapping & Field Studies

The Research Design was oriented towards bringing into the research process an ever widening circle of scholars, researchers, activists, policy makers and journalists - to expose them to the idea and legitimacy of a rights based audit that brought to the centre the conflict affected peoples’ understanding of the impact of such peacemaking on their lives and hopes. Also the structure of the research methodology involved research processes that were people based, in particular: Focus Group Discussions, Survey and the Round Table/ Town Hall Meetings. The support structure of Consultants, Core Group and Discussants further deepened and widened the engagement of a third tier of scholar activists and former policy makers. It enabled us to bring in scholar bureaucrats e.g. Sajad Hasan (Mizoram) VS Jafa (Northeast); gender experts: Ritu Menon and Rubina Saigol; federal experts: Md Waseem, Tariq Rahman and Balveer Arora; political scientists and international relations scholars: P. Sahadevan and Imtiaz Ahmed; scholars with political economy perspective: Pritam Singh; peace studies scholars Samir Das and Ranabir Samaddar; and human rights activist, journalist and political commentator I A Rehman.

Lead Researchers were encouraged to work with a team of researchers – e.g. senior research students at the Universities: Amena Mohsin, Sajal Nag and Monirul followed that model;
whereas as Alia AmirAli, Tapan Bose & Rita Manchanda drew in activist scholars, researchers and privileged access to both nationalist/official decision making circles. About 25 persons were actively involved and trained in collection of research of materials, interviews, FGDs, data analysis, and round table dialogues. Above all the expanding circle of researchers, public intellectuals, policy makers, media practitioners, social activists, including women’s groups, were exposed to the innovative experiment of a rights based methodology of a peace audit.

The Survey process involved the development of a Master Questionnaire under the guidance of an expert from CSDS Sanjay Kumar. A series of field surveyors, translators and data analysts were engaged. In addition 2 professional editors were brought in to turn around 3 of the reports into Manuscripts

Delhi based team of Field researchers & Interns were actively involved in developing a comprehensive knowledge base on peace processes in south Asia, typologies and comparative framework of analysis. In particular, they have been engaged in developing chronologies and bibliographies. About 6 Research assistants were involved and some 5 interns. The majority of the team were women and gender as a cross cutting theme was continuously emphasised; the importance of bringing in gender perspectives and listening to women’s voices was a fundamental requirement.

Investing in local partners capacities
--The Survey component was new research tool for many of the Researchers and was an important learning experience for our partners as well as us. The Survey process entailed very specific training of field surveyors.
--We brought to the table a regional and South Asian perspective and many of our research partners have emphasized how valuable those frameworks are in sharpening their own understanding and strengthening their policy advocacy.
--For the authors who worked with editors, it was a rare opportunity to work with gifted editors who showed them how to make more effective and eloquent their important ideas and insights. Presumably this will have a longer term impact on what they write, later on.
--It is to be hoped that the audit exercises will have a demonstration effect and will lead to wider and deeper such rights based inquiries

4.2.5 Cross Border Dialogues
3 Partner Organisations & Participants: 65 & SAFHR Team: 4.
Widening the Debate & Seeding new research relationships: Seminar: University Faculty, Students & Researchers: 35; Informing Official Stakeholders: Interactions with senior BSF officials: 5 including IG BSF and former BSF DIG.

Capacity building and learning is a mutually enhancing and empowering experience and we owe a huge debt of gratitude to our partners who shared their depth of knowledge and understanding of the border situations. In turn, we invested in our Partners intellectually, financially and organisationally - strengthening their cross border access (Bengal) and intra state and community reach (Rajasthan). In particular, we brought to our Partners a framework of thinking regionally and the value of ways of jointly strategizing for advocacy and policy change. In addition there
was outreach to other organisations engaged in similar activities e.g. Centre for Civil Societies (Delhi) that has been engaged in using RTI for gathering information on the eastern border as well as MCRG (Kolkata) which has a well developed Border Studies focus. Also scholars with expertise in border studies like Frahana Ibrahim have been inducted into advisory core.

The participants included local elected body representatives, educationists and lawyers who are the opinion shapers and the voice of the border communities. In addition there were representatives of NGO networks, refugee organisations and the local media. Select interactions with district level office bearers focused attention on missing development schemes. Every effort was made to include proportional gender representation especially as both the Director of Ain i Sailesh Kendra, SURE and the Research Director of SAFHR are women, but despite the significant presence of women, their participation and the bringing in of gender perspective was felt to be inadequate.

Amongst the SAFHR Team, the two young (women) research assistants have gone onto pursue careers in related fields: PhD Border Studies: Yale University; MPhil: Migration & Intercultural relations, Erasmus Mundas. Also the intellectual and policy interest generated resulted in future commitments focusing on Pakistan’s borderlands and Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab and Gujarat border Ladakh border [Seminar Magazine] and proposed Delhi meeting of a select group from the Dialogues to galvanise follow up action. In the search for funds for this intervention our Bangladesh partners are likely to take the initiative.

