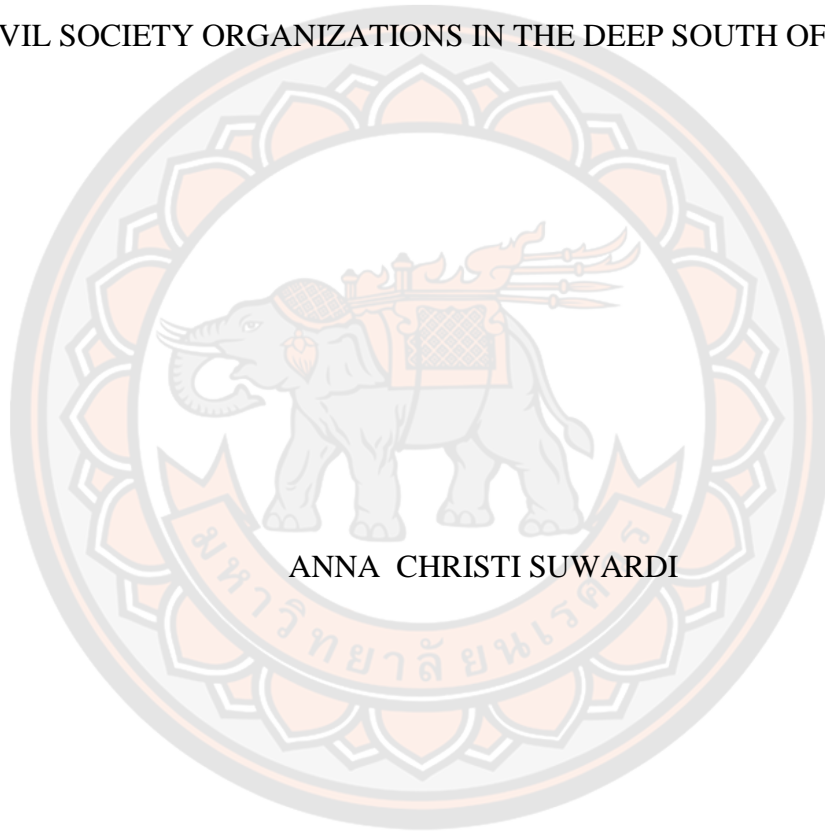MEASURING WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: EFFORTS AND IMPACTS OF
CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN THE DEEP SOUTH OF THAILAND

ANNA CHRISTI SUWARDI

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School of Naresuan University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Doctor of Philosophy in ASEAN Studies - (Type 2.1)
2023

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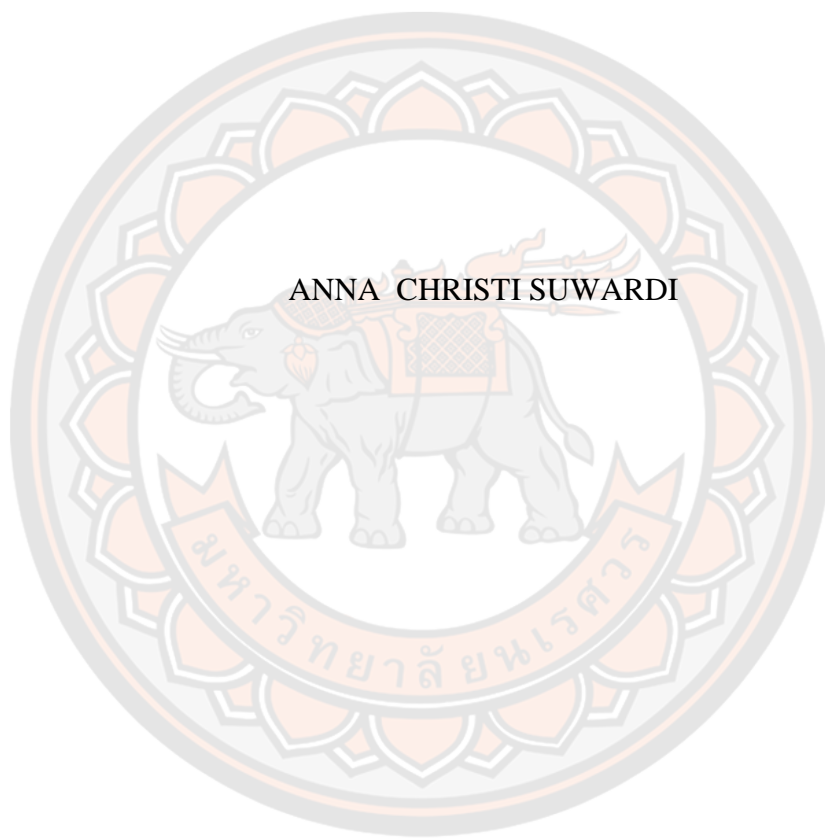CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN THE DEEP SOUTH OF THAILAND

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By Anna Christi suwardi

has been approved by the Graduate School as partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the Doctor of Philosophy in ASEAN Studies - (Type 2.1) of Naresuan University

Oral Defense Committee

．．． Chair
(Assistant Professor Yasmin Sattar, Ph.D.)

．．． Advisor
(Dr. Paul Chambers)

．．． Internal Examiner
(Assistant Professor Napisa Waitoolkiat, Ph.D.)

．．． Internal Examiner
(Honorary Assistant Professor Katsuyuki Takahashi, Ph.D.)

．．． External Examiner
(Assistant Professor Srisompob Jitpiromsri, Ph.D.)

Approved

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(Associate Professor Krongkarn Chootip, Ph.D.)
Dean of the Graduate School

Title	MEASURING WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: EFFORTS AND IMPACTS OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN THE DEEP SOUTH OF THAILAND
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Advisor	Dr. Paul Chambers
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ABSTRACT

This study examined women's civil society organizations (CSOs) in Thailand's deep south conflict-affected region. It emphasized the institutional evolution of women's CSOs from 2004 to 2020 and the impacts of CSOs on women's empowerment. At the macro level, the theoretical approach of historical institutionalism was used to analyze the associated factors including historical legacy, path dependence, and a critical juncture of the evolution of women's CSO. At the micro level, the feminist analysis was used to measure the impact of women's CSOs programs on women's empowerment which was categorized into three levels of empowerment: personal, relational, and environmental. The study provided comprehensive analyses based on an empirical data set obtained from 10 CSOs and 309 women in the three southernmost border provinces of Patani, Yala, and Narathiwat.

The study found that the conflict that escalated in 2004 was a critical juncture for women's CSOs as they were institutionalized over time and became change agents. Women's CSO agendas have gradually shifted from victim compensation projects to a larger gendered agenda of empowerment and peace initiatives. Over the past 16 years, women's CSOs have embarked on a path of institutional change, moving from informal to formal contributions to peace process. On the other hand, the survey results showed that conflict experience was a strong motivator for women to join

CSOs. The trend toward higher levels of empowerment among women who participated in CSO programs occurred as a result of the diverse identity composition of CSOs.

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Anna Christi suwardi

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INTRODUCTION

A. Preface Summary

Women's empowerment is vital in supporting a global agenda of gender equality. Yet this agenda tends to be harder to achieve, especially when a particular society suffers from conflict, underdevelopment, state control, and religious misinterpretation, such as in the Deep South of Thailand (DST). In response to this, forming Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) that address women's issues becomes crucial. As institutions, path dependency and critical junctures are the major factors in shaping the evolution of CSOs in empowering women from time to time. In addition, the significant impacts that CSOs have made justified by the perceptions of women participating in the empowerment programs. Those participating women tend to have higher confidence enabling them to become agents of change.

By studying the case of women's CSOs in the DST this study addresses further queries related to how women's CSO's in the DST have evolved according to their behaviour and path dependence to change institutions and empower women. The study will also analyse associated factors towards the impact of women's CSOs programs towards women's empowerment, such as women's diverse backgrounds, women's experience with conflict, historical legacies, actors, and events, as well as critical juncture dimension. Therefore, this study justifies its central argument that the more women have participated within and contributed to CSO programs in the DST, the more women's CSOs have become agents of change, thus spearheading women's empowerment in the DST. Ultimately, this study offers five research questions.

1. How have CSOs in the DST evolved so that they increasingly addressed the empowerment of women?
2. How have women's behaviour and path dependency shaped the change occurring in CSOs as institutions?
3. To what extent did the CSOs programs impact the empowerment between groups of women who had participated with CSOs and women who have not participated?

4. What are the characteristics and major challenges of the CSOs in running programs on women's issues?

5. Within the group of women's CSOs participants, what strategies could be applied to enhance women's empowerment to become agents of change?

6. How do the diverse backgrounds of women in CSOs affect the level of empowerment?

Using qualitative and quantitative approaches, the study will test the following central hypothesis:

The more that women have participated within and contributed to CSOs' programs in the DST, the more women's CSOs have become agents of change, thus spearheading women's empowerment in the DST.

B. Background

Gender inequality and violence against women are global issues that significantly contribute to the injustice living women with fewer opportunities than men in dimensions of life, including social-economic, lack access to education, health care, and political participation (Ridgeway, 2011). Women's issues are even more complicated when they intertwine with poverty, insecurity, and conflict settings in certain areas or regions. Like many, the DST is where women generally conduct multiple burdens caused by horizontal development inequalities (Burke, 2012), religious misinterpretation, and conflict situations (Buranajaroenkij, 2018). In response to these challenges, state actors only may not be enough to solve the problems. Therefore, collective initiatives established by non-governmental actors, including Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) addressing women's issues, become significant contributions.

This study examines the evolution of CSOs from 2004 to 2020 and its nexus between programs on women's issues that impact women's empowerment alone in the DST. Unlike most of the Thai population, ethnically, the Deep South is comprised of 78% ethnic Malay Muslim population. However, religion and ethnicity have made them minorities compared to 90% of Thailand's population, who are Thai Buddhists (Jitpiromsri and Shobonvasu, 2007). The Deep South also has a long history of violent conflict between the armed groups and the Royal Thai government's military,

conflict which first made an appearance in the 1960s; later, the enormous violent tragedy in 2004 resulted in conflict that has remained unresolved to this day (Askew, 2007). Apart from the conflict, the three provinces of Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat, considered the most underdeveloped areas compared to the rest of the northeast provinces of Thailand. There was a high unemployment rate, low educational attainments, and a small amount of income per capita compared to northeast provinces (Jitpiromsri and Shobonvasu: 2007, Funston: 2008). A recent report from the World Bank Group highlighted that the Southern provinces (especially Pattani and Narathiwat) classified with the highest poverty rate since 2017, which is associated with conflict-affected situations (Yang, Wang, & Dewina, 2000).

According to UN Women (2017), the data taken from eighty-nine countries found a trend of gender-based discrimination that is globally threatening to women and girls. One in five women and girls under fifty years of age have experienced physical/sexual violence, while fifteen million girls under the age of eighteen are prone to harmful child marriage practices. Globally, women hold only 23.7% of parliamentary seats, and financially, women were 2.6 times of unpaid jobs and domestic care compared to men. Therefore, women's and girls' empowerment become a crucial part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Out of the 17 goals for women's equality and empowerment, goal five stresses that globally women could contribute to improving the quality of life and global development.

In the Thailand context, fighting the challenges of achieving gender equality have started since 1985. The formal commitment towards gender equality and women's rights came along when the country became a party to the United Nations (UN) treaty on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). According to UNDP's Gender Inequality Index (GII) 2018, Thailand ranked 84th globally. In the empowerment indicator, Thailand had performed 5.3% of women seated in the parliament, and 43.1% of adult women had a formal education of secondary level. Meanwhile, the reproductive health indicator showed that 20.0% of women died from pregnancy causes and almost half of the adolescent birth rate per thousand women were 15 to 19 years old. In the indicator of economic activity, 59.5% of women participated in the labour market (UNDP,2019). This data showed that Thailand has very few numbers of women in the political

practice, and at the same time, it reflects the political system that tends to favour men rather than women. Thailand's expert on human rights issues, Muntarbhorn (2010), has argued that the gender equality of this kingdom faces multiplayer challenges. These challenges include women's limited access to the decision-making level, discrimination of unequal pay, and domestic and sexual violence has found primarily committed due to men's alcohol abuse.

Along with underprivileged developmental problems and conflict situations in the Deep South society (Yang, Wang, & Dewina, 2000), women particularly faced gender-based violence against them. Mainly influenced by traditional culture and religious practices, women stereotyped as submissive, weak, and dependent. The gender norms in the ethnic majority of Malay Muslim society in the DST strongly influenced by Islamic teaching and Malay culture. The domestic and public spheres define the segregation of gender roles between men and women. Women follow Islamic teaching rules and practices to serve duties through marriage and cultural identities (World Bank, 2020).

Since 1946, the Muslims society in the DST governed by Islamic Family and Inheritance Law. According to the Friends of Women Foundation (FOW) under the Patani Working Group, unfortunately, implementation of this law favours men and is irrelevant to contemporary life, adding to the ambiguity of women's rights. The discriminations against Muslim women include lack of legal marriage protection (divorce, widowhood, and polygamy), no minimum age of marriage (child marriage and unwanted pregnancy), less access to property ownership, and barriers to leadership (Patani Working Group, 2017).

Furthermore, military intervention in the DST has significantly impacted people's lives. Since the horrific 2004 tragedy happened, the security situation in the Deep South remains jeopardized. The tension has been increasing concern worsened by Thailand's political turmoil, marked the 2014 military coup. The coup had put down Yingluck Shinawatra's administration led by Gen. Prayuth Chan-Ocha, who then served as the Prime Minister of Thailand. The presence of military operations in the DST is not merely for security purposes. However, it claimed as "a need for political primacy" in fighting against armed Malay-Muslim groups (Chambers, 2015). For instance, from 2012-2015, the numbers of incidents and victims were at an all-

time high peak, making up around 7,000 people who died in the past fifteen years (the Deep South Watch report, 2019). Although most casualties were men, the conflict caused women multiple burdens physically, mentally, and socially.

In response to these challenges of gender inequality and discrimination against women, groups of women under various forms of organizations and networks, including CSOs, came to make multiple efforts. The presence of CSOs is crucial in making efforts to develop women's empowerment in the Deep South. They are making change through grassroots initiatives that proactively contribute to promoting gender equality and ending discrimination against women. Their programs have addressed various issues, such as economic empowerment, capacity building, trauma healing for conflict survivors, advocacy for the peace movement, and more.

The definition of women's empowerment is varying, but it agrees that it is critical to achieving gender equality. According to VeneKlasen and Miller (2002), women's empowerment defines as a process whereby the lives of women and girls are transformed from a situation where they have limited power to one where their power is enhanced. Thus, the transformation of women's lives could be seen through the changes that need to be empowered. A woman's empowerment includes her ability of decision-making power, improvement of a sense of self-worth, ability to make an impact on changes, and having power and control over her life both in domestic and public spheres (UN Women, 2017).

Characteristically, women's CSOs in the Deep South differ in terms of their focus areas, the diversity of their members' backgrounds, and their affiliations. Some CSOs focus on economic empowerment, peace and capacity building, education, and culture, etc. Although the majority population is Muslim, some non-Muslim women are actively involved in CSOs. Several women CSOs are exclusively Thai Buddhists, Malay Muslims, and mixed. Thus, the different backgrounds of CSOs members could impact the definition of their empowerment agenda. Although these CSOs are usually not-for-profit, their activities are financially supported by many different resources. These includes government agencies, international non-governmental organizations (international donors), and civil societies. These different forms of affiliation can impact CSOs' agendas for women.

Molnar (2014) argued that the active engagement of women in the DST covers the impact of violent conflicts, proliferation, and nature of engagement of local women's CSOs. Women also engaged in state institutions and implications for transition to engagement in the formal political arena. Programs for economic empowerment likewise have been created in various formats (World Bank, 2010). Besides, groups of women's CSOs have also been actively advocating the peace initiatives implemented by the authorities under the pilot project, namely the "safety zone." This project, initiated by women's CSOs under the umbrella of the Peace Agenda of Women (PAOW), urged that the public areas must be free from violent incidences and called for the enhancement of women's involvement in the peace process (Buranajaroenkij, 2018). Additionally, Pornpimol Kanchanalak, a prominent female Thai leader, stated that "civil society, including grassroots women's organizations and networks, play an important role in assisting victims and survivors of sexual violence in conflict" (Kanchanalak, 2015). Therefore, the presence of women's CSOs, to some extent, has been impacting Muslim women's empowerment in the DST.

Despite the various efforts of women's CSOs to bring change in society, the hard-line methods that Thailand's security forces utilize in the DST concerning security maintenance have complicated women's struggles in achieving their goals. In many occasions, women's groups are not able to bring about institutional change because of the overriding state's power and resistance. State over-centralization of power has led it to lord over the DST society and marginalize people's initiatives in raising social awareness, including women's issues. Consider the political motive in the government's tendency to stand its ground in neglecting the leading causes of the DST conflict—giving them more autonomy and helping them improve their lives. This circumstance has created frustration among the DST people and shows a crisis of state legitimacy, which, the government has incessantly attempted to deny (Jitpiromsri & Mcargo, 2010).

State control during armed conflicts, or wars, perpetuates repression against women. Previous research conducted by the researcher has examined state repression of women in the context of conflict and war, where women not only suffer direct violence but also endure systemic hardships. Moreover, women often bear the dual

burden of being victims of war. For instance, the historical plight of 'comfort women,' who were victims of war during Japan's colonialization in many Asian countries, especially Southeast Asian nations, serves as a poignant illustration. The struggles of 'comfort women' that persisted into contemporary times in post-war settings demonstrate how women asserted their rights. Initially, 'comfort women' were portrayed as sex slaves during Japan's colonial rule. However, through persistent resistance and activism, 'comfort women' shattered societal taboos and transformed the narrative surrounding them as war victims, ultimately allowing them to reclaim their rights (Suwardi & Rosydiana, 2017).

Several state-affiliated organizations have been established to work specifically on the Deep South issues, such as the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC) in 1982, National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) in 2005, and the newly established Coordination Centre for Children and Women in the Southern Border Province (CCWSBP) in 2019. Although these government agencies are generally established to stabilize the lives of the people affected by conflict, they have also had various relationships with civil organizations, depending on the program types and organizational structures. Nevertheless, when there have been bureaucratic changes in these organizations, it has directly impacted policy implementation concerning the CSOs. Regarding women's CSOs, for example, there was a significant difference when the Bangkok administration changed the secretary-general of the SBPAC in 2014, given that the newly appointed official did not extend the previous secretary-general's policies with CSOs. Therefore, there is a lack of consistency in state policy owing to rotations of policymakers and, therefore, a tendency of state-induced deviation where state control over the people burdens women's CSOs in building their capacity to influence change.

By examining the case of CSOs in the Deep South of Thailand from 2004 to 2020, this study addresses the inquiries on how the behaviour and path dependency has shaped the change that occurred in CSOs as institutions. What are the characteristics and significant challenges of the CSOs in running programs on women's issues? Besides, specifically looking at the impacts of CSOs programs on women's empowerment, this study has two further questions: to what extent did CSOs empower groups of women who have participated with CSOs and women who have

not participated? Within the group of CSOs participants, how do women's different backgrounds affect their empowerment, and what strategies could be applied to enhance women's empowerment to become agents of change?

While much research and study have been done in analysing CSOs' performances (Molnar 2014; Abdulsomad 2017; Buranajaroenkij 2018), no literature specifically examined the evolution of CSOs in the Deep South. A research report by Don Pathan (2012) highlighted that the role of CSOs in building peace was narrowly focused on establishing confidence-building to prepare their involvement in the next level of the official decision-making process. In contrast, Chantra (2017), from the perspective of political participation, argued that most CSOs at the beginning of the upsurge of 2004's violence were conducting activities by were conducting activities led by experts and professional activists. Later the knowledge borne out of these activities was transferred to the people. As a result, more participants joined the CSOs programs since the conflict is still ongoing. This study, therefore, attempts to fill this gap by analysing the nexus between CSOs programs and the women's perceptions of empowerment in the DST by examining how women's participation in CSO programs has influenced their perceptions of their ability to achieve empowerment.

C. Theoretical Framework

This study draws its analyses of the relationships between women's empowerment and the role of CSOs in the DST mainly from two lenses of theoretical approaches: Historical Institutionalism (HI) and Feminism. Firstly, the HI approach will guide the qualitative discussion by looking at some queries of women's participation in the DST CSOs. The discussion will look at a range of participation from simple presence in CSOs to women functioning as main actors. What are the causal events (internal and external) that affect the behaviour of CSOs as institutions? How did the path of dependency and critical juncture shape CSOs as change agents towards women's empowerment? Secondly, in a quantitative thesis, the Feminist approach will navigate certain parameters to measure CSOs programs' impact on women's empowerment. By using measurement tools of the Women's Empowerment Index (WEI), the Feminist approach will be looking at both responses of women as individuals as well as CSOs as an institution.

Historical Institutionalism

In analysing the phenomenon above, this study utilizes the theoretical approach of Historical Institutionalism (HI) to primarily explain the evolution of CSOs as institutions working on women's empowerment. Through HI's perspective, the discussion will specifically examine how the CSOs' behaviours and path dependency have fostered changes over the time frame (institutional change) (Waylen, 2009). In understanding women's empowerment and CSOs, the researcher utilizes HI approaches to give direction on the analyses of interrelated factors such as aspects of critical juncture, actors and interests, and external events. Furthermore, there will be analyses of the characteristics and efforts of the CSOs in addressing women's issues. The study will analyse effective practices that have been carried out, including what can be developed further to improve women's empowerment in the Deep South.

In the spectrum of political studies, HI emphasizes the importance of understanding that what has happened in the past impacts the present. In the HI perspective, "time" is a key that requires a deep understanding of the dimension to which ideas of institutions and beliefs evolve (North 1999 in Stefes 2019). Thus, an institution carries out its historical process to produce an outcome. In this process, key features of how long the process takes, how quickly the change occurs when the process takes place, and whether the process is accelerated progressively are some primary inquiries that need to be addressed (Stefes 2019). This attention to the "timing" aspect contributes to understanding that an institution meets some joined junctures of events (internal or external) that contributed to the change along the historical process.

Before the theoretical argument of HI, a foundation of understanding the term 'institution' itself must be highlighted. Various well-known scholars have conceptualized the definitions of institutions from different points of view. A leading Historical Institutionalist, Peter A. Hall (1986), had firmly placed his argument in defining *institution* as the "formal rules, compliance procedures, and standard operating practices that structure the relationship between individuals in various units of the polity and economy" (see Andre Sorensen, 2015, p.6). In more recent literature, Streeck and Thelen (2005) define institutions from the actors' and actions' points of

view. They underlined that institutions are "collectively enforced expectations with respect to the behaviour of specific categories of actors or the performance of certain activities" (Streeck & Thelen, 2005, p.139). Additionally, Sorensen (2015) concludes that institutions as "the shared norms and formal rules shape action in social, political and economic processes" (Sorensen, 2015, p.19).

Another critical thesis in the HI is the power contestation between related agents, resulting in new formations of institutions during the transformation phases. In this aspect, a social group may generate a different form of collective action than the others. The causal relationship is affected by the type of institutions (formal or informal) and the group's size (Voigt, 2019). Therefore, an institution like women's CSOs can potentially trigger transformative change over their power and resources.

Furthermore, HI is widely known among social and political scientists with its ideas of path dependency. Drawing from the works of Collier and Collier (1991), Croissant (2019) summarized the concept of path dependency as a centre of debate in focusing on institutional change from the factors of its continuity and limits as the result of past political decisions in the developments of future institutional structure. The path of dependency that an institution has created in its process is one of the vital associated factors in analysing change and evolution.

Historical Legacies

Discussions associated with women's empowerment have a critical alignment to women's historical legacies as prominent foundations in their own native knowledge. Historical legacy in this context could be structural, institutional, legal, or behavioural. There have been at least two types of conceptual ideas (broad and narrow) in defining the historical legacy (Croissant, 2019). From a *broad* understanding, Morlino (2010) argues that the historical legacies include an adopted phenomenon from the reproduction of authoritarian or pre-authoritarian phases and previous events of which political actors separate themselves from an authoritarian regime (period of democratic institutionalization). In contrast, a *narrow* understanding of legacy focuses on the premises of a phenomenon that existed at least at two observation periods. The legacies could be at any level, either *structural*, *institutional* (social groups), or *behavioural* (individual). In the structural level, for example,

socio-economic inequalities and a form of 'deep state' are both critical aspects of legacy in the social and political aspects. Additionally, the term 'deep state' in Thailand context is refers to a "*composed of state agents (civil servants) who oppose the rise of electoral politics that often refuse to take their orders from elected governments with high tendency to maintain and strengthen a particular and preferred social, political and economic order with the monarchy as its symbolic keystone*" (Merieau, 2016 p.446). Furthermore, the two observation periods could be seen in the transition process from an authoritarian government to democratic government. (Croissant, 2019). Regarding women's narratives, the historical legacies are grounded on how women fought for equality in public spheres and breached systemic patriarchy (Pandit, 2015).

Table 1 Classification of legacies

Level of analysis	Political	Social
Structural	'Deep state'(See note 1)	Socio-economic inequalities
Institutional	Military prerogatives	Levels of social organization
Behavior and attitudes (individual)	Trust in political institutions and authorities	Memories of historical injustices

Based on the classification of legacies above, the researcher will see how historical legacies operate among the debates on women's issues in the DST. From the social point of view, historical legacies are associated with memories of injustices that lead to resistance. According to Croissant (2019), historical legacies are always lined with causal events, which explains how those legacies have been created. Therefore, it can be argued that the gender dimension from the historical legacy aspect is that women's roles in history could have an enduring effect on later generations' consciousness. Women's potential in the future could be generated from past legacies, regardless of to what extent their impact has contributed.

In Southeast Asia, historical narratives on women's empowerment concerning gender equality and the power relation between men and women in non-domestic spheres have been relatively distinctive since the early twentieth century. While long before that, literature on women was still around glorification narratives on female warriors' heroism (Andaya, 2007). In the DST context, Teeuw, and Wyatt (1970), for example, have elaborated on women warriors' historical legacies from the Patani kingdom in the fifteenth century. There were famous narratives of the Yellow Queen (*Ratu Kuning*), who was well-known for her leadership in trading sectors. Simultaneously, the Purple Queen (*Ratu Ungu*) was a brave female leader who led the battalion on the battlefields. In more recent literature, the story of "Three Tiger Warriors" presented three Malay-Muslim women as a role-model in leadership. Most of their works were the dedication of their life to the people through knowledge sharing and education. These three women leaders had been acting as the leading female politicians who advocated women's political roles. They encouraged the community to vote for women candidates in the 1976 election. This narrative was one of the prominences that contributed to the establishment of more women leaders in the DST (Marddent, 2017).

Contrary to that, historical legacies that women inherited in the Deep South were also strongly associated with injustice issues against the Deep South society. These injustices generally result from the complex restrictions on people's needs and unique identities. These collective memories of injustices include coercion to shift from religious-based education to secular education and the limitation of cultural symbols and practices (Tisammana, 2017).

Path Dependence and Critical Juncture

One of the primary theses in Historical Institutions is that "history matters," given premises to what happened in the present as a causal effect of the past; therefore, path dependencies of interrelated events and changes are established. Introduced early on by Nelson and Winter (1982), the path dependency concept significantly influenced how HI sees past decisions as a critical influence on the current decision of change in new institutions (Voigt, 2019). Since HI recognizes institutions influencing individuals' and groups' behaviour toward building change,

such interconnectedness of societal change is path dependent (Stefes, 2019). Path dependency determines the process of how institutional transformation occurs (Merkel et al., 2019). The factor sequence (or in which the order processes and events are taking place) is also crucial in formulating path dependencies. According to Pierson (2004), path dependency means that "early parts of a sequence matter much more than the later parts" (Pierson 2004, 44 in Stefes 2019, 97). Nevertheless, repeating past decisions might only sometimes be analytically relevant to current decisions due to different contexts. Therefore, *a critical juncture* of specific events in a later sequence is necessary to help institutions transform.

Collier and Collier (1991) have argued that a critical juncture is a moment of entering a self-reinforcing process. In other words, critical junctures are points where actors and the course of a path present to influence (take) the decision-making process. Additionally, as cited by Stefes (2019), within HI debates, Capoccia and Kelemen (2007) define a *critical juncture* as "a situation in which the structural … influences on political action are significantly relaxed for a short period, with two main consequences: the range of plausible choices open to powerful actors expands substantially and the consequences of their decisions for the outcome of interest are potentially much more momentous" (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007, 343).
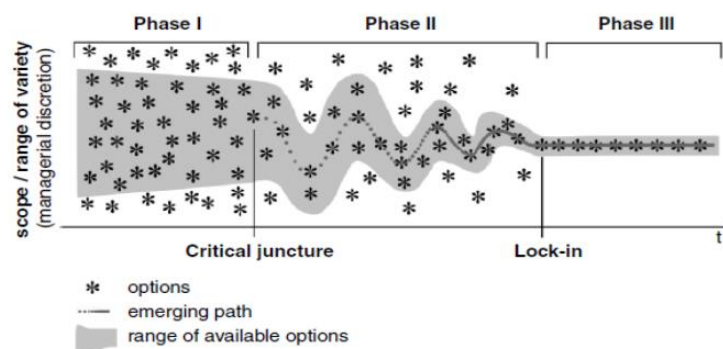
Figure 1 The Evolution of a Path

The figure (See note 2) above shows the conceptualization of how an institution (or organization) created its path as a form of social process. In Phase I, an institution making decisions from available options toward finding the critical juncture from various triggering events. While in Phase II, several options are

concentrated to shape the specific pattern of actions or social practices (so-called Path Formation Phase). This process continues to Phase III, where a normative or lock-in pattern is defined. In the last phase, an institution's principal action or practice is formulated (Georg Schreyogg & Jorg Sydow 2010, p. 8). Thus, it is again firmly shown that path dependency focused on institutional change impacted by the decision made in the past from the available choices.

Referring to Figure 1, a critical juncture is a defining moment that significantly contributes to institutional change. The critical juncture happens when an event (one even or more) triggers the institution to develop a crucial decision. In the case of women CSOs in the Deep South, the increasing violence and tension in public spaces has been affected by conflicts and resulted in death tolls/high-profile casualties. As a result, CSOs took a step of massive consolidation to form a network of twenty-three CSOs, urging for a "safety zone" (Buranajaroenkij, 2018).

Actors and Events

In doing this study, the researcher also explores other factors related to the central theory of HI in understanding the evolution (and transformation) of women's CSOs towards their roles as agents of change in addressing women's empowerment issues; these are actors and events. In this context, actors contribute directly and indirectly towards deciding how the institutional path dependency created changes either through individual or collective action. At the same time, events consider internal and external occasions (or incidents) that trigger institutional transformation.

Through the lens of political studies, understanding the aspect of actors can be analysed from a theoretical approach of *methodological individualism*. This methodological individualism highlights its assumption that the actions and interactions of individuals cause social phenomena. Individuals' behaviours are often structurally and culturally affected by their perceptions and intentions. Thus, when groups of individuals agree upon something, they gradually form collective decisions (Merkel & Wagener, 2010, p.42-43). Besides understanding actors from an individualistic point of view, actors become factors of institutional transformation when they act as elites. The elites have the power to maintain and direct political and social change constantly. Additionally, the action approach has argued that elites'

strategies, subjective assessments, and actions are dominant factors of the transformation process (Przeworski 1991, Karl and Schmitter 1991 in Mark and Wagener, 2010).

Introducing this actor's aspect to the case of women CSOs in the Deep South, various women actors simultaneously contributed towards the institutional change of their CSOs. Deep Southern women are prominent actors or actively working as leaders in grassroots efforts for change. Nevertheless, the action of actors might also be influenced by events that happened either internally or externally. In HI's perspective, Kellen Thelen (1999) has underpinned that different reproduction mechanisms have impacted external events and processes towards producing path-dependent institutional evolution and change. He also summarized that events are essential to creating the effect of "filling political space," which could not be reversed from the past.

Regarding the case of women's NGOs in the DST, the ongoing conflict is one of the significant factors that creates multidimensional events affecting the direction of women's NGOs. When the landscape of conflict changes, the bargaining interest among conflicted parties shifts.

Feminism

Besides Historical Institutionalism (HI), the researcher combines the theoretical framework of Feminism to analyse the case of women's CSOs and its programs for empowering women in the DST. The feminist perspective is undoubtedly needed to position the epistemology in treating women as a unit of analysis. Feminism considering how women's unique experiences that are causally relevant in shaping women's perceptions of empowerment (Wylie 2003, Isike 2009). By adding a feminist perspective, the analysis will explore women's roles as critical actors in delivering ideas, framing interests, and defining agencies in the institutional context. The combination of HI and the Feminist approach will help address the critical question through historical process tracing and actor's analysis to reach institutional evolution (Waylen, 2009).

In the spectrum of institutionalism, feminism came to defends the ground principles that *formal and informal* institutions are gendered; therefore, it is necessary

to insert gender perspective to include women as an entity in the institutional system (Krook 2010, Krook & Mackay 2010, Geha 2019). According to Kenny (1996), Feminism claims that institutions intertwine gendered relationships with the construction of masculinity and femininity in day-to-day life, including the decisions made by political institutions. Incorporating gender analysis into institutionalism, Mackay et al. (2010) have highlighted that there are works of gender norms, rules, and practices that affect political outcomes and foreground the power within institutions.

Furthermore, it is not only the patriarchal system and male supremacy but also the *status quo* that poses a challenge to gender equality and women's empowerment. The status quo can be defined as a "…. wide range of individual, political, social, and institutional processes operating to reproduce gender inequalities" (Luyt & Starck, 2020, p.7). The actors within this spectrum hinder any efforts to empower women, and ironically, there are groups of women on this spectrum. The status quo perpetuates the patriarchal system that tends to use women through a narrow, gender-blind view. Therefore, it is essential to address the problems of the status quo through feminist agendas.

In a further feminist search for institutional transformation, scholars have underlined some critical hypotheses in the feminist approach to institutionalism. Such changes in the structures of gender relations are significant prospects to create enormous institutional change. Moreover, power relation within an institution is naturalized and institutionalized due to excorticating gender norms and relations between masculinity and femininity (Cornell 2006, Mackay & Waylen 2009).

Considering the feminist perspective to institutionalism, in this sense, it is arguable that strengthening women's empowerment agenda will not limitedly benefit only women themselves but society at large. This condition is expected to develop more inclusive developmental dimensions (including socio-economic, religious, and cultural harmony and peace initiatives), which could be done better when women can be equally involved (Chrames and Wieringa, 2003). As such, the feminist approach escalates the equal participation of women within an institution, where women can create space and address their common issues to pursue changes.

From this feminist framework, this study relates that women's CSOs are becoming an institution that plays dual roles in the formal and informal activities toward women's empowerment agenda. Women's CSOs, as feminist organizations, are potential catalysts to frame women's empowerment agendas, including emancipation and equality (Lang in Smith, 2000). In the formal arena, CSOs become a facilitator in developing the capacities of women to be agents of change. While in the informal arena, CSOs are resources for women to strengthen their knowledge and understanding of their rights.

These formal and informal areas are part of the focus of this study, which will later be researched through survey inquiries into the three dimensions of empowerment: *personal, relational,* and *environmental* (Lombardini et al., 2017). Those three levels of empowerment will be precisely measured by the perception of women related to their engagement with programs conducted by the CSOs. In this context, personal changes are defined as empowerment within the person as a woman. This personal aspect includes how a woman defines herself, perceives her role in society, makes decisions and acts for herself and others, and has strong self-esteem. In contrast, the changes at the relational level refer to the empowerment that happened within the relationships and power relations of women's networks which includes the capacities of women in their interactions of power with the household, community, local authorities, markets, and decision-makers. Lastly, environmental changes are more likely the broader areas of empowerment where women can be agents of change towards social norms and attitudes of society, political and legislative institutions, and socio-economic welfare (VeneKlasen and Miller, 2002). The researcher will classify the study's participants into two groups: participated *CSOs* (A) and *CSOs non-participants* (B). Group A consists of women engaging with CSOs programs, either as participants or members (staff) of the CSOs themselves. In comparison, group B is women without direct or indirect engagement with CSOs. This group has stated that they never participated in any CSOs' women's empowerment programs. The comparison will quantitatively be conducted by collecting data using a questionnaire which will be completed by both groups of women. Generally, the questionnaire will focus on the women's empowerment aspects in the *personal,*

relational, and *environmental* (see method). These queries will also answer the theoretical dimension of "agent" in discussing women's empowerment.

D. Research Questions

Using the case of CSOs in the Deep South of Thailand, this study attempts to address the main queries, including:

1. How have CSOs in the Deep South of Thailand evolved so that they increasingly addressed the empowerment of women?

2. How have women's behavior and path dependency shaped the change occurring in CSOs as institutions?

3. To what extent did the CSOs programs impact the empowerment between groups of women who had participated with CSOs and women who have not participated?

4. What are the characteristics and major challenges of the CSOs in running programs on women's issues?

5. Within the group of women's CSOs participants, what strategies could be applied to enhance women's empowerment to become agents of change?

6. How do the diverse backgrounds of women in CSOs affect the level of empowerment?

E. Operationalization

In brief, this study would like to test the central hypothesis as follow:
The more that women have participated within and contributed to CSOs' programs in the Deep South of Thailand, the more women's CSOs have become agents of changes, thus spearheading women's empowerment in the Deep South of Thailand.

To support this general hypothesis, this study sets six working hypotheses (WH) that are briefly listed and visualized below:

1. The more that women preserved their historical legacies, the more likely women's CSOs can perpetuate over time. (WH1)
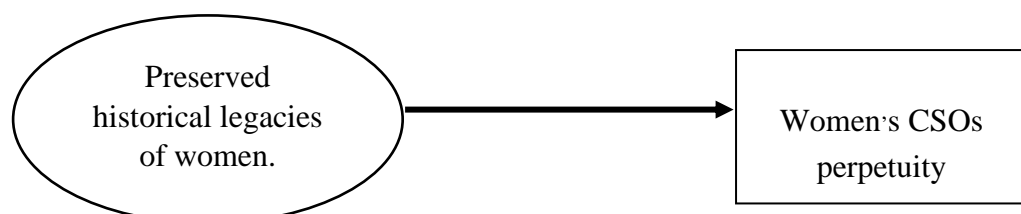
2. The more that CSOs can shape their own institutional path dependence through decision making in the critical junctures, the more likely that they can affect positive change. (WH2)
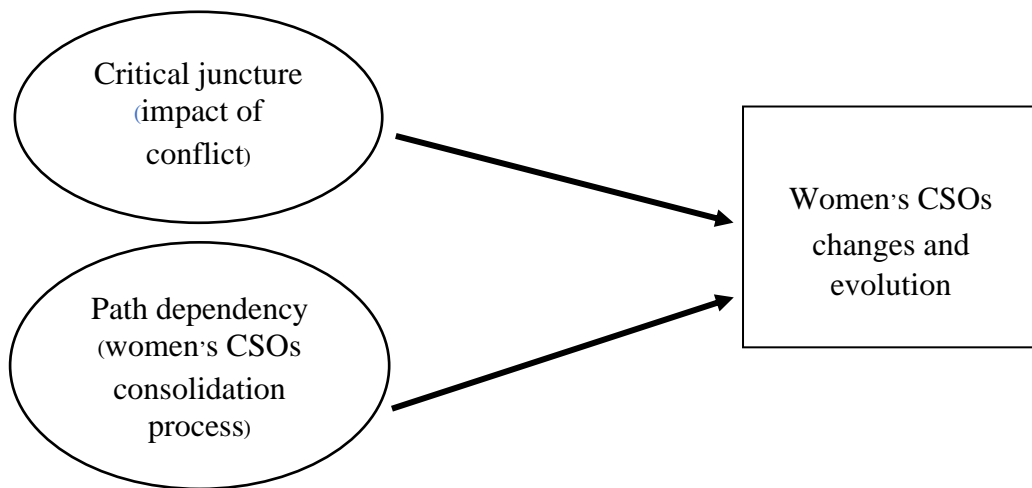
3. The longer and more consistently women participated in the CSOs, the more likely they contributed towards institutional evolution of women's CSOs durability of women's CSOs. (WH3)
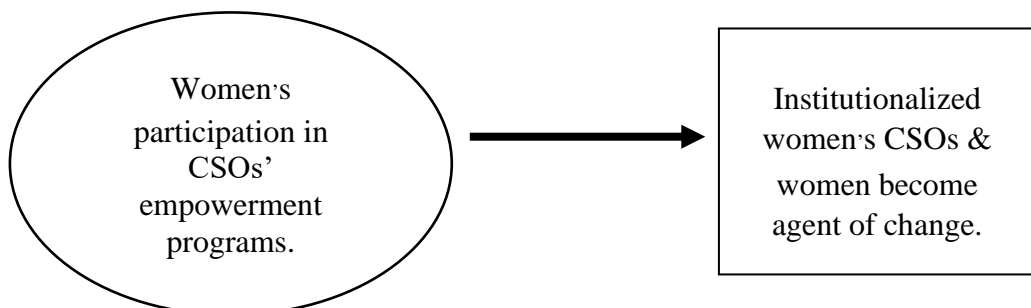
4. The more inclusive the membership of women's CSOs (including their religions and ethnicities), the more they enhance women's empowerment. (WH4)

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   ┌─────────────────┐                          ┌─────────────────┐
  (   CSOs'          )  ──────────────────────▶ │  Level of women's│
  (   inclusiveness. )                          │  empowerment.    │
   └─────────────────┘                          └─────────────────┘
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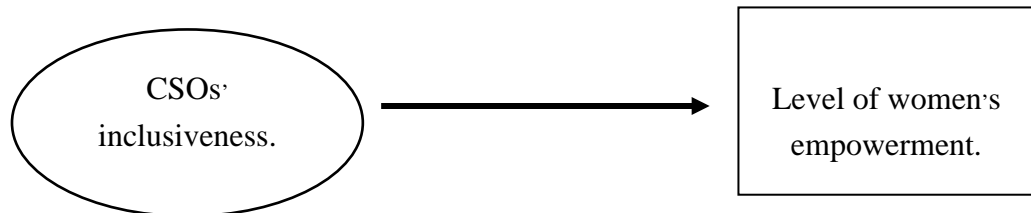
5. The more intensely women have experienced conflict, the more motivated they are to participate in CSOs (WH5)

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   ┌─────────────────┐                          ┌─────────────────┐
  (   Women as       )                          │  Motivation to   │
  (   victim of      )  ──────────────────────▶ │  participate in  │
  (   violence.      )                          │  CSOs.           │
   └─────────────────┘                          └─────────────────┘
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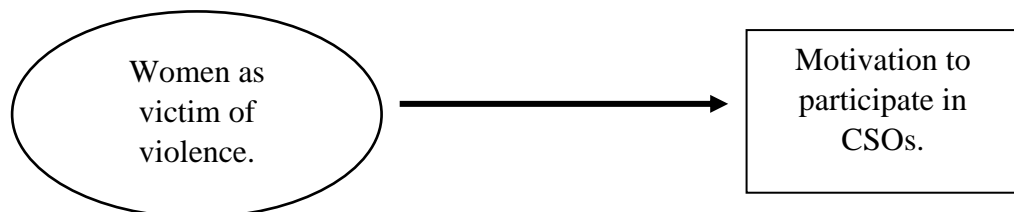
F. Operational Definitions

- Civil Society Organizations (CSOs): It is an organization that refers to "non-state, not-for-profit, voluntary entities formed by people in the social sphere that are separate from the State and the market" (UN Guiding Principles, 2016). In this study, the CSOs refer to the women's CSOs established and located in the Deep South of Thailand, mainly working on women's issues.

- Women's empowerment: A concept that refers to "the process of increasing women's access to control over the strategic life choices that affect them and access to the opportunities that allow them fully to realize their capacities" (Chen & Tanaka, 2014). The empowerment levels will be measured based on the following indicators: self-esteem (personal), decision-making for personal and social matters (relational), and leadership (environmental) (Lombardini et al., 2017).

- Critical juncture: A momentum in which a critical situation occurs that leads to the point where actors and the course of a path influence the decision-making process (Collier and Collier, 1991). In this study, the critical juncture

refers to a period of 2012-2015 when the peak of destructive impacts of the conflict increased again after the 2004 tragedy. This momentum, then, influence the decision of women to form a consolidation among twenty-three CSOs.

- Path dependency: The path that determines the process of institutional transformation and societal change, in which it is interconnected with individual and group behaviours (Stefes 2019, Merkel et al. 2019). Particularly in this study, the consolidation process among women's CSOs is the path dependence.

- Women's historical legacy: A legacy in which women preserved their historical narratives at any level of structural, institutional (social groups), or behavioural (individual) to fight for equality whether that be women's rights against injustice (Pandit, 2015; Croissant, 2019). Specifically, two significant legacies in this study are the historical narratives of women's leadership (role model) since the sultanate Patani era and the collective memories (experiences) of injustice that most women in the Deep South had experienced due to conflict and gender issues.

- Women's participation: The participation of women in the CSOs programs, either being CSOs staff or participants of the programs conducted by CSOs. The indicators of participation in this study are consistency and degrees of influence associated with women's empowerment.

- Change agents in Historical Institutionalism: Agent of change is people (women) or "actors who gain and maintain all situations of institutional stability and change" (Seitzl and Emmenegger, 2018). Women as individuals or elites as well as women affiliated with CSOs are the actors who then become agent of change in this study.

- CSOs' institutional evolution: the timeline that draws the evolution process of women's CSOs as the result of path dependency and critical juncture. In this study the whole evolution is affected by consolidation process among women's CSOs and the critical situation as the impact of conflict casualties.

- Program activeness: the intensity of programs that women's CSOs conducted to strengthen women's empowerment.

- CSOs' inclusiveness: the background of women who have joined CSOs is diverse in terms of their religions and ethnicities and does not consist exclusively of one homogeneous identity.
- Women's experience of conflict: women who have been victims of conflict in either direct or indirect ways.
- Participated CSOs: group of women who have been engaged with CSOs either as participants or member of the CSOs (group A).
- CSOs non-participants: group of women who have never been engaged with CSOs directly or indirectly. (group B).

In summary, this study analyses the relationships between the variables are classified in each working hypotheses in this table below.

Table 2 Variables and indicators

Working Hypothesis (WH)	Independent Variable (IV)	Dependent Variable (DV)	Indicator (I)	Data collection
WH1	Women's historical legacies	Women's CSOs perpetuity	Initial condition Onset of the path	In-depth interview Questionnaire
WH2	Critical juncture Institutional path dependency	Evolution of women's CSOs	Casualties of conflict effort and cohesion of women's CSOs women's CSOs consolidation process	In-depth interview

Working Hypothesis (WH)	Independent Variable (IV)	Dependent Variable (DV)	Indicator (I)	Data collection
WH3	Women's participation consistency & CSOs' programs activeness	Institutionalized women's CSOs & women as agent of change	Direct and indirect participation of women in CSOs programs. CSOs' programs consistency and ability to consolidate and influence decision making.	Questionnaire In-depth interview
WH4	CSOs' inclusiveness	Level of empowerment	Religion Ethnicity	Questionnaire
WH5	Women's experience of conflict	Motivation to participate in CSOs	Direct victim Indirect victim	Questionnaire Interview

G. Significance

This study is expected to be a reference for CSOs in developing strategies to enhance women's empowerment by understanding the path dependence and its evolution. In addition, this study will display the timeline of events from 2004 to 2020 that can act as an essential documentation record for the women's CSOs. At the same time, the survey result could be an alternative tool for evaluating future CSOs

programs. Previous studies which apply Historical Institutionalism for the purpose of addressing the evolutions of CSOs and gender inequality in the DST are sparse. In this sense, this study fills the research gaps.

Additionally, this study offers a quantitative perspective based on a direct survey of women's perceived empowerment. Measuring women's empowerment is a significant contribution to the worthy cause of women and CSOs in the DST, mainly because: *first*, empowerment is a multidimensional and unique concept that women portray based on their culture and identity (Njogu & Orchardson-Mazrui, 2013; Lombardini et al., 2017; Schuster et al., 2019). *Second*, classifying women's empowerment into personal, relational, and environmental levels allows parties (CSOs) to develop appropriate empowerment programs based on the needs and characteristics of women (Lombardini et al., 2017). *Lastly*, in a conflict situation like the Deep South, empowering women has excellent potential to contribute to peacebuilding, as women (in conflict areas) become active agents in promoting peace (Anderlini 2007; Gayika et al. 2016).

H. Objectives

In the case of women's CSOs in the Deep South of Thailand, this study aims to analyse:

1. the institutional change occurs in the evolution of CSOs from 2004 to 2020,

2. the factors related to women's empowerment as agents of change within the group of CSOs participants,

3. the characteristics of the programs conducted by CSOs and the historical evolution of CSOs in addressing women's issues,

4. significant challenges and barriers that CSOs had face while working on women's empowerment programs,

5. the impact of CSOs programs towards the empowerment of women.

I. Methods

The methods applied in this study are both qualitative and quantitative approaches to gather and analyse the data collected from both primary and secondary

resources. The research was conducted mainly in three provinces of the DST: Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat.

- **Population**

In the qualitative design, the population of this study is women's CSOs that are in southernmost provinces as well as working in women issues. Thus, CSOs that were not working on women's issues and located in this mentioned area will be excluded from the population of this study. Since this study was inquiring the timeline between 2004 to 2020, therefore, those CSOs that were still active until year 2020 are considered as the informants of this study. E snowballing sampling technique, there were 10 women's CSOs participated in this study. This number was obtained through the preliminary contact that the researcher has made with the Civic Women, one of women's CSOs that affiliated with Prince Songkla University, Pattani campus.

The population of the quantitative study was the population of women who lived in the study area that inclusively characterized into two groups including: *first*, women who live in the study area, who had joined or participated in CSOs programs will be so-called *participated CSOs* (group A) and *second*, women who live in the study area, who had never been joined or participated in CSOs programs will be so-called as *CSOs non-participants* (group B).

The sampling technique used was a purposive sampling method. Specifically, the technique employed is Total Population Sampling (TPS). According to Etikan et.al. (2016), the TPS is employed when the entire population that meets the research criteria is included. Through the TPS technique sampling, the researcher was allowed to include the entire population of interest. The inclusion criteria set to group A were women Thai nationals who have been participated in CSOs' programs and currently based in the provinces of Patani, Yala, and Narathiwat. In contrast, the sampling criteria for group B limitedly relied on respondents' statements, which referred to women Thai nationals based in the provinces of Patani, Yala, and Narathiwat who never participated in CSO programs.

- **Data collection**

From the qualitative approach, the data were collected through in-depth interviews by using open-ended questions. The in-dept interviews participated by

representatives of all 10 women's CSOs. Referring to the case study design, the interviews explored deep information to answer the research questions related to: factors involved in CSOs evolution and institutionalization (critical juncture and path dependence), aspects of historical legacy, as well as the characteristics and challenges of the women's empowerment programs. In collecting the data, the researcher was assisted by a local interpreter who can speak English, Thai, and Bahasa Melayu.

In addition, the quantitative approach used a questionnaire as a data collection tool in which each woman completed individually. The survey is non-mandatory and confidential; therefore, the personal identity of the respondents was not revealed as part of the research. Respondents had the right to withdraw their participation when they experience any discomfort while answering the questionnaire. Before completing the questionnaire, respondents were given informed consent, an explanation and information about the research and how to participate in the questionnaire. The researcher was assisted by a local interpreter. English and Thai were the survey languages used to balance the communication between the researcher (who is a foreigner) and the respondents, who usually prefer Thai for formal purposes. The questionnaire was back translated and checked by experts for validity and reliability. This questionnaire was adapted from the Women's Empowerment Index (WEI) introduced by Oxfam GB (2017) to measure women's empowerment level impacted by CSOs programs. This tool was mainly developed from the framework of ideas of women's empowerment that recognized three levels of changes as a sign of empowerment, including: *personal, relational, and environmental*.

- **Data Analysis**

The data collected during the in-depth interviews were analysed using process tracing analysis. This framework was used to analyse the development of women CSOs as institutions from 2004 to 2020. According to Mohoney (2010), process tracing qualitative analysis helps to draw causal inferences by observing the causal process. Therefore, the causal relationships among variables could be potentially well explained by paths of change and causality.

Meanwhile, the data collected from the questionnaire were analysed using statistical analysis of variance Chi-square test to examine the significant differences of empowerment level between two groups of women (Group A and Group B) and

between the different backgrounds of women within Group A (identities and conflict experience). The analysis was conducted using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 software.

J. Proposed Table of Contents

In general, the researcher will divide this dissertation into five chapters, as follows:

- Chapter One: In this chapter the researcher discusses the background of the research equipped with related literature reviews to highlight the research problem and where this study positions its arguments to fill the gaps among the existing debates. The researcher also highlights the significance of the study, theoretical framework, methodology and hypotheses.

- Chapter Two: This chapter will elaborate deeper on the review of literature which includes some major works that discuss women's empowerment from the feminist perspective, roles of women's CSOs especially in the conflict affected areas, as well as Historical Institutionalism as approach to study institutional evolution.

- Chapter Three: The analyses of the result from the qualitative data collection will be discussed in this chapter by focusing on how the women's CSOs had evolved from 2004 until 2020. This chapter will further capture some theoretical implications on the related variables including the historical legacies of women, path dependency and critical juncture, as well as the impacts of actors and events towards the evolution of women CSOs as an institution. In summary, this chapter will present the timeline of institutional change that occurred in the women's CSOs.

- Chapter Four: The result of quantitative data collection is the focus of this chapter. The researcher will analyse the statistical data based on the findings which primarily compare the women's perception of their empowerment between two groups of respondents, those who have been involved in CSO's program and those who are non-CSOs-participants.

The results on the impact of women's different backgrounds in CSOs as well as their conflict experiences are presented in this chapter. Therefore, this chapter will picture how women's CSOs programs have impacted women's empowerment in the Deep South.

- Chapter Five: The conclusion of the whole study will be displayed in this chapter including some recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter elaborated on reviews of significant literature that underpinned the development of this study. What is women's empowerment, and how are women's CSOs working as agents of change toward empowering women in the DST? This chapter further elaborates on theoretical concepts in Chapter 1, including Historical Institutionalism and Feminist perspective. The chapter also presents existing studies on CSOs and women's roles in the DST.

A. Women's Empowerment

In this study, women's empowerment is a central variable treated as the outcome of the featured CSO programs. Thus, the concept of women's empowerment in this study mainly combines general viewpoints from a gender justice lens and women's empowerment in conflict-affected areas. In gender studies, empowerment based on equality between men and women in both private and public spheres is central to the fundamental principles of empowerment. In this context, women's empowerment in conflict-affected areas refers to the international blueprint on women's participation under the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) No. 1325 on women, peace, and security (WPS).

While the concept of women's empowerment varies, the gender justice perspective underlines that promoting equality between men and women should be done through well-established institutional frameworks within society (Kabeer, 2012). Fundamentally, empowerment comes with an understanding of power that acknowledges that empowerment is a collaborative process that calls for the cooperation and engagement of organizations and peers (Rowlands, 1997). These ideas of gender justice were far-reaching in the early 19th-century European revolution era. For instance, Mary Wollstonecraft, a philosopher, and women's rights advocate, argued that the ideals of a just society should not exclude half of humanity, which are women's rights (Kelly, 2013).

In the famous series of *Big Ideas Simply Explained*, "The Feminism Book" conceptualized empowerment as:

> "Measures to improve the lives of oppressed people, particularly legal and social changes. It also describes a feeling of strength experienced by individual women when they make changes in their work or relationships with themselves and others". (Mangan, 2019, p.338).

Empowerment has also been tremendously articulated from the lens of activism. For instance, Batliwala (1994) defined *empowerment* as a process intended to alter the nature and direction of the systemic processes that, in a specific setting, marginalize women and other disadvantaged groups. Batliwala's conceptualization of empowerment is closely related to the women's social movement assumption that believed there is a systemic, unjust, and destructive power that needs to be breached (Mellucci, 1996). Due to systemic control of power, empowering vulnerable groups such as women requires multilayers and comprehensive efforts.

Meanwhile, liberal feminists tend to focus on women's economic empowerment, including improving development and eliminating poverty (Sandenberg, 2008; Mangan, 2019). According to ASEAN and UN Women on ASEAN Gender Outlook 2021, women 58% less paid than men, while during the Covid-19 pandemic, 30% of women were burdened by increases in unpaid domestic work. Such trends show that women are still prone to economic disadvantage in society. Meanwhile, liberal feminists tend to focus on women's economic empowerment, including improving development and eliminating poverty (Sandenberg, 2008; Mangan, 2019). According to ASEAN and UN Women on ASEAN Gender Outlook 2021, women are 58% got paid less than men, while during the Covid-19 pandemic, 30% of women burdened by increases in unpaid domestic work. Such trends show that women are still prone to economic disadvantage in society.

On the other hand, Alexander et al. (2016) used a global political point of view to define women's empowerment. They constructively defined *women's global political empowerment* as "the enhancement of assets, capabilities, and achievements of women to gain equality to men in influencing and exercising political authority worldwide" (Alexander, 2016, p. 433). As political contestation is historically a men-

dominated arena, women become the second class in political leadership. However, there are 25 countries worldwide that have been implementing an average of 25% gender quotas in their parliamentary systems (UN, 2021). However, according to the recent Gender Quotas Data Base, for instance, in Thailand, only 15.7% of women hold legislated quotas at a sub-national level. (IDEA, 2022). As such, women's political empowerment needs to be addressed continuously.

Based on the various conceptualizations of empowerment above, this study treated women's empowerment as a holistic necessity to achieve a just and equal society. When women's groups such as CSOs are contributing to addressing women's issues, their efforts are critical to establishing women's alliances and building resilient women's networks.

The focus of this study is women's empowerment in conflict-affected areas of the DST. It is important to note that women's groups in the DST face specific and complex challenges that make achieving empowerment agendas difficult. The concept of empowering women in conflict areas, as outlined in the UNSCR 1325 on women, peace, and security, means providing open access for women to participate in building peace. The fifth paragraph of the resolution states:

> "Reaffirming the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding and stressing the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution" (UNSCR 1325, 2000).

Drawing an understanding from this resolution, women in conflict zones play an integral part in building peace. In doing so, this mission of women, peace, and security (WPS) requires comprehensive efforts to achieve women's empowerment so that women can be involved in decision-making on conflict resolution and peace-making. For instance, CSOs have been active agents in implementing UNSCR 1325 in their attempts to achieve women's empowerment at the macro level (Barrow, 2009). In contrast, Pratt & Richter-Devroe (2011) later found that attempts using UNSCR 1325 to construct women's demands on empowerment showed some failures when mobilizing women at the grassroots level. They argue that women's empowerment focused on UNSCR 1325 has excluded some areas of women's

resistance in fights against global capitalism, which for these women is also another form of empowerment (Pratt & Richter-Devroe, 2011, p. 498).

Meanwhile, in the DST context, the adoption of WPS agendas is more visible at the grassroots level. Legally, Thailand is one of the countries that signed to implement the 1325 resolution. Although there is lack of adoption of the resolution into Thailand's national action plan (Mardent, 2019). Women's CSOs in the DST have been utilizing this WPS as a tool to develop practical actions in pushing Thailand's policies on gender and security. For instance, they have been working on demanding compensation rights of widowers whose spouses victimized by conflict (Marddent, 2019: 6). Further, women groups in the DST have been implementing the WPS agenda by influencing the decision-making on peace initiatives. Peace Agenda of Women (PAOW) is an example of the Deep Southern women's groups demanding a "safety zone" that conflict parties adopted in the peace dialogue in 2015 (Buranajaroenkij, 2020).

Despite the pros and cons of implementing WPS agendas for women's empowerment in conflict zones, this study sees the necessity to have WPS as an international umbrella for women working for peace, especially women's CSOs. As women-led groups, CSOs need platforms and access to capacity building and financial resources to run their program, including women's empowerment programs. Women's CSOs, like in the DST, could use WPS agendas to reach those resources.

To deepen the understanding of women's empowerment in practical or organizational ways, this study refers to Lombardini et al. (2007) to the three dimensions of empowerment, including *personal, relational,* and *environmental* (Lombardini et al., 2017). They benefit from VeneKlasen and Miller (2002) in defining women's empowerment as a process through which the power of women and girls is increased from a situation in which they have little control. The three categories are utilized in developing measurement tools for women's empowerment by looking at the "changes" that women could perform. This tool has been implemented for a framework of the Women's Empowerment Index (WEI) by OXAM. In this study, the three dimensions of changes are referred to as "empowerment levels".
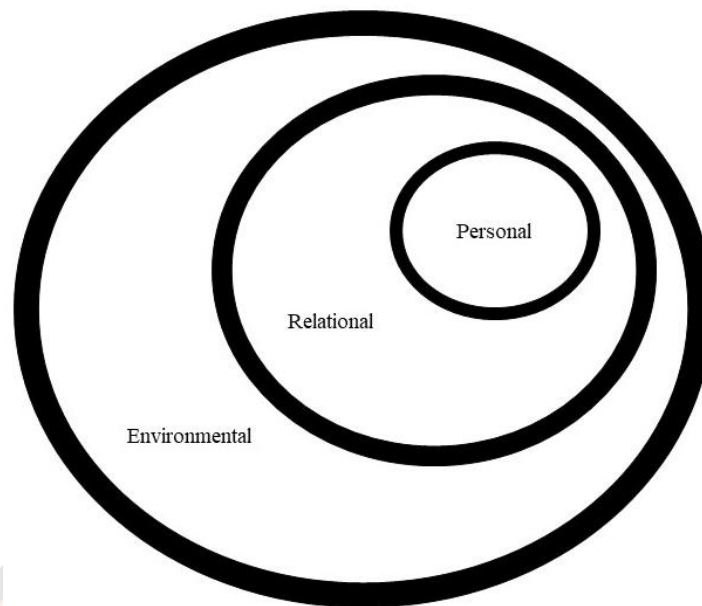
Figure 2 The Levels of Empowerment (see Note 3)

First, empowerment on *a personal* level refers to the change that occurs in a woman as an individual. This personal empowerment is closely associated with the transformation of "power within", where a person has a sense of self-worth and self-awareness. It entails the capacity to appreciate others while acknowledging personal differences (VaneKlasen & Miller, 2002, p. 45). As such, a personally empowered woman will have the power to make decisions for herself, identify her strengths and capabilities, and have adequate self-esteem (or confidence) (Lombardini et al., 2017).

Second, empowerment at *a relational level* occurs within "power relations" between women and the systems around them. Systems surrounding her could include household, community networks, markets, governments, and decision-makers (Lombardini et al., 2017). A woman with this level of empowerment will be able to play roles and create changes in the public sphere.

Third, the broader empowerment is at *the environmental* level, meaning changes occur in informal and formal forms (Lombardini et al., 2017). This environmental empowerment usually happens at collective stages. For instance, informally, women's groups could influence the shifting of new norms or engendering new ideas in society. While formally, it could be seen in political participation, legal actions, and decision-making process for the collective good.

B. Restating the Approach: Historical Institutionalism

At the macro level, this study utilizes Historical Institutionalism (HI) to explain the evolution of women's CSOs in the DST (2004-2020). HI, guides to investigate factors associated with institutional changes that occur in women's CSOs by focusing on path dependence, critical juncture, historical legacies, and contributions of actors and events over time (see Chapter 3).

HI is one of the significant institutional theories in social and political studies that explicitly focuses on the historical process where events that happened in the past bring significant influence in shaping the present (and potentially predict the future). *Institutions* themselves refer to rules, norms, procedures, and organizations (Streck & Thelen, 2005; Mahoney & Thelen, 2010). In HI, immediate attention is given to explain institutional evolution and change (Thelen & Coran, 2016). Besides, Stefes (2019) argued that an institution follows its historical procedure to arrive at a result. Essential aspects of this process include how long it takes, how quickly things change when it happens, and if it accelerates gradually. Pierson (2004) has been elaborating on institutional change with the notion of 'gaps' that exist between initial institutional design and implementation of such designs, implementation which affects institutional change over time. Drawing attention to Pierson (2004), Thelen & Conran (2016) break down key sources influencing institutional change, including "limits of institutional design, institutional buildings is a political compromise of the political actors, the contestation of power, and aspect of *time*" (Thelen & Conran, 2016, p. 58).

Institutionalists explore several premises in explaining in more detail how HI works. Hay & Wincott (1998) prioritized the relationship between structure and agency that needs to be treated as an 'analytic concern' in developing institutionalism at its full potential. Meanwhile, Fioretos (2011) has helped summarize the key dominant features of HI and the other two types of institutionalism (rational choice institutionalism and sociological institutionalism). He focuses on the contributions of HI to the development of International Relations as a discipline, especially through analytical and substantive profiles of HI (see Table 3).

Table 3 Key Features of Historical Institutionalism (see Note 4)

Key features	Historical Institutionalism
Substantive focus	Patterns of institutional reproduction and change; types of incremental change
Temporality	Timing and sequence
Theory of action	Actors guided by balance of past attachments and prospective opportunities
Conception of history	Often inefficient
Understanding of constraints on action	Legacies of past designs. bounded rationality

HI is effectively to be understood as an "approach" for researching politics and social change. The historical perspective and focus on how institutions are structured, and influence behavior and results are HI's main characteristics (Steinmo, 2008). HI has prioritized its attention to studying historical events because history "matters." HI assumes that political decisions and events take place within a historical background, which directly affects the choices or actions of the actors; agents (actors) could gain knowledge from their experiences, so their future expectations could shape past events. Thus, historical institutionalists are aware that behavior, attitudes, and strategic decisions are influenced by specific social, political, economic, and even cultural circumstances (Steinmo, 2018, pp. 127-128).

According to Mahoney & Thelen (2010), HI explains the institutional change that frequently arises when rule interpretation and enforcement issues allow actors to implement current rules in novel ways. Institutions stand for compromises or comparatively solid, nonetheless contentious, agreements based on coalitional dynamics. The institutional evolution occurred due to the roles of ideas, timing, actors' agency, and historical legacies (Kelemen, 2016). Thus, most literature on institutionalism included HI's basic assumptions to understand institutional evolution

by looking at historical legacies, critical junctures, and path dependence (Collier & Collier, 1991; Pierson, 2004; Croissant, 2019; Stefes, 2019).

HI strongly recognizes the past's legacies since what happened in the past influences and explains the future phenomenon. To define legacies through the lens of HI, Wittenberg (2015) noted that historical legacies depend on how historians (scholars) choose to periodize history and are not just present in the empirical world waiting to be uncovered. In other words, when the outcome of causal chain events is related, the conclusion is that the phenomenon endured and that the result, at the very least, has the potential to leave a legacy. Nevertheless, it is essential to acknowledge that no eternal legacy exists, so that legacy must be determined explicitly when it ends (Collier & Collier, 1991, pp. 33-34).

Moreover, historical legacies have crucial functions in structuring institutional choices (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010). In detail, Collier & Collier (1991) formularized three components of the legacy, including.

1. *the mechanisms of production of the legacy*,
2. *the mechanisms of reproduction of the legacy*, and
3. *the stability of the core attributes of the legacy*.

In this sense, historical legacy only sometimes necessarily emerges after a critical juncture but through some intervening (institutional) processes. Such a process is essential to manage the stability of the legacy, and that critical juncture could produce primary attributes of the legacy (Collier & Collier, 1991, pp. 30-31).

Historical legacy is a result of a specific critical juncture. Various historical institutionalists explain critical juncture within institutional change. Sorensen (2014) argued that critical junctures are the "punctuation points" of a "punctuated equilibrium," in which significant changes brought about by exogenous forces, and new institutional arrangements and developmental pathways are established. Collier & Collier (1991 deliver their version to understand the critical juncture, which is a period of substantial change that often takes place differently in various units of analysis and is predicted to produce differing legacies.

Critical junctures are helpful for actors to impose an interpretation of the legacy of the past and create a vision towards future institutional change (Keating, 2008). In many works of literature, a critical juncture is often referred to as a

"momentum" that creates opportunities for future change. To Falleti (2010), a critical juncture is a breaking point in a crisis that demented the old system and provides an opportunity for a new change. Meanwhile, critical junctures also explain the contingency moments where the regular restrictions on action which removed or loosened (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007). Additionally, Katznelson (2003) argued that critical junctures present chances for historical agents to change the course of evolution.

In HI, the understanding of the concept of critical juncture is coming together with the legacy. Collier & Collier (1991) have specified that critical juncture consists of three elements: 1) *the claim that each significant change occurred within each case*, 2) *this change took place in different and distinct ways*, and 3*) the explanatory hypothesis about its consequences* (Collier & Collier, 1991, p 30). Referring to these elements, critical junctures have possibilities for either success or failure to produce a legacy. Some intervening factors, such as actors' behaviour (how they make decisions) and events, would likely influence how critical juncture could successfully produce a legacy that creates institutional change.

Nonetheless, critiques also came to how historical institutionalists tend to emphasize critical junctures. For instance, Onoma (2010) argued that there are endless possibilities for change that the contradictory potential of institutions permits. More opportunities for avenues of change exist in such theories, which are rooted in the punctuated equilibrium model of change. Similarly, Lynch & Rhodes (2016) criticized that an overemphasis could obscure power politics on critical junctures and positive feedback processes.

Furthermore, another core element that HI highlighted is the phenomenon of path dependence. To HI, path dependence is a medium to elaborate a phenomenon of continuity over time where decisions are made at a point in time (critical juncture) (Keating, 2008). According to Pierson (2004), path dependence is a social process that generates a positive response and produces 'branching patterns' of historical evolution. In other words, the core idea of path dependence is that modest decisions made early on can have big long-term effects because once institutions are developed, they tend to get more difficult to change over time (Sorensen, 2014).

According to Mahoney et al. (2016), two types of sequences reveal a path dependence: 1) *self-reinforcing sequences (increased returns dynamics)* and 2) *reactive sequences (backlashed dynamics).* In a self-reinforced sequence, path dependence increases the likelihood that a unit will continue to move in the same direction with each step taken in that direction. It gets harder and harder to change direction with time. Meanwhile, reactive sequences type of path dependence acknowledges the presence of a series of events tightly coupled and causally linked and comprised of the trajectory connecting a critical juncture period to a desired outcome (Mahoney et al., 2016, pp. 83-86). During institutional change, path dependence should not be interpreted institutions being locked in, but rather that continuity is frequently the result of ongoing movements by actors who benefit from the institution and seek to protect their advantages (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010).

HI applied in social and political sciences as a theoretical approach. Therefore, this study acknowledges the necessity to present some contemporary literature to (particularly) see the theoretical application of HI in Southeast Asian contexts. In the Indonesian case, for instance, Slater (2010) studied how authoritarian institutions changed under Soeharto's New Order from 1966 to 1998. By utilizing the HI approach, Slater's research found that the combination of historical legacies and agent (actors) strategies produced the institutional evolution of Indonesia's New Order. While from the Thailand case study, Chambers & Waitoolkiat (2020) utilized HI to study the evolution of factionalism in Thai political parties. They argued that the path dependence of the Thai political party system would persist in being factionalized. Similarly, from fields of political party systems, Ufen (2012) explores the difference between Thai and Filipino clientelist parties and cleavage-based parties in Malaysia and Indonesia by using the HI approach, especially through analytical explanations of the critical junctures.

Even more, a comparative work from the cases of Vietnam and the Philippines by Del Rosario et al. (2021) has utilized the lens of HI to study how the history of health systems in two Southeast Asian countries influenced their healthcare governments in overseeing the COVID-19 pandemic. Their study suggested that health institutions could redesign their governance mechanisms to provide more effective and efficient health policies. While from the security sector, Chambers

(2016) contributed his analyses using the HI approach to security sector reform in three emerging democracies, including Thailand, Myanmar, and the Philippines.

Referring to the implementation of the HI approach in those literature above, this study contributes the novel case of women's CSOs in the DST by using the lens of HI.

C. Bridging Institution and Women: Feminist Institutionalism

Part of this study contributes to women's studies in general and specifically to women in conflict-affected areas in Southeast Asia. Thus, this study utilizes the theoretical lens of the feminist perspective. Feminist theory in this study lays a foundation for the development categorization of women's empowerment (see Chapter 4) and how the feminist lens treats women's issues in conflict-affected areas (in relation to WPS agendas). In addition, as one of the objectives of this study is to explore the evolution of women's CSOs in the DST

(see Chapter 3), feminist institutionalism takes part in guiding the direction of the analyses.

Feminism is well known as a perspective that defends the rights and justice of women in society. Delmar (2018) is intrigued by the fundamental question of "What is Feminism?"; she deliberately deepens the understanding of feminism by finding common ground between the distinction of feminist and feminism. She at least highlighted that feminist and feminism are all about struggles to fight discrimination against the female sex, which result in the neglect of females' specific needs, in turn making radical change necessary to earn justice in social, economic, and political spheres (Delmar, 2018, p. 5).

As such, feminism has expanded to diverse directions (i.e., liberal feminism, radical feminism, Marxist feminism, cultural feminism, eco feminism, and many more). In the 19th and 20th centuries, a paradigm of feminist institutionalism has arisen to intersect institutionalist and feminist scholars. Regarding feminist institutionalism, this study looks up to leading work such as Waylen (2009), Mackay and Waylen (2009), as well as Krook and Mackay (2011) in discussing how institutionalism is useful for feminist work.

Is fundamental to use feminism when studying women, the study requires attention from a gender point of view. Thus, a feminist perspective can explain gender

outcomes within the historical institution framework. Waylen (2009) has helped in positioning the logic in at least three ways, including 1) paying attention to the process over time to identify the causal sequence in the pathways, 2) structural constraints are closely associated with actors in determining their strategies, goals, and outcomes, and 3) to what extent does the path dependence process result in outcomes at points of transitions (institutional change) (Waylen, 2009). Drawing from these explanations, the study would analyze the process of the institutional evolution of women's organizations by focusing on its pathways, timing, and actors.

Feminist institutionalists center their claim that "*formal and informal*" institutions are gendered (Waylen, 2009; Krook, 2010; Krook & Mackay, 2011; Geha, 2019). Institutional evolution and changes bring significantly impact on feminist struggles. Krook & Mackay (2011) argued that discourses on women, gender relations, and gender equality influenced by institutional changes that emerged in the last several decades from the substantial structural changes in marketization, regionalization, decentralization, and even constitutional reform. They have highlighted that feminist institutionalism contributed to expanding the features of women's public participation. In this context, 'political' participation is no longer limited to formal electoral activities or decision-making processes but also recognizes informal engagement, such as women's movements and grassroots organizations (Krook & Mackay, 2011).

To Makay (2011), feminist institutionalism is creating conceptual frameworks for comprehending the dynamic interaction between "institutional architects, institutionalized subjects, and institutional environment," where the agency is seen to entail calculated self-interest as well as strategic, creative, and intuitive activity (Makay, 2011, pp. 190-191). Additionally, Curtin (2018) argued that feminist institutionalism could highlight the importance of timing, the presence of crucial actors, and the connections between formal and informal institutions in bringing about change that would enhance gender equality outcomes.

By recognizing that both formal and informal institutions are gendered, feminist institutionalism allows deeper identification of what constitutes tangible and intangible challenges in the gendered institutional agendas (Kenny, 2007). Critical actors and agencies play significant roles in successfully manifesting gender

institutionalism or obstructing institutional agendas (Thomson, 2017). The uses of the feminist institutional approach have been varied. For instance, by distinguishing formal and informal institutions, it is useful to explain the gap between mainstream gender policies (and their formulization) and practices (Minto & Mergaert, 2018). On the other hand, a more recent study showed that feminist institutionalism could shed light in explaining the institutional changes that happened in the academic institutions affecting its gender equality plan (Clavero& Galligan, 2020).

Furthermore, it is important to note that feminists argue that institutions, particularly the logic of political institutions, create gendered connections between the formation of masculinity and femininity in everyday life (Kenny, 1996). This phenomenon influences the power relationship within the institutions. It resulted in the dominance of gender norms and relations between masculinity and femininity, and power relations within institutions became naturalized and institutionalized (Cornell, 2006; Mackay & Waylen, 2009).

Considering the existence of power contestation between masculinity and femininity within institutions, it becomes clearer since feminists have always challenged the patriarchy and male domination (Smuts 1995). According to Butler and Scott (2013), patriarchy remains a cohesive descriptive concept through the accumulation of small forms of oppression.

Nevertheless, within the spectrum of feminist institutionalism, *the status quo* earned specific attention because it does not only emerge from patriarch actors but also possibly from within women themselves. Ironically, groups of women fall inside this spectrum, which serves as a barrier to any attempts to empower women. The status quo upholds the patriarchal system, which has the propensity to exploit women through a constricting, gender-blind perspective. Referring to Luyt & Strack (2017), the status quo is "a wide range of individual, political, social and institutional processes operating to reproduce gender inequalities" (Luyt & Starck, 2020, p.7).

With that in mind, feminist study typically emphasizes progressive movements that support women more than reactionary organizations that try to stop change or uphold the status quo (Thomson, 2017). Strong male elites stand to gain the most from the existing gendered logic of appropriateness and whose interests are best served by maintaining the status quo in the institution (Mackay, 2014).

It is important to alter the status quo in any form of feminist agendas and women's empowerment. By changing the status quo, the choices for women in making decisions both domestic and public spheres will be available (Stein, 2008). Women's formal political participation, for instance, has enacted efforts by feminist organizations. Women within the parties decided to push for a national quota law (for women in the parliament) to change the status quo after learning about attempts to enact quotas abroad (Krook, 2010).

In the general sense, the literature on feminist institutionalism provide evidence for their basic claim of recognizing both formal and informal institutions that are gendered. While the implications remain varied, an intersection between the feminist and institutionalist approaches has offered a crucial understanding of gender studies.

D. Researching CSOs and Women's Roles within Thailand's Deep South Conflict

This section narrows down the positioning of this study among the existing literature on the case studies of CSOs and women in the DST. This study could only refer to the available literature produced in English.

Existing literature regarding CSOs in the DST focused on the general roles of CSOs regarding their positions as non-governmental actors influencing decision-making and addressing societal issues. As a case study of the DST, this study divides into three main focused groups of literature: *first*, the dynamics of conflict and peace process; *second*, CSOs' roles in peace initiatives; and *third*, women's roles in the DST.

Works of literature that have been done around 2004 focused on analyses of the origins of the conflict, types of policy in managing the conflict, and the dynamics of conflicted parties. Shortly after 2004's violent incidents, McCargo has been contributing a series of literature on Thailand's deep south issues. In some instances, he analyzes how the Thai government violent incidents have been treated under Prime Minister Thaksin. McCargo argues that political reorganization and security arrangements worsen the conflict situation in the DST (McCargo, 2006). After a decade, a peace agreement has yet to be signed in the DST; McCargo expanded his

attention to how ideas of decentralization and local autonomy for the majority Malay-Muslim in the DST are hardly being understood by the government. There was a tendency for neglect, although these ideas could bring a potential solution to the conflict (McCargo, 2012). He also responds to the 2013 peace negotiation facilitated by the Malaysian government. Neither the Thai government nor the *Patani* (see Note 5) representation showed great commitment to seeking political settlements to the conflict (McCargo, 2014).

Additionally, the work of well-known local scholars such as Jitpiromsri is also one of the most referred literatures to understand the dynamics of conflict and journeys of peace initiatives, especially from the perspective of civil society and non-governmental bodies. He was part of the peace negotiation team and continuously led the Deep South Incident Database (DSID) documentation. In his recent piece, Jitpiromsri (2019) argued that the prerequisite discourses to support peace dialogue in the DST include sincere willingness from both sides, civilian protections, safe zone implementation, and human rights. His further contribution to promoting peace was formulating a proposal to lessen the violent tension in the DST. Jitpiromsri, together with Chambers and Waitoolkiat (2019), highlighted the need to pay attention to autonomy, improve the justice system and negotiation, and recognize the cultural identity, including the Malay language as the working language in the DST (Chambers, Jitpiromsri, & Waitoolkiat, 2019). He previously identified that social grievances and poverty in the DST are contributing factors to explain the cause of conflict (Jitpiromsri & Panyasak, 2006).

Furthermore, Harish (2006) particularly focused on discussing the identity issues involved in the conflict origin. He argued that ethnic division between the Thais and the Malays is deeply "entrenched" in the Deep South's conflict narratives. Similarly, Yusuf (2007) highlighted the ethnoreligious aspect that contributed to the conflict between the Buddhists and the Muslims. He added that the relationship between Thailand and Muslim countries, including Islamic organizations, could potentially (to some extent) suggest how the Thai government should properly solve the conflict in the DST.

Subsequently, regarding literature on CSOs in the DST, most works discussed the roles of CSOs in promoting peace from various angles. Chantra (2019) has

highlighted the participation of CSOs in endorsing peace processes. The notion of CSOs in the DST has started to be involved in more direct ways to influence the peace process since the 2013 peace negotiation (Panjor, 2018). As part of peacebuilders, CSOs in the DST need to strengthen their capacities to have adequate conflict analysis and strategizing peace initiatives (Ropert & Anuvatudom, 2014). The CSOs would benefit from utilizing the international blueprint on human rights protection to support peace initiatives. Accordingly, Panjor & Heemmina (2018) drew a comparative study to show the significance of transitional justice implementation to protect human rights in the DST.

Moreover, Iglesias (2013) saw the significant potential of CSOs to participate in the formal peace process by building collaboration and consolidation, such as establishing the Civil Society Council of Southernmost Thailand (also known as CSOs council). CSOs have also been expanding their roles in addressing societal issues. For instance, Chaijaroenwatana & Whangsani (2016) analyze how local CSOs in the DST dealt with forms of developmental projects. They argue that networks of local CSOs contributed to developing recommendations on development projects to avoid conflict between the agencies and the locals. Nevertheless, CSOs in the DST still pose external challenges that hinder their roles in building peace. These include human resources, time management, funding sources, and political and safety issues (Boonpunth, 2015).

Lastly, although less, it is crucial for this study to elaborate on existing literature focusing on women's issues in the DST. Initial attention to women's studies in the DST began with attention to the ethnoreligious differences between the Malay Muslims and the Thai Buddhists. Sai-idi et al. (1993) looked at the significant differences associated with women's participation in community and political activities affected by their religious identities. Since the development of violent incidents in 2004, attention has shifted. Prominent Thailand female scholars such as Amporn Marddent and Duanghathai Buranajaroenkij are a few who specialize in discussing women's issues in the DST. Marddent herself tends to focus on the Islamic and Malay perspective in profiling women. She studied women's political participation in the DST, which began as far back as the era of queens under the Patani sultanate. She investigated the history through the story of the "*three tiger*

warriors" as a legacy of Malay women leaders (Marddent, 2017). She also argued that there are some gaps in the narratives about Malay-Muslim women and security due to a divergence in personal-political conceptions of conflict and donors' projects (Marddent, 2019).

Meanwhile, Burranajaroenkij actively pays attention to women's involvement in the peace process in the DST. She has summarized women's journeys in formal peace negotiations from 2008-2015, which remained less represented (Burranajaroenkij, 2018). Continuously, she identified that women in the DST face gender inequality in accessing the formal peace process due to limitations in self-mobilization and visibility, knowledge, and skills, outside influences, and the ability to strategize gender issues (Burranajaroenkij, 2019). Her latest piece attempts to present comparative work on women's inclusion in the peace process between Thailand and Myanmar cases. She argues that women, including those in the DST, still face challenges in balancing the messages of gender advocacy, obtaining seats at peace tables, and gaining local representation (Burranajaroenkij, 2020).

Additional literature, such as Molnar (2014), complements the discourse on women's roles in promoting peace in the DST. Although there are many challenges posed to women, women are potential agents of change, and their involvement in politics impacts various issues relating to human security, including peace-building initiatives in diverse parts (Molnar, 2014). Similarly, Scheibach (2021) argued that women actively resisted conventional standards and used their own personal agency to challenge their traditional gender roles. Eventually, traditional gender norms and a strict gendered division of labor significantly impact women's daily life and the work they do in civil society organizations.

Reflecting on the literature discussed above, this study spots gaps that need to be filled. Despite frequent claims that women's organizations can contribute to peacebuilding, analyses of women's CSOs still need to be highlighted. By examining the historical development of institutional changes over the past sixteen years and measuring the effectiveness of women's CSOs programs, this study provides an alternative perspective to further analyze women's CSOs in the DST.

CHAPTER III

THE EVOLUTION OF WOMEN'S CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION IN THE DEEP SOUTH OF THAILAND

This chapter presents the results of qualitative analyses that focus on how women's CSOs in the DST have evolved over time since the emergence of conflict incidents in 2004 until the present time in 2020. It begins with a preface discussion on situating the debates of women's CSOs in the DST within the Southeast Asian context of women, peace, and security agendas. Subsequently, the chapter elaborates comprehensively regarding the narratives of women's institutional challenges, both formal. In the last section, the chapter present the summary of the investigation of events, actors, and issues influencing institutional change of women's CSOs in the DST from 2004 to 2020.

A. Situating the Debates of Women's CSOs in the Deep South of Thailand within the Women, Peace, and Security Agendas in Southeast Asia.

Despite the pros and cons of the performances of women's groups in the conflict, the issue of peace has tended to affect men and women differently concerning the reality of the violence. Indeed, the ongoing intra-state struggle occurring in the DST exacerbated since 2004, has also been affecting women, though in ways different from men. With tensions rapidly growing, women's groups increasingly engaged with the situation, seeking to protect women's rights by forming or transforming civil society organizations (CSOs). The main concern of the DST women was that in conflict, though men are often targeted by direct violence, women also struggle with long-term consequences, including physical, mental, and socioeconomic challenges.

In a global context, besides being prone to being victims of conflict, women's groups have to run significant roles in peace initiatives in many different conflict settings. In 2000, a prominent international blueprint on women, peace, and security (WPS) was formulated. The UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325

upholds four main pillars to ensure women's active, inclusive and effective participation in building peace, including 1) the role of women in conflict prevention, 2) women's participation in peace-making and peacebuilding, 3) the protection of women's rights during and after conflict, and 4) women's specific needs during repatriation, resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration, and post-conflict reconstruction.

Motives of women's involvement in peace initiatives vary, ranging from "conflict experience, pragmatism, emotional/spiritual motivation, and compelling need." Similarly, community-based women's organizations play a crucial role in building reconciliation across different settings of post-conflict societies. Women working for peace are not concentrated in central areas but also operate in the peripheral, from a grassroots movement to community-based initiatives. Working in a bottom-up model, groups of women mobilized their movements from informal activities to formal participation toward influencing decision-making in the peace process.

In contemporary Southeast Asia, peacebuilding in Aceh, Indonesia, and Bangsamoro in Mindanao, the Philippines are the most referenced cases, including the implementation of WPS agendas. In August 2005, it was a historic momentum when the signing peace agreement (MoU Helsinki) between the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka) with the Government of Indonesia. Yet before that momentum, Acehnese women's groups were officially recognized as the first group who initiated public demand for peace through official Acehnese Women's Congress (Duek Pakat Inong Aceh) in early 2000. It recorded that one Acehnese woman participated in the peace talk in Helsinki (Suwardi, 2015). While in the Philippines, Bangsamoro women in Mindanao consolidated their work across religious identities to promote peace under the umbrella of the Mindanao Commission on Women (WMC). Their work from grassroots to peace table refers to the implementation of UNSCR 1325. Within a decade of work since 2001, WMC had gradually brought women's issues to the peace table until the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Government of the Philippines in 2013. Women in Mindanao are continuously working on peace

monitoring by establishing the Women's Peace Table network led by WMC (Santiago, 2015).

The narratives of women's involvement in building peace in Aceh and Mindanao became sources of lessons learned for their neighboring sisters in the DST. Comparative studies have conducted to find what strengthens women's roles in building peace in the Thai state's most heavily Muslim provinces. Panjor and Heemmina (2015) have highlighted the urgency of bringing the transitional justice aspect in alignment with the creation of peace initiatives, as most of the problems rely on human rights violations. Meanwhile, Buranajaroenkij (2019) argued that Deep Southern women held the potential to influence the peace-building process, yet much further empowerment needs to be addressed, including visibility and self-mobilization factors. Additionally, Boonpunth & Saheem (2022) have emphasized networking among CSOs and law frameworks as critical factors determining the success of building peace.

Reflecting on this literature, women's groups such as women's CSOs in the Deep South are undeniably vital actors to be involved in the peace process together following the implementation of women, peace, and security agendas. However, despite the common arguments on the potential of women's groups for peacebuilding, analyses on the nature of women's CSOs have not been found sufficient. Thus, this study offers an alternative perspective to deepen the analysis of women's CSOs in the Deep South by studying the historical evolution of their institutional changes during 2004-2020.

B. Broadening the Context between Thailand Deep South's Peace Agenda of Women & Indonesia's Acehnese Women Congress

Researching the extensive history of women's organizations in the DST and their contributions to promoting peace sheds light on the experiences of women's groups in other Southeast Asian countries as they grapple with conflict and navigate their roles in peacebuilding. This section delves into a comparative analysis between the women of the DST and Acehnese women in their efforts to participate in peacebuilding initiatives. The analysis emphasizes two phenomena: the Peace Agenda of Women (PAOW) in the DST and the Acehnese Women Congress, known as Duek

Pakat Inong Aceh (DPIA), in Aceh province, Indonesia. What roles have these organizations played in bringing women to the forefront of peace promotion? What strategies have they employed to foster consolidation and execute collective actions?

In the DST, the Peace Agenda of Women (PAOW) established in 2015 as an umbrella organization consisting of twenty-three women-led organizations. PAOW undertook numerous initiatives that marked the largest women-led peace effort since the escalation of the conflict tragedy in 2004. The establishment of PAOW was primarily in response to the growing number of victims resulting from the conflict over the past decade. According to the Conflict Incidents Database of Deep South Watch, there were over 17,000 casualties between 2004 and 2015. Among these, 15.16% they were directly victimized women (DSW, 2022).

PAOW has successfully carried out three major initiatives in terms of their contributions to peacebuilding. Firstly, marking a significant milestone since the formal peace negotiations held in 2013, women's groups represented by PAOW sent a set of recommendations to the negotiating teams, Party A (the Government of Thailand) and Party B (MARA Patani). This recommendation letter, titled "Policy Paper and Recommendations," outlined critical points of emphasis. PAOW articulated three key demands concerning establishing and assuring a safe public space, the designation of a free military zone, and the creating of a free-arm zone. They also advocated for the inclusion of a "safety zone" agenda in peace negotiations, as well as the protection of women from both parties. PAOW extended the following recommendations to the government at both provincial and national levels: 1) An increase in the representation of women at all levels of the peace process. 2) Enhanced protection for women in conflict-affected areas. 3) Establishing an open and inclusive process for peace and security involving Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), religious leaders, the community, and the public. 4) The development of a framework for women's engagement in the peace process. 5) Improved accessibility to the central database system on women, peace, and security (Suwardi, 2023).

Secondly, one of PAOW's primary demands, the "safety zone" proposal, was adopted by the authorities and implemented as a pilot project. This initiative implemented in villages deemed red zones or heavily affected by conflict. The concept of a safety zone entails the creation of areas that must remain free from

conflict incidents, including bombings, gunfire, and the like. The priority areas for these safety zones encompass religious sites such as mosques, temples, churches, and other public spaces like schools, markets, squares, and fields. Thirdly, PAOW initiated a creative project called "people journalism" in collaboration with a national TV station. In this project, women became live-streaming reporters, providing updates on various issues relevant to women's groups, including promoting peace initiatives. Through this endeavour, women's groups shared daily life narratives that depicted the challenges faced during the conflict and the optimism and determination to foster peace.

Through in-depth interview sessions, the researcher engaged one of the PAOW leaders in a discussion to understand how PAOW managed to consolidate and mobilize a large audience. The interview yielded two critical insights that shed light on PAOW's strategies. First, PAOW established a foundation based on collective demands and a spirit of solidarity. Collective demands involved women's groups advocating to end violent incidents, particularly because women and children bear the dual brunt of conflict's impacts in the short term (direct violence) and long term (indirect effects like trauma, widowhood, and economic burdens). Concurrently, PAOW reassured its audience that women's groups remained united in solidarity with the victims of the conflict. The increasing numbers of orphans and widows resulting from the conflict and prevailing feelings of fear played significant roles in motivating women to join forces and collaborate. Second, PAOW strongly emphasized interfaith and interreligious collaboration, ensuring that both identity groups, Thai Buddhists, and Malay Muslims, were represented. This aspect provided evidence to the public that women's groups were coming together in a united front to advocate for peace.

In the context of Aceh, Acehnese women initiated the first women's congress, known as *Duek Pakat Inong Aceh* (DPIA), in the early 2000s. DPIA saw the participation of approximately 450 women who came together to address critical issues, primarily focusing on women's equal access to decision-making processes related to peace efforts. The congress produced a set of 22-point recommendations, which were subsequently translated into actionable plans. The implementation of these plans fell under the purview of the *Balai Syura Ureung Inong Aceh*, an

independent umbrella organization for women tasked with carrying out the recommendations stemming from DPIA (Budianta, 2000).

DPIA has significantly contributed to the Aceh peace process at the policy and grassroots levels. On the policy front, DPIA conveyed its 22-point recommendations to former Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid, commonly known as Gus Dur. These recommendations played a role in influencing Gus Dur's administration to bring an end to the designation of Aceh as a military operation zone (Mohd, 2011). Moreover, while DPIA effectively influenced decision-making and policy at the higher level, it also sparked a resurgence in the involvement of Acehnese women in grassroots movements. Since the inception of DPIA, women have been actively participating in public spheres. They have undertaken local initiatives and community-driven activities, persevering despite life's challenges amidst the ongoing conflict.

Scholars researching Aceh conflict resolution have recognized that DPIA was the first official platform to discuss ending three decades of conflict through peaceful means such as dialogue (Mohd, 2011; Srimulyani, 2013). In this context, DPIA's strategies for fostering unity among women's groups are rooted in at least two fundamental principles: the legacy of women's leadership (Sultanah) and the collective grief caused by the protracted conflict. Historically, Aceh had female warriors during the Aceh Sultanate, with illustrious figures such as Cut Nyak Dien, Cut Meutia, and Pocut Meurah Intan serving as role models for Acehnese women's leadership (Zulfikar, 2022). This legacy evolved into a resilient spirit among Acehnese women to combat injustice and hardship resulting from the conflict.

Despite the challenges posed by patriarchy and misinterpretations of women's roles in the public sphere within an Islamic context, Acehnese women united through DPIA to demand peace. Additionally, the staggering casualties and losses inflicted by the conflict were a tremendous source of grief for thousands of Acehnese women. When the peace agreement (MoU Helsinki) was signed in 2005, reports indicated that 15,000 people had lost their lives during the conflict (BBC, 2005). As in other conflict settings, Acehnese women bore a double burden due to the consequences of the conflict.

Table 4 Comparison of Consolidation Strategies and Contributions of Women's Groups on Peace Processes in the Deep South of Thailand and Aceh, Indonesia

Women's Groups	Consolidation Strategies	Contributions
PAOW	- Collective demands - Spirit of solidarity	- Policy recommendations - "Safety zone" pilot project - People journalism
DPIA	- Legacy of women's leaderships - Collective grief	- Policy recommendations - Grassroots and community driven initiatives.

C. Women's CSOs' Institutional Challenges

This section elaborates on information based on the interviews with informants from the 10 different CSOs working closely to address women's issues (see Table 5). A set of interviews were conducted in person with informants from Yala and Pattani provinces, while informants from Narathiwat province were interviewed via on-live meeting due to Covid-19 issues. This section elaborates on the analyses of the institutional challenges women's CSOs face in their programs. Two classifications are made to understand various forms of institutional challenges that this study refers to as: *formal* and *informal challenges*. The result revealed that women's CSOs have been facing security threats and lack of financial access which referred to as formal challenges. Whereas informal challenges referred to patriarchal culture, religious misinterpretation, and lack of capacity.

Table 5 Lists of CSOs Working on Women's Issues in the Deep South of Thailand

No	CSOs	Province	Year of establishment
1.	Muslimah Leadership Club of Narathiwat	Narathiwat	2004
2.	Muslimah Social Welfare	Yala	2004
3.	Nusantara	Yala	2014
4.	Perwani	Yala	2013
5.	Foundation for Education and Human Resources Development	Yala	2008
6.	We Peace	Yala	2004
7.	Buddhist for Peace	Pattani & Yala	2012
8.	*Patan Satree* of Yala Municipality	Yala	2005
9.	Duayjai	Pattani	2010
10.	Civic Women	Pattani	2010

Brief organization profiles of the ten CSOs participated in this study describes as follows:

1. Muslimah Leadership Club of Narathiwat

Established in 2004, the Muslimah Leadership Club of Narathiwat serves as a dedicated haven for Muslim women, offering them the opportunity to delve into the teachings of the holy book, Al-Qur'an, alongside their children. Guided by the wife of an Imam, this community-based organization (CSO) has been making significant strides, engaging with over 482 women across 33 villages within Narathiwat province.

Central to its mission, the Muslimah Leadership Club of Narathiwat plays a pivotal role in extending guidance and support to women, particularly in matters pertaining to their domestic lives. Regularly, every two months, the club orchestrates 'halaqah' gatherings. These meetings convene the committee of the Islamic court, providing a

platform for the wives of Imams to openly exchange thoughts, share experiences, and deliberate upon various women-centric concerns.

Through its multifaceted efforts, the Muslimah Leadership Club of Narathiwat not only fosters a deeper understanding of religious teachings among women but also empowers them to address the challenges they encounter in their daily lives. With unwavering commitment, the club stands as a beacon of communal strength, uniting Muslim women and contributing to their holistic growth and well-being.

Issues affecting women within the Muslimah Leadership Club of Narathiwat often stem from the conflict-related instabilities. These encompass a range of challenges, such as women who have become victims of both physical and psychological domestic violence, wives grappling with unemployment due to their husbands' addiction to drugs, and the economic struggles faced by widows left behind by the conflicts.

Confronting these intricate problems, the Muslimah Leadership Club of Narathiwat experience a series of obstacles. Notably, despite having a direct line of communication with the committee of the Islamic court, the decision-making power to issue fatwas or Islamic decrees remains exclusively vested in men, specifically the Imams. The wives of the Imams, while able to relay the grassroots narratives of women, they were excluded from the actual process of policy formulation. This has led to a critical observation by the leader of the Muslimah Leadership Club of Narathiwat: a call for women's active involvement prior to the formulation of fatwas concerning women's issues. The argument posits that such involvement would allow women to effectively convey their concerns and opinions, fostering an environment where they can voice dissent and engage as contributors rather than mere followers.

Within the context of women's empowerment, the Muslimah Leadership Club of Narathiwat underscores its role as a sanctuary within the community. This space enables women to access formal training aimed at enhancing their skill sets. Moreover, the CSO extends financial support to women through community-driven donations, serving as a lifeline for those struggling to overcome economic challenges.

The Muslimah Leadership Club of Narathiwat serves as centre for advocacy for addressing women's issues stemming from conflict-induced instability. By pushing for women's participation in decision-making processes and offering avenues

for skill improvement and financial aid, the organization not only uplifts individual lives but also contributes to the overall progress and empowerment of the community.

2. Muslimah Social Welfare

Situated within Yala province, the Muslimah Social Welfare was established in 2004 and is operational across 13 villages, boasting an approximate membership of 83 women. Evident from its nomenclature, this Civil Society Organization (CSO) is exclusively composed of Muslim women. The organization's primary mission revolves around promoting family welfare, addressing the needs of widows and orphans who are victims of conflicts, and assisting women facing economic adversity.

The Muslimah Social Welfare undertakes a comprehensive array of women's empowerment initiatives, encompassing training of trainers in micro-economic industries, provision of financial aid, and fostering networking opportunities among women. Simultaneously, the organization actively engages in peace-building endeavors, collaborating with other women-centric CSOs. The 64-year-old female Muslim leader of the Muslimah Social Welfare prioritizes establishing a knowledge foundation among women. She asserts that enhancing the quality of life necessitates not just financial resources but also the acquisition of skills and capabilities, thereby fostering true empowerment.

As a grassroots women's CSO, the Muslimah Social Welfare encountered a significant setback when its centre destroyed by unknown assailants in 2007. Although the incident did not result in any casualties, the organization incurred substantial losses, amounting to almost 2 million Thai Baht, due to the fire. This tragic event had a lasting impact on both the leader of the Muslimah Social Welfare and the entire women's group in the region. In the face of adversity, rather than succumbing, the organization displayed resilience, reconstructing its centre with the aid of government support and persevering in its endeavours.

For the Muslimah Social Welfare, addressing women's issues presents multifaceted challenges. Firstly, it is imperative that women provided with safe spaces, transcending mere skill training, to effectively exhibit their abilities within society. Secondly, the active participation of women in the public sphere necessitates

unwavering support from their families, ensuring that they are not burden with societal labels of being disobedient wives.

In sum, the Muslimah Social Welfare stands as a testament to the fortitude of grassroots women's organizations in tackling intricate challenges. By focusing on education, skill-building, and community resilience, the organization endeavours to empower women, while acknowledging the multifarious hurdles that lie on the path towards gender equality and social progress.

3. Nusantara

Centred around supporting orphans and widowers, Nusantara is a local organization located in Yala. This CSO identifies itself as a charitable organization, actively engaging in the management of public donations, commonly known in the Muslim context as *sedekah* to aid those in need. Established in 2014, Nusantara's primary focus is serving the Malay-Muslim community in DST region. During an interview conducted with a representative from Nusantara, it communicated that the organization maintains a firm stance against accepting contributions or funds from Thai government-affiliated entities.

Within its organizational programmes, Nusantara has introduced an initiative tailored to the welfare of orphans and widowers, notably exemplified by their KEMBARA (*Kumpulan Menyantuni Anak Yatim Barat*) program. This project, facilitated by a grant from a Turkish-based organization, strategically allocates donations during the sacred month of Ramadan. Noteworthy is Nusantara's initiative-taking involvement in disaster relief undertakings, particularly during instances of flooding in the DST region. Given that women encounter distinct challenges in such scenarios, including (but not limited to) sanitation-related concerns, Nusantara extends its assistance to women within the community.

Furthermore, Nusantara is deeply committed to the preservation of cultural heritage. The organization actively participates in an annual event wherein young individuals, both males (*pemuda*) and females (*pemudi*), congregate to highlight their cultural heritage. Occurring in the aftermath of Eid, this event sees Malay youth adorned in traditional attire. Within Nusantara's framework, this cultural festivity assumes significance as a means of safeguarding their cultural identity.

Correspondingly, the organization spearheads the promotion of public historical tours of Patani, aiming to impart education and knowledge-sharing activities within the community.

As a CSO, Nusantara emerges as a grassroot organization with a distinct philanthropic orientation, focusing on uplifting marginalized groups such as orphans and widowers. Through its programs, disaster relief engagements, and cultural preservation efforts, the organization demonstrates its commitment to fostering community well-being, cultural vitality, and the perpetuation of a distinct local identity.

4. Perwani

The Patani Women Organization (*Persatuan Perempuan Patani*), commonly referred to as Perwani, stands as a prominent collective of Malay Muslim women. Originating from the efforts of former university students who played pivotal roles in the students' movement, Perwani has firmly established itself in Yala, with additional presence in the provinces of Patani and Narathiwat.

Perwani is steadfast in its commitment to empower women through a spectrum of initiatives. Foremost, they orchestrate regular online live streams via Facebook, aptly named "Dunia Wanita" or "Women's World." Conducted in Bahasa Malay, this program offers a platform for female participants to engage in insightful conversations encompassing a diverse range of topics. The discourse spans Islamic teachings, leadership, familial dynamics, financial matters, security concerns, and educational pursuits.

Collaborating with other Malay-based CSOs, Perwani also spearheads an annual event under the banner of "Safe Patani Women." This event serves as a dedicated platform to address the multifaceted challenges faced by women because of the ongoing conflict in the DST region. The event's focus extends to encompass the myriad ways in which conflict intricately impacts the lives of women.

A particularly notable project undertaken by Perwani is the *Asyifa* project. This project centres on the recovery, rehabilitation, and mental well-being of survivors directly affected by the conflict. Spanning across various villages, the *Asyifa* initiative actively creates safe spaces where women can candidly share their

experiences and engage in learning opportunities. Rooted in a drive for promoting women's rights and safeguarding themselves and their families, the project offers a crucial avenue for women to navigate their roles amidst the conflict. These spaces empower women with the tools and strategies necessary for effective problem-solving and resilience-building.

Since its establishment to this day, Perwani emerges as a commendable force in the landscape of Malay Muslim women's empowerment. Through their diverse programs, annual events, and targeted projects, Perwani serves as a beacon of support, fostering women's growth, resilience, and advancement within the complexity challenges of the DST region's ongoing conflicts.

5. Foundation for Education and Human Resources Development (FERD)

Established in 2008, the Foundation for Education and Human Resources Development (FERD) emerges as a noteworthy Civil Society Organization (CSO) and social enterprise, situated within the vicinity of Yala. FERD's central focus lies in aiding orphaned children and widowers, specifically those who have impacted by the consequences of conflict, with particular attention directed towards the Tak Bai and Kru She Mosque incidents. While FERD does not explicitly categorize itself as a women's organization, its concerted efforts intertwined with the struggles and needs of women within these conflict-affected contexts.

FERD's engagements have been chiefly aimed at the marginalized women's communities in Yala, comprising individuals adversely affected by the conflict. Among its beneficiaries are the mothers of detainees and victims of forced disappearances, as well as the wives of detainees and individuals unable to return home due to their suspected or fugitive status.

In the aspect of women's empowerment programs, FERD has orchestrated an array of activities. Chief among these is the provision of support for the psychological and mental well-being of women groups. Women inhabiting the conflict areas of the DST often find themselves in vulnerable positions, coerced by conflicting parties who exploit their maternal or spousal roles to extract information for the purposes of conflict-related investigations.

In addition to these initiatives, FERD has initiated skill-oriented projects, exemplified by training programs for approximately seventy tailors, fostering the production of garments. The organization has also ventured into establishing both livestock and durian farms, thereby affording numbers of women and orphaned individuals an opportunity to gain meaningful employment and earn sustainable incomes.

Despite its commendable initiatives, FERD grapples with persistent challenges. Foremost among these challenges is the omnipresent spectre of military operations that exert profound effects on every facet of life within the DST. These military actions, driven by security priorities, often ignore essential aspects like healthcare, education, and economic sustenance. Amplifying the complexity, the prevalence of drug abuse compounds the struggles faced by the DST society, leaving many individuals in a state of despair wrought by the unceasing conflict and military interventions.

As a local CSO, FERD emerges as an impactful force, extending a lifeline to the marginalized women and orphaned individuals ensnared in the convoluted web of the DST conflict. Through multifaceted programs spanning psychological well-being, skill cultivation, and income-generation, FERD aims to mitigate the hardships faced by these communities. Nevertheless, the organization's noble mission persists in the face of the formidable challenges posed by the conflict's enduring impact and the complex interplay of social issues.

6. We Peace

Centred around families who have endured the heart-wrenching loss of loved ones due to conflict, We Peace emerges as a prominent women-led organization headquartered in the province of Yala. Comprising an approximate membership of 78 individuals, We Peace diligently pursues three central programs, each anchored in their commitment to fostering positive change: offering aid to women who have survived conflict, advancing gender equality by embracing the principles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and spearheading a dynamic peace movement.

A distinguishing hallmark of We Peace lies in its recognition of the critical need to bridge the divides between the Muslim and Buddhist communities. Through cross-cultural initiatives that engage both segments of society, the organization initiatives to cultivate collaboration and understanding. This effort takes on heightened significance as the communities have become isolated from one another due to the persistent conflict. By fostering interactions and collaboration, We Peace seeks to cultivate trust and camaraderie between these historically segregated communities.

We Peace's approach to women's empowerment hinges on the fundamental belief that women must play pivotal roles as decision-makers. This conviction arises from the understanding that without active female engagement, issues integral to women's lives are at risk of marginalization. Furthermore, the organization underscores the formidable challenge of cultural patriarchy, which acts as a deterrent to broader female participation in the public sphere. By tackling these obstacles head-on, We Peace has its commitment to establish an environment conducive to the holistic empowerment of women.

Through years of unwavering commitment and efforts, bolstered by support from government bodies and international benefactors, We Peace has progressively expanded its contribution to the society. This expansion encompasses diverse spheres, including training for female members of the press and specialized guidance for women navigating the intricacies of local elections as politicians. The recognition of their commendable efforts culminated in a prestigious accolade: the 2020 Royal Pride Award for Social Work, a testament to the tangible impact We Peace has achieved within its community.

We Peace stands as an exemplar of resilience and collective action, advocating for peace, women's empowerment, and social progress. Through their multifaceted initiatives, the organization exemplifies the transformational potential that arises when communities unite under a shared vision of equality, understanding, and harmony.

7. Buddhists for Peace

Buddhists for Peace, established in 2013, stands as one of the longest-standing CSOs exclusively dedicated to fostering peace within the DST region. With a primary

focus on representing the minority Buddhists community in a predominantly Muslims context, the organization is based in Pattani and Yala, while actively extending its reach to encompass all provinces within the DST. The core leadership of Buddhists for Peace primarily comprises women, supplemented by the involvement of key male figures. Guided by the mission to cultivate resilient Buddhists community that adheres to the teachings of Buddha, the organization's aspiration is to foster security and prosperity.

At the heart of Buddhists for Peace's operational philosophy lies an interfaith approach, a strategy that wasn't universally embraced by the Buddhist community initially. However, one of the founders revealed in an interview that a conviction emerged within the organization that harmonious relations between Buddhists and Muslims were essential. This stance aimed to build a foundation of trust between these two communities. Over a span of a decade, the unwavering efforts of Buddhists for Peace have gradually borne fruit, resulting in growing acceptance and trust within the Muslim community.

A testament to the effectiveness of the interfaith approach is evident in instances were Buddhists for Peace successfully garnered trust through collaborative efforts. A notable example is the initiative to establish a specific Buddhist festival as a public holiday within the DST. Strikingly, instead of appealing solely to Buddhist policymakers, the organization approached a Muslim senator in Bangkok with the proposal. Despite encountering some resistance within the local Buddhist community, the proposal eventually received approval. This episode underscores the importance of fostering interfaith harmony, particularly among the younger generation within the Buddhist community in the DST.

Buddhists for Peace has been consistently stands for peacebuilding in a region marked by complex inter-religious dynamics. Through its interfaith approach, the organization has skilfully navigated the intricacies of a predominantly Muslim environment to establish bridges of understanding and trust. As organization, the Buddhists for Peace has not only transformed perceptions and relationships but has also underscored the need for inclusivity and harmony among diverse communities in the pursuit of lasting peace.

8. Pratan Satree of Yala Municipality

Located in Yala province, Pratan Satree of Yala Municipality, Pratan Satree of Yala Municipality (ประธานกลุ่มสตรีเทศบาลนครยะลา) is a community-based organization led by women groups. The word "Pratan" means "leader" which then refers as "leader/head of women's organization". Since its establishment in late 2004, this organization continuously grew covering numerous smaller groups at village level. In term of programs, Pratan Satree in Yala focuses on several issues that closely related to women, including women and family welfare, microfinance, and small business enterprise such as food and clothing products.

During an insightful interview with the esteemed chair of the organization, a 60-year-old woman, who is a former teacher, a Thai Chinese Buddhist, and has been dutifully serving as the chair for the past 12 years, shed light on the profound impact of conflict on women's groups in the region of Yala. Her experiences offered a poignant understanding of the challenges faced by these groups.

Within her organization, she spearheaded a program namely "back to family", a compassionate initiative aimed at guiding mothers and sons struggling with drug addiction through the arduous journey of rehabilitation. Beyond the shadows of conflict, the scourge of drug addiction has emerged as a pressing concern in the area, predominantly affecting young men. Recognizing the pivotal role mothers play in their sons' recovery process, this program emphasized their crucial involvement in the rehabilitation efforts.

Delving deeper into her motivations, she expounded on the driving forces propelling both herself and her organization to remain fervently dedicated to addressing women's issues. She elucidated that her commitment fuelled by a profound empathy for the victims of conflict, coupled with a resolute determination to empower women through education and capacity building. She fervently advocated for the independence of women to cultivate resilience within the societal framework.

The interview with this remarkable individual illuminated the intricate interplay between conflict, addiction, and the pivotal role of women in fostering positive change. Her organization's "back to family" program was remarkable, underlining the potential for transformation and empowerment even in the face of deeply entrenched challenges.

9. Duayjai Group

Led by a Thai Muslim woman, Duayjai established in 2010. Duayjai is enormously vocal for human rights protection in the DST affected conflict areas. The founder shared stories how she witnessed families who faced difficulties to visit detainees in the jails. She also noticed detainees have not received legal assistance and judicial process prior their verdicts. During an interview with the researcher, the founder recalled about a tragedy when an 8-month-old baby shot in Narathiwat. This tragedy also became a trigger for Duayjai to focus on protection of children from conflict. Duayjai has been actively engaged in distinct types of advocacies works and influencing decision making related to human rights. One of them is promoting the approval of the Torture Act in Thailand, so that it will gives legal protection to victims of torture, especially for political detainees in the DST. In terms of donors, as a non-government organization, Duayjai is independent and have been partnering with international organizations to run various human rights programs.

Duayjai also actively keep the society well informed about the conflict in the past as an effort to keep the memory and refuse to forget the history. Duayjai produced a documentary video dedicated for the 25 October-Takbai tragedy. Survivors and families of the victims of the Takbai tragedy shared their stories and called for justice from the authority. It also shows that generation should know what happened in the past and hope such tragedy would not be happen again in the future. In addition, Duayjai also released a documentary project namely "Listening Project" which consists of episodes. This project featured conflict survivors from diverse backgrounds. The aim of the "Listening Project" is to give space for survivors to share their narratives, for their voices to be heard, and raise awareness of the destructive impacts of conflict.

Besides, Duayjai also regularly published a brief monthly report on "Human Rights Situation in Southern Border Provinces of Thailand". This report covered issues of detention, women's rights, children as victims of conflict, and extra judicial killings due to conflict situation in the DST. Figures and statistics of the number of the cases of human rights violations appeared in this report. Duayjai usually publish this report through its social media page such as Facebook.

Since its establishment, Duayjai has been facing obstacles, including financial, security, trust, and legal issues. As an independent organization, Duayjai struggled to find funding and donors to run their programs. While from security aspect, Duayjai's activities often got threats from military personnels. They accused Duayjai against the government and or associated with the rebel groups. Such barrier led to difficulties for Duayjai to gain trust from the people. Moreover, Duayjai leader has been receiving dead threats from unknown parties and even sued that forced her to go through judicial process.

To women's issues in the Deep South's peace process, Duayjai (through her leader) highlighted key thoughts. She argued that it is challenging to advocate women's rights due to hierarchy of patriarchal culture that embedded in a conservative Islamic society. To her, women's empowerment required knowledge of human rights, so that women could have solid foundation of what become fundamental issues for themselves. She also believes that women should presented in the peace table to ensure that women's perspectives and voices are being accommodated in peace negotiation.

10. Civic Women

Unlike the other CSOs, Civic Women was at first established under the mandate of the Academic Service Department of the Prince of Songkla University, Pattani campus in 2010. After few years, Civic Women became an independent CSO that focus for the work of women especially those who affected by the conflict. Far before its establishment, Civic Women was groups of women who came together with an initiative to response to the catastrophic event of the 2004 incidents. These women named themselves as "Friends of Victimized Families", which they held a project for the families of victims of the *Takbai* incident.

Lead by a well-known Malay Muslim woman figure in Pattani, Civic Women work in cooperation with numerous national and international organizations. Civic Women was one of leading women organization that formulized the Peace Agenda of Women (PAOW) in 2015, a remarkable women's movement that became an umbrella for 23 local CSOs. As a result, PAOW sent a policy recommendation to peace table

that mainly urged for "safety zones", safe public spaces that free from any kind of violent incidents.

Focus areas of Civic Women are including peace advocacy and policy recommendation, interfaith dialogue, victim recovery, and women's empowerment. From these areas, various activities and programs have conducted. For instance, Civic Women with its partner institutions launched multimedia programs such as: *Bicara Wanita, Podcast Melayu,* and *Motivasi Keluarga.* These programs featured women individuals and groups to share their thoughts in various issues which posted in Civic Women's Facebook page and broadcasted by national television station Thai PBS.

Moreover, Civic Women have a special activity namely *'Melawat'* or home visits. This activity is visiting the family of victims of conflict, regardless religions of the families. When a person died from violent incident, women from Civic Women came to express their condolences, sympathy, and care. Simultaneously to *Melawat*, Civic Women also addressed issue of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) that happened to of whom affected directly by the conflict. Trauma healing through various medium including religious and arts conducted by Civic Women to those who suffered from PTSD. Civic Women is continuing its programs in various projects to strive the goals of women's empowerment and peace in the region.

Formal Challenges: From Security Threats to Lack of Financial Access

While women's issues have already isolated from the spotlight of types of reconciliation programs, women's CSOs in the DST have confronted challenges that are imposing on their agendas and activities. This first includes security challenges due to conflict situations and military operations. Since violent incidents in the DST escalated in 2004, the region has been under various forms of martial law. This also means that military troops have deployed in nodes around the provinces. Military camps and checkpoints are becoming people's daily scenery. A woman from Perwani said, "There was a time when numbers of troops stopped and raided our team when we were on the way to visit a village to conduct an activity of trauma healing for the families of conflict victims. They treated us unpleasantly with so many suspicions." There is such a generalization in Deep South society that contributes to enhance

divisions between Muslim and Buddhist communities. When the victim's identity is Muslim, the military suspected them to be associated with the Malay resistance group.

Thus, when CSOs held activities to help conflict victims, they often dealt with suspicions of being supporters of resistance groups. "It is hard to accept when the military collected personal data of the people, including children. Just because they are the family and relatives of a victim that they were suspected of being part of the resistance group", said a female staff from Nusantara. Local CSOs in the Deep South have been raising such issues as human rights violations, including forced DNA collection. In 2015, the military collected around 4,000 DNA samples. The army claimed that DNA sample collections were meant to decrease violence rates and for evidence in case someone does something considered illegal by state authorities in the future. According to the founder of the NGO Duayjai, the military's accumulation of this personal data has simply increased distrust of the people against the state. She added that being a human rights defender has brought risks, such as verbal harassment and, even worse, death threats. "In 2007, my centre got burned down by unknown people; everything I built with the community to help the people was just gone", said a woman from Muslimah Social Welfare organization. Besides the military, security challenges have come from the resistance groups. The latter often target women's CSOs that work with the support of government funding since they see these CSOs as not their allies. Thus, security issues from the state and insurgents alike are part of the challenges faced by women's CSOs in doing their programs and activities.

Secondly, women's CSOs have been facing challenges regarding a lack of funding. There are distinct factors related to these financial challenges. The barrier to administrative and legal registration is one of them. "It is hard for us to get the funding, especially from international donors, just because we are not officially registered with the government," said a woman from the NGO Buddhists for Peace. Thailand's 2017 Constitution on Chapter 3, entitled 'Rights and Liberties of the Thai People', is the legal umbrella of people establishing organizations according to the government. Nevertheless, registering a CSO took at least six months long with multiple layers of administrative procedures, including a 200,000 THB minimum endowment. The Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Interior, and the Ministry of Labour made the registration. Such a lengthy registration process has been a

significant barrier for local CSOs that prevents them from accessing funding. In 2020, the Thai government was on its way to requiring all NGOs to register with the Ministry of Interior. But with no clear definition of NGO, the proposed law was likely to criminalize any formal or informal NGO activity not approved in advance by the state. Additionally, financial challenges also came from the government side. Since the violent conflict occurred in 2004, the government has allocated an extra budget to the Deep South. In 2009, for example, 76 billion THB funds approved by the government and managed by SBPAC until 2012. Unfortunately, there are distribution issues between Muslim and Buddhist CSOs to access that budget. Several CSOs claimed that Buddhist people received more, while contrary, Buddhist organizations argued that Muslims were receiving easier access to funds.

Informal Challenges: Patriarchy, Religious Misinterpretation, and Lack of Capacity.

In Thailand's Deep South, a long-entrenched historical legacy of cultural male dominance contributed to the embedding of a path dependence of female subservience to husbands, fathers, and brothers, which prevented women from improving their situation in society. Culturally and religiously dominated by Malay-Muslims, the Deep South society has traditionally viewed the primary roles of women to be in the domestic sphere. Such an understanding has brought informal challenges to the performance of women's CSOs. "My husband was told to seek a second wife, just because I was quite frequently busy with my public and social activities," said a woman from Civic Women NGO. In Malay-Muslim society, the historical legacy of patriarchy embedded and institutionalized in their culture for so long that there has never been a possibility that they could evolve into societal change-agents. However, in the post-2004-era, despite the conflict setting, women have a unique possibility to work to promote peace compared to men.

Nevertheless, women's public roles are less likely recognized as a form of leadership. A wife of an Imam from the Muslimah Leadership Club of Narathiwat, Narathiwat said, "We women indeed must voice out our opinions because our needs are different from what men think. Thus, we have tried to deliver our messages before they (men) make the 'fatwa' addressing our (women) issues." Such barriers have

resulted from the 'ideational influence' of institutionalized patriarchy that limits women from maximizing their public roles. Surprisingly, even women involved in CSOs for more than five years still tend to be reluctant to feel equal to men. "I do not think I am equal enough to my husband, although I also have made money for the family," said a woman from Civic Women. To women's CSOs, institutionalized patriarchy also affected the opportunity for women to be in peace talks and decision-making. Since the first official peace talks held in 2013, none of the women became negotiating team members. A prominent woman CSO leader from Buddhist for Peace shared her thoughts: "We wanted to see the peace talks have a woman representative because men did not entirely represent the voice of women in the negotiation." This reality demonstrated that institutionalized patriarchy has controlled the peace process and perpetuated the fact that armed conflict, like in the Deep South laid out in the form of patriarchal masculinities.

Islam is the dominant religion in the Deep South, making up almost 80% of the total population. However, Deep South Malay-Muslims are often referring as "second-class" citizens within the ethnonational Thai Buddhist state. As such, there is a sense that the Deep South people carry a socio-cultural burden to present their Malay-Muslim identity as a form of validation. Unfortunately, this phenomenon has influenced how Islam interprets the treatment of women in Deep South society. "It is difficult here to empower women to be human rights defenders due to hierarchy in Islamic society," said a woman from Duayjai NGO. Women active in CSOs still face such challenges when they run their programs. Besides promoting and mainstreaming Islamic teachings that liberate women, Deep South society has associated women as '*makmum*' meaning followers.

Islam's consideration of women as beneath men has made it difficult for women to express themselves in Deep South society. A woman from Muslimah Leadership Club of Narathiwat stated, "Women need to learn how to disagree with men, especially when the latter are being abusive." She shared her experiences in dealing with women who were the victims of physical and mental abuse by their husbands. Women experienced domestic violence, especially those who were under drug addiction. These women feared defending themselves given that they might label as sinners and "disobedient wives." Most women mistakenly understood that

practicing Islamic teaching meant that the wife should obey the husband no matter what. The Islamic misinterpretation of women's status had prevented women, including those involved in women's CSOs, from improving their performances and roles in society. Especially in conflict-affected areas or civil war settings, gender bias against women's leadership has resulted in a greater barrier to women's empowerment. As such, religious misinterpretation considers part of the status quo, preventing women's empowerment agendas faced by women's CSOs.

In addition, the interviewees shared challenges within CSOs themselves, such as the lack of capacity in specific skills and expertise, which reflected in organizational challenges. "I was facing many hesitancies from women in my organization; as to them, doing something for the public was unusual and so they felt not confident enough," explained a senior chair of one of CSOs. Similarly, a leader of Duayjai NGO emphasized the need for women to understand the root causes of problems they faced to generate solutions. "Women's CSOs must keep improving their capacities, especially for peace initiatives, such as how to lead the talks, have better communication and dialogue skills, because the situation here also keeps changing," a senior Buddhist woman activist. For example, the conflict situation in the Deep South involved multi-layered issues and interests from multiple actors. Therefore, women's CSOs must have skills and expertise in dealing with the dynamics of the conflict. Although women in CSOs have sought to build solid self-esteem, it has still been difficult for them to compete with men in terms of engaging in organizational capacity performance.

D. Understanding the Evolution of Women' s CSOs in the Deep South of Thailand

Women's groups in the DST have certainly evolved from 2004 until 2020. Borrowing from the theoretical approach of Historical Institutionalism (HI), this section elaborates on how the institutional evolution of women's CSOs have transformed over time. In the lens of HI, time is a key to understanding the changes that occurred in an institution as a historical process. Hence, institutional behaviour and path dependence matter in determining institutional change in the context of women's CSOs in the DST. It is important to underline that in HI 'change' occurred

when there is a realignment of the path (Chambers & Waitoolkiat, 2019), with the supporting condition that 'change agent' could affect the critical juncture. HI considers critical junctures as determinant factors in institutional evolution as it is a moment of entering a self-reinforcing process. In other words, an institutional change could be identified from how legacies of the past (including past political decisions) affect the future institutional structure.

In the context of women's CSOs in the DST, the investigation revealed how women become agents of change. Women brought about a positive impact on peace efforts and society. The resistance shown by women in pursuing their collective initiatives has gradually shifted the narrative away from patriarchal domination in the predominantly Malay Muslim population of the DST. As women's informal collective actions have evolved into formal CSOs and consolidated groups, they have increased their bargaining power within the landscape of the peace process. While a peace agreement has not been officially signed, women's CSOs have demonstrated their active participation as change agents. Such challenges the prevailing assumption that women are only victims of conflict, highlighting their capacity to lead in promoting peace.

The following figure simplified the analyses on the factors contributing to the evolution of women's CSOs in the DST. Subsequently, the details explanation of this figure is provided after this section.
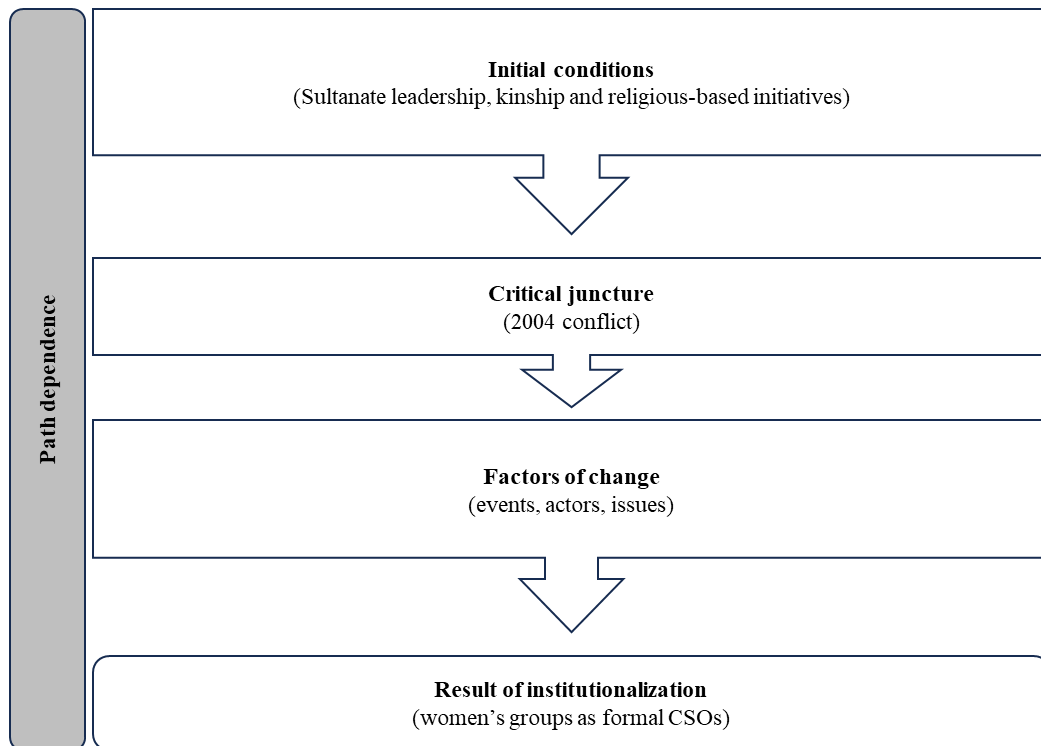
Figure 3 Framing the Analyses of the Evolution of Women's CSOs in the DST

Initial Conditions and Onset of the Path

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the evolution process of women's CSOs in the DST requires elaborating on the legacies of the past. It involves examining the initial conditions, the onset of the path, and factors shaping those conditions.

In the context of a region dominated by Malay-Muslim culture, a unique historical dynamic exists regarding women's groups in the DST. Prior to the conflicts in 2004, these women's groups were already engaged in efforts to enhance their presence in the public sphere, primarily focusing on advocating for women's rights. In 1980s, Malay Muslim women engaged in domestic and public spheres particularly related to preserving cultural identity. During the early 1990s, Malay-Muslim women in the DST were still grappling with fundamental human rights issues, such as access to education. A 1993 study demonstrated that women in the DST considered disadvantaged regarding educational attainment (Sa-idi et al., 1993).

There was a tendency to think that authoritarianism and patriarchal domination are dual factors that contributed to the failure to form strong women's organizations

in the DST. Historically, the Thai government employed the policy of "Thaification" as a strategy of nation-building identity, which (somewhat) targeted minority groups. Few years after the name of 'Siam' officially changed to 'Thailand' in 1939, the National Culture Commission formed to determine the Thai cultural identity in 1943 (Draper, 2019). The policy includes enforcing the use of only the Thai language and Thai identity in education and public services.

To minority ethnics in Thailand, such as Malay Muslims in the DST, the Thaification policy faced protests from the Malay-Muslim community since they natively speak the Malay language and write in the Jawi alphabet. One of the well-known protest movements led by Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir, a Muslim scholar and Islamic educator based in Pattani. Haji Sulong founded as the first Islamic madrasah or a modern version of *Pondok* (Islamic boarding school) in 1933. Due to the prominent leadership and influence of Haji Sulong within the DST people caused discomposure to the Thai government, which led to the closed down of Haji Sulong's madrasah in 1935, accused him of anti-government political organization (Liow, 2010). As such, the Thaification policy grew and affected aspects of the life of the expressions of Malay-Muslim identities. Particularly for women, there was a ban on wearing hijabs or headscarves for female students at schools, leading to more reluctance to attain education (Boonprakarn et. al., 2015).

In contrast, historically, the area of DST during the era of the Malay Patani Sultanate cherished the leadership of Muslim queens. Between the 15th and 17th centuries, queens served as leaders of the kingdom. Amirell (2011) has summarized the timeline of Patani queens from various sources. It began with the first appearance of the Patani inland dynasty, which included Ratu Ijau (the green queen) in 1584, Ratu Biru (the blue queen) in 1616, Ratu Ungu (the purple queen) in 1624, and Ratu Kuning (the yellow queen) in 1635. In the Patani Kelantan dynasty, there was Ratu Mas Kelantan in 1670, followed by Ratu Mas Chayam in 1698, who then reigned for the second time in 1716 after the reign of Peracau Ratu Dewi in 1702 (Amirell, 2011).

Debates exist regarding the extent of success achieved by the leadership of the Patani queens in the past. Scholars argued that the Patani queens had a significant impact on nation-building and economic trade, while others criticized the legitimacy of their rule. For example, Mansurnoor (2013) asserted that figures like Ratu Hijau,

Ratu Biru, and Ratu Ungu played a significant symbolic role as female leaders. These queens of Patani ascended to prominence as architects of a nation. In fact, Patani reached its pinnacle of prosperity during their reign, experiencing flourishing trade and evolving into a significant political hub in the region (Mansurnoor, 2013, p. 275).

Additionally, Reid (2013) emphasized that female rule in the Patani kingdom represented a remarkable constitutional innovation, demonstrating the adaptability and creativity of the key players involved. The experiment of placing a woman on the throne was unique. However, the merchant oligarchs who executed it had good reasons to believe that Patani queens would bring a more businesslike and practical approach compared to their male predecessors (Reid, 2013, p. 21). Meanwhile, Amirel (2011) argued that there is insufficient evidence in current sources to validate the findings of earlier studies that portrayed the Patani queens as weak figureheads.

The historical footprints of female leaders in Patani adds depth to the current context of women's CSOs in the DST. The legacy of Patani's queens upheld and perpetuated by groups of women who strongly identify with the Malay nation identity (*identitas kebangsaan Melayu*) and believe it is deeply rooted in fundamental Islamic beliefs. In an interview with a woman from Perwani, for instance, she stated, "We, Malay Muslim women, should understand our history. Even though we are women, we can be courageous leaders too, just like in the past when Patani had queens who led our kingdom with dignity."

However, other women's groups, who focus more on the future of women's empowerment in the DST, expressed a dismissive opinion of the historical legacy of female rule. A woman from Buddhists for Peace said, "I have some knowledge of that story, but I think nowadays, women are actively participating in CSOs and public affairs because we have had enough of the current struggles in our lives, especially those caused by conflict." Similarly, a woman from Civic Women argued, "I believe female leaders during the sultanate era held their positions mainly because of their royal status, not necessarily because of their ability to rule."Furthermore, in the modern context, since Patani came under the control of Siam (Thailand), women's movement in the DST has entered a stage of struggle to assert identity and welfare. This journey began in January 1949 when the British and Siam signed the Anglo-Thai Agreement in Bangkok, significantly altering the lives of the Malay community in the

DST (Suwannathat-Pian, 2013). The treaty clearly went against the wishes of the Patani states to join other Malay states in Malaysia. Instead, Patani became administered as part of four of Siam's provinces (modern Patani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Songkhla provinces). This was the starting moment where authoritarian power controls the DST down to date.

Before the treaty, in 1944, Siam abolished Islamic law in Malay region of the deep south. Instead, instead, the Thai civil law imposed in the deep southern region, which included the removal of the Islamic judge, *Dato Yutitham*, who managed family and property disputes among Muslims. The enforcement of Thai civil law also restricted the practice of local autonomy in the predominantly Malay-Muslim region (Aphornsuvan, 2008). Since then, the struggle of the Malay community to regain self-governance in the region has been on the rise, particularly following the forced disappearance of Haji Sulong in 1954. During this period, women's activism tended to be inactive and stagnant.

Furthermore, during the 1980s, women's groups in the DST began participating more in various public activities. In this period, the onset of the path of the institutionalism of women's groups in the DST indicated its beginning. Despite the hindrances faced by Malay Muslim women groups to gain more participation in the public sphere, the globalization of feminist ideas, to some extent, reached the deep southern women. A leading Islamic feminist scholar, Amina Wadud (1999), in her thesis, broke the stigma of "you cannot have feminism and Islam (together)." she proves how Islamic teachings (through the holy book of Al-Qur'an) treat women holistically hold privilege and dignity. Amina argued how the patriarchal lens dominates major narratives of Islamic interpretation (Wadud, 2021).

In the DST context, Prachuabmoh (1989) argued that the actions of Malay Muslim women in public and private spheres played a significant role in preserving their ethnic identity during that decade. Women successfully took part in informal religious education and established kinship-related networks. Another notable initiative emerged in 1987-88 when women's groups organized demonstrations to advocate for the right to wear the hijab in Yala province (Marddent, 2013). Moving into the 1990s, Malay-Muslim women engaged in community-based endeavours, such

as religious study groups and philanthropic activities focused on orphan girls (Marddent, 2017).

Until the early 2000s, the participation of women's groups in public spheres displayed fluctuations. However, their influence perceived as relatively limited. During interviews with senior women figures, a local senior university lecturer expressed her perspective, stating, "I believe education is one of the main factors that have empowered more and more women in our community, enabling them to become actively independent, unlike in the past." Her statement sheds light on the historical context in which women in the DST underrepresented and subject to patriarchal domination. This viewpoint aligns with another housekeeper interviewee, who noted, "These days, women can take care of themselves; we work, earn money, and often we are the ones who provide for the entire family".

Women's groups within the DST began to gain momentum as conflict escalated in 2004. They primarily came together with a shared commitment to assisting conflict victims, whom many of these women were members of these women's groups. Their collective efforts typically revolved around ending the conflict, safeguarding human rights (including women's rights), and establishing peace. This research highlighted that 2004 marked a pivotal moment (critical juncture) for women's organizations, determining the course of their future institutional development. The following section presents a chronological overview of the transformation of these women's groups as they evolved from solidarity-based entities into institutionalized civil society organizations.

Timeline of the Evolution of Women's CSOs

Based on the HI approach, this section presents aspects of critical juncture, actors, and events, as well as path dependence, to understand the institutional evolution of women's CSOs in the DST. The timeline explained the process from a form of women's informal grassroots groups to became formal women's CSOs in the present. Thus, it is significant to study how women's CSOs have evolved through a series of events, influences of different actors, and various issues. The analysis is based on interviews with several senior women's activists working in the Deep South of Thailand for the past two decades.

Before the violent conflict escalated in 2004, the historical legacy of a patriarchal society had produced a path dependence of societal women's subservience to men which had prevented women's CSOs from ever becoming proactive; there were thus very few women's groups in the Deep South. Women's activities were present as individuals affiliated with other agencies (not specifically women's organizations). "I began my work in around 1997 when I was joining with an organization that focused on environment and development issues in the southern borders, but later, after the conflict in 2004, I started to collaborate with local women's groups," said a senior Buddhist woman activist. Nationally, in the late 1990s, Thailand had been experiencing the dynamics of people–state relations. Civil participation in an organization first came from non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These NGOs' work mostly endorsed the government's programs on economic development. Yet changes emerged when the landscape of Thailand's politics affected by the country's 1997 "people's" Constitution. Under this charter, the engagements of civil society transformed, and people found more possibilities to engage in public spheres. The 1997 Constitution replaced by the new 2007 Constitution, and then the 2017 Constitution, both of which also influenced the formation of civil society in Thailand. Thus, having the 1997 Constitution also meant an initial juncture that allowed people to increasingly engage in Thailand's public sphere of civil society.

Nevertheless, in Thailand's Deep South, the key factor that galvanized a transformative opening and strengthening of civil society was the 2004 upsurge in the region's political violence (critical juncture). A senior Muslim woman activist said, "In the beginning, women participated in informal ways, our size was minimal, and we work only based on solidarity with the victims of conflict in 2004". Thus, the exacerbation of violent conflict in Thailand's Deep South became the principal catalyst—the critical juncture—that facilitated the rise of CSOs in the Deep South, including women's CSOs. The episode marked a change in path dependence such that henceforth women's CSOs could begin to play a role in society. "Later on, starting in 2005, we were working more formally by cooperating with national CSOs based in Bangkok for reconciliation projects", explained a senior Muslim woman

activist. Until 2020, 13 officially registered CSOs were working on women's issues in the Deep South of Thailand.

The information explained by the interviewees revealed how actors in influencing the institutional change occurred in women's CSOs in the Deep South of Thailand. Historical institutionalist features institutional tradition as "actors guided by a balance of past attachments and prospective opportunities". Regarding that, actors significantly influenced women's CSOs in the Deep South, including government agencies, national think tanks, conflict parties, international donors, and women's agencies. To some extent, different actors' behaviour resulted in different dynamics of institutional change in women's CSOs. The first actor in women's agencies was the core of women's CSOs. They worked independently as individual woman activists before the formation of formal CSOs in the post-2004 violent conflict. "We were young and just graduated from universities, so we had been volunteering to work for social issues as individuals, not as CSOs yet," explained a senior woman leader. After the violent the DST conflict became exacerbated in 2004, women's groups worked together with Bangkok-based organizations such as Family Network Foundation. Together, they formed Reconciliation Committees for the victim's compensation programs.

Through this cooperation, women gradually formed their CSOs in 2007 and engaged with international agencies like the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). A prominent woman said, "In 2008, women's groups were more active; we addressed the issues of the compensation program to the victims that were not distributed inclusively enough". In late 2010, local CSOs in the Deep South established a CSOs council, namely the Civil Society Council of the Southernmost Thailand or *Dewan Badan Masyarakat Madani Selatan Thailand*. This council became the umbrella for around thirty local CSOs including women's CSOs. Their first official launching was held on August 20th, 2011, in Pattani. "I reckon that since women's CSOs were engaged with the CSO Council, we gained more knowledge and experience regarding advocacy and capacity building," explained one senior woman leader. The CSO Council has helped women's CSOs to improve their organizational capacity, including the significance of building an alliance through consolidation.

Furthermore, actors play significant roles in defining the institutional process. Actors bring different interests, which shows the construct of power and resource inequality among different actors. Consolidation among actors, including organizations, led to institutionalization. In the Deep South, women's CSOs appeared to have more extensive consolidation in 2015 under the initiative of the Peace Agenda of Women (PAOW), where women had sent an official recommendation to the peace table in demanding a "safe public space". Furthermore, actors influencing women's CSOs' institutional change in the Deep South were the conflict parties; in August 2015, Malay resistance groups formed a coalition umbrella for a peace negotiating team, namely MARA Patani or Party B. "Among women's groups, we can say that MARA were tendentious in being more welcome and willing to talk with people; they indeed listened to our voices," explained the core woman's figure.

Like MARA, the leading figure of Party A (Thai Government) in the peace negotiation team also affected women's CSOs. In 2015, the chair of Party A, General Aksara Kerdpol, was a key person with whom women's CSOs often had contact. "He was an open-minded person," said a female CSO leader. During General Aksara's leadership in the peace negotiation, he recognized the roles of CSOs as neutral parties that could promote peace. Indeed, in the interviews, women also mentioned other essential actors for women's CSOs, including the Southern Borders Provinces Administration Centre (SBPAC) and international donors (i.e., the Asia Foundation). These institutions building alliances with key women who led Deep Southern CSOs. These women and their CSOs became influential actors and change agents in their efforts to improve the situation of women and improve the prospects of peace in the Deep South. Thus, in different ways, actors at different levels of analysis (individuals and organizations) significantly influenced institutional changes of women's CSOs in Thailand's Deep South.

Over the past sixteen years, from 2004 to 2020, women's CSOs' behaviours in response to different events and issues have followed an institutional path dependence of increasing participation in working to ameliorate the instability of Thailand's Deep South, but particularly focusing on helping women. The year 2004 was especially crucial because it saw the emergence and/or strengthening of women's CSOs in Thailand's Deep South due to their collective reaction to the sudden upsurge

in numerous violent incidents. Women's groups worked in solidarity with the victim's families. "After a year or so, we started facing more complex issues including assistance to victims' families and dealing with the situation where people just had no trust in each other," explained a senior woman leader. From 2005 to 2007, women's groups participated in humanitarian assistance and emergency responses to the conflict's victims. The situation became more difficult when the conflict in the Deep South led to increasing distrust between Malay-Muslim and Thai-Buddhist communities. The Thai military's post-2004 counterinsurgency led to a spike in injuries and deaths as well as increasing fears among people that they would be targeted.

In 2008-2010, more women's CSOs established. Their focuses had shifted to more broadly significant issues, including decentralization and special autonomy, a trauma healing program, monitoring for the compensation program, as well as human rights abuses. Meanwhile, from 2011-2013, women's CSOs became especially focused on peace initiatives following the first official peace negotiation held between Party A and Party B in Malaysia, which gradually resulted in decreased degrees of violence. Although Thailand had experienced a military coup in 2014, women's CSOs in the Deep South had managed to broaden their impact on more institutionalized organizations.

In 2015, 23 local women-led organizations formed the PAOW as an umbrella organization where women amplified their voices for peace by recommending "safe public spaces". One PAOW founder explained, "I do not think the coup impacted us that much because, with PAOW, we were very neutral and asked only for peace." The "safe public spaces" proposal demanded that these areas (markets, schools, roads, and religious sites) are free from violent incidents. This PAOW movement also successfully brought inter-religious communities to come together to call for peace. However, due to its dependent financial issues, PAOW became inactive.

From 2018 to 2019, women's CSOs were more stable, as they earned more organizational skills, capacities, and experiences. Former PAOW member organizations joined with SBPAC to establish the Women and Children Coordination Centre (*Soporoso*). This *Soporoso* became the extension of the government's agency in addressing women and children's issues in the Deep South. With *Soporoso's*

government funding, women's CSOs could actively continue their programs. Nevertheless, they had to deal with less freedom in designing programs. An interviewee said, "We became less independent in doing our work for women's issues because everything must meet the government's procedures). Another event was the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic that hit the Deep South as the worst infected area, with 22.5% of Thailand's cases after Bangkok. Women's CSOs were active in helping prevent the spread of the virus. Different activities conducted to support the health protocols in coping with the pandemic's impacts.

This study identified a critical juncture in the institutional evolution of women's CSOs in the 2004 tragedies. This critical juncture illustrated in Table 6 and is characterized by significant violent incidents at the Kreu-Se Mosque and the Tak Bai tragedies. These violent events prompted the implementing of martial law in the Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat provinces by Prime Minister Shinawatra's directive, resulting in enduring security concerns within the DST.

The year 2004 holds immense importance in the trajectory of women's CSOs for varied reasons. First, the escalation of the conflict placed the DST in a state of crisis, necessitating women's contributions to aiding the victims. Second, the conflict had a distinct masculine dimension, primarily targeting male-led guerrilla movements. Consequently, women's groups perceived as non-violent, providing a unique opportunity to expand their collective efforts in establishing organizations. Third, the conflict garnered attention from external and international entities, enabling women's groups to collaborate with them and solidify their roles in the public sphere.

The timeline of the evolution has explained on how women's groups had gradually become involved in addressing the societal issues affected by conflict situations, ranging from victims' solidarity to women's empowerment agendas. Along the way, women's groups had established formal CSOs as they developed the path from informal to formal participation in society. Such path dependence had the potential to realign to a new path. When women had improved their capacities and leadership, they tended to become change agents. Some remarkable initiatives done by women's CSOs including the acceptance by stakeholders regarding recommendations on an equal amount of compensation program (2011-2013) and the policy recommendation for a safe public space program (2014-2017).

Along with factors of critical juncture, path dependence, roles of actors, and events, this study argued that the choices made by women's CSOs enabled change in their institutions. Over time, especially since the escalation of violent conflict in 2004, women's CSOs in the DST tend to adapt to the dynamics of the surrounding environment. Women's CSOs had performed a pattern of being adaptive to respond to the priority issue' in their interest. Together, they had been standing (relatively) at the forefront of organizational contributions to society, from victim's assistance to women's empowerment and peace agendas. From informal participation, women's groups gradually evolved by creating changes toward formal institutionalized CSOs in the DST.

Table 6 Summary of Events, Actors, and Issues Influencing Institutional Change of Women's CSOs in the Deep South of Thailand from 2004 to 2020

	1980s (Onset of the path)	2004 (Critical juncture)	2005-2007	2008-2010	2011-2013	2014-2017	2018-2019	2020
Events	- *Thaization* (cultural assimilation). - Hinderance to perform and practice Malay and Islamic identities.	- Massive violent incidents (Kreu-Se Mosque and Tak Bai tragedies). - Following the PM Thaksin launched martial law for Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat provinces.	- Formation of Reconciliation Committee for victim's compensation programs.	- The establishment of CSOs Council. - CSOs drafted recommendations to address decentralization and special autonomy.	- The first initiation of peace dialogue. - Facilitation meeting between CSOs and BRN in 2013. - The government has accepted the CSOs recommendation on compensation to be equally the same amount between ordinary people and officials.	- Military coup. - The establishment of Peace Agenda for Women (PAOW) in 2015.	- The establishment of Women and Children Coordination Center (*Soporoso*) under the SBPAC.	- Covid