Meanwhile ‘Partner’ Mausum is building upon the findings of the Border Dialogues and responding at the level of policy issues. Moreover Mausum is keeping alive the informal cross border network through dense flow of e-mail communications. Sustainability remains a challenge, and there is disappointment at the lack of movement on joint strategic advocacy for institutional interaction between cross border elected representatives of local bodies. It is a reminder of the need for exciting catalysts to build in financial and human resources for follow up support.

4.3.0 Policy & Practice

4.3.1- SAFHR Mapping, Monographs & Field Studies

-- Research Design had been specially developed to provide for ongoing interface of the research work with policy makers, public intellectuals, ‘civil society’ groups (especially women’s associations), and media practitioners – through the Round Table Dialogues/ Town Hall Meetings. Manchanda & Bose’s Naga study demonstrates the value of such a research component in providing feedback, throwing up new insights and consolidating our understanding. And they provided an important means of disseminating the idea and methodology of an audit to bring in public accountability of the peace process and its impact.

However, security considerations in the case of Balochistan obliged Amirali to drop this research segment and offset this deficiency by relying on Interviews. In other cases, the value of this research component was not fully appreciated and an important research tool compromised.

-- Efforts have been made, with some impact to strategically use the research for policy advocacy. For example the monograph “Gender & Ethno-Nationalist Struggles: Narratives of Power & Instrumentalization” was widely distributed at the “CEDAW Committee’s Asia Pacific Regional Consultation for the proposed General Recommendation on Human Rights of Women in
Situations of Conflict and Post-conflict* held on 26-28 March 2012 in Bangkok. Its critical perspective regarding customary laws and practices were incorporated in the General Recommendations.

It is expected that now that the peace audit studies are available and being published opportunities will be found in our countries to organize academic-policy-activist discussions on the research findings. Already, discussions have been initiated with NMML, Delhi to host a regional meeting. Also in view of the contemporary relevance of these studies opportunities will be found to intervene with the media and policy makers. Discussions are ongoing to provide research support to Naga social organizations involved in the “Committee on Alternative Arrangement (Naga –Manipur).

-- Policy Makers resistant to dialoguing with public intellectuals: Field studies have demonstrated that policy makers on both sides (state and non state) are quite hostile to engaging with ‘public intellectuals’ and in particular making more transparent and participatory negotiating processes.

4.3.5 Cross Border Dialogues
-Recommendations distilled from the Dialogues are being disseminated by partners and through publication. However more strategic advocacy is planned and the recommendations will form the be the centerpiece for proposed policy conversation in Delhi. Discussions are ongoing with partners to raise funds. Advocacy will also be aimed at the BSF using the publication and recommendations.

SAFHR’S Border Dialogues are a part of a multi pronged advocacy for a more humane border policy that balances state security concerns with the human rights of the peoples of the borderlands and sees border not a zones of anxiety but as zones of cooperation. It is a significant research and advocacy input in the campaign to stop violence on the border and has contributed to the cumulative pressure on the Indian Home Minister to announce a policy of no shooting on the Bengal border.

The enthusiastic response of well known academics and writers to pursue further our rights based framework on the borderlands and contribute to the Borders Special issue (Seminar Magazine ) is witness to its significance and value.

4.4.0 Research Contribution & Importance

- The fields of Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies labour under an academic disadvantage in that the study of contemporary conflict resolution and peace studies is not viewed as a legitimate area of scholarly attention. The SAFHR Research project has vindicated the scope and possibility of such research achieving high standards of academic excellence. Most important, the research should have a demonstration effect drawing in younger scholars, scholar-bureaucrats and scholar activists into the field.

- In the policy research domain of Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies, the SAFHR research project has brought in critical perspectives which interrogate the status quo notion of ‘peace’ (more akin to ‘pacification’) and the proclivity of the orthodox stream of such studies to reinforce that status quo, especially by indexing the ‘success’ of the state’s praxis of peace making on stability, integration, and ending direct violence.
• The SAFHR research project has challenged the centring of the state as the referent in the methodology of peace impact assessment and empirically demonstrated the alternative methodology of a rights based audit that brings in the perspectives of the people most affected by the conflict. Through the field studies and analytical mapping exercise SAFHR has demonstrated the inherent flaws in the methodology of the dominant stream of Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies

• The Research demonstrates the gap between the perspectives and expectations of the elite (including rebel elite) policy makers negotiating peace and the perspective and aspirations of the people for whom peace is being made. The field studies showed that this gap is likely to undermine the building of an enduring peace. Peace building which does not look beyond elite power sharing arrangements and the institution of electoral democracy, and eschews the issues driving the conflict, the human rights consequences of the conflict: the issues of justice, and the possibility of transforming unequal relations (including gender relations) – will not mobilize people to defend that peace.

• The audit methodology provides a practical technology to understand what such top down peace making policies and practices deliver. It questions the positioning of people as ‘receivers’ of peace. It empirically demonstrates how a process that enables multiple stakeholders (beyond the two ‘armed’ protagonists at the table) to impact upon the peace process would expand the agenda beyond an elite power sharing to actually empowering the struggle group.

• SAFHR Research studies challenge the dominant orthodoxy of Conflict Resolution experts (and policy makers both state and ‘rebel’) that tends to homogenise the ‘ethno-nationalist’ movement as an undifferentiated mass and marginalises or ignores the opportunity proffered by the emergence of new social stratifications (e.g. middle class) and the expanding middle space of action of a heterogeneous group of actors- women and men- in the civil society sphere. The Dialogic frame has no capacity to enable their voices to make an impact on the peace process, and to transform a top down peace process. SAFHR Peace audits point to the importance of multiple stakeholders and multilayered peace making.

• The field studies draw attention to the importance of Policy Makers, CR & Peace Studies experts emphasising a dynamic rather than static analysis of the state and the movement. Too often CR experts and policy makers focus on resolving a conflict situation as if it were static, whereas the changing dynamics of an unfolding peace process posit opportunities, contradictions and new complexities. Constructs that explain the waxing and waning of self determination movements as derived from ‘tribalism’ and re-tribalism (or the feudal Baloch Sardars) ignore that the political economy of jhum that propped up tribal structures has receded into the past. State and market penetration have created new social stratification with consequences for ‘national’ movements rooted in traditions.

• SAFHR studies emphasised the relevance and value of bringing in gender as a cross cutting theme. Also, the field studies demonstrated the methodology of gendering a peace audit. The special focus on Gender and Ethnicity demonstrated how integral is a gender perspective in understanding the dynamics of such identity based mass struggles and their resolution through the creation of ethnic homelands.

Thinking Regionally & Comparative Analysis
South Asia is a culturally and historically integrated region and the research studies and dialogues demonstrate common state policies and praxis. But our states have developed stakes in ‘othering’ neighbours with consequences for cross border kin-ethnic and religious groups, resulting in discrimination, discontent and revolt. It is not only territories that have been partitioned but our minds. Even the more liberal stream of scholars and public intellectuals in our countries has little familiarity or attraction towards developments across the border. The multi-country and multi disciplinary research project was designed to challenge that partitioned mind set to break down prejudices.

- Comparative Analysis fore-grounded similarities (and differences) opening up fresh ways and the value of thinking regionally. It demonstrated best practices of what has worked and what has not, begging the question – why do India’s neighbours turn away from looking at India’s experiences with asymmetric federalism when it comes to constitution making e.g. Nepal.
- Cross border and regional analysis has a policy imperative as these conflicts spill over and in some case take on the characteristic of a regional conflict system.
- Most important, the process has networked a regional body of scholar activists with a shared vision and concerns and an experience of working together which it is hoped will seed more exchanges.

5.0.0 Top Highlights

- Peace audits demonstrate that state praxis in resolving identity based ethno-nationalist movements via special autonomies and asymmetric federal arrangements are likely not to confer rights on people, but to shift the locus of struggle from the domain of peoples’ struggles to elite power sharing negotiations. State authority in empowering the ethnic “counter elite” in ethnic homelands produces a broader and more complex elite stratification but it is contingent on the rebel circle of power becoming a mirror image of the state system. The discourse of grievance gets displaced by the discourse of state power. Indeed the flaw in these top down peace accords lies in the disjuncture between a ‘peace’ deal negotiated by ‘national’ and ‘counter elite’ at the high table and the struggle group’s aspirations and expectations.

- Too often CR experts and policy makers focus on resolving a conflict situation as if it were static, whereas the changing dynamics posit opportunities, contradictions and new complexities. In these societies emerging out of conflict, the encounter with modernity and state penetration has produced the growth of new social stratifications, especial the emergence of a ‘new middle class’ comprising women and men who straddle both the structures of traditional authority and have access to education, professional achievement and money. It can be a social force for strengthening the status quo or a source of new ideas for resolving old problems (Nagaland); it can be a means of transcending narrow tribal/ feudal loyalties and forging pan ethno-nationalist identities and separatism (Balochistan), or it can create new contexts of opportunities and axis of competition (CHT). SAFHR’s Research studies challenge the dominant orthodoxy of homogenising an ‘ethno-nationalist’ movement as an undifferentiated mass and marginalising the opportunity proffered by the emergence of these new actors in the expanding civil society sphere. Unfortunately, the peace dialogic frame has no capacity to enable their
voices to make an impact on the peace process, and to transform a top down peace process. SAFHR Peace audits point to the importance of involving multiple stakeholders and multilayered peace making.

- Our research demonstrated that such totalizing ethno nationalist movements in reclaiming, valorizing and protecting a ‘unique’ history, culture and society assign a particular role to women in the private sphere as the purveyor of that culture and tradition and delegitimize their role in the public sphere. Whether it is the Madhesh, Naga, Mizo or the CHT, these post conflict situations have seen concerted efforts to resist nationwide reservation policies for women in the name of tradition. Many peace accords include special guarantees for protecting customary laws and traditional practices. However, as the field studies demonstrated, the workings of such guarantees can confine women to live under regressive social systems and multiple insecurities, unless guarantees for respecting international (CEDAW) norms and standards are incorporated in the Agreements. In these ethnically determined autonomous spaces women are even less able to challenge their local patriarchies as post conflict they are constantly pushed back into and kept within the limited niches of their ethnic, caste or tribal communities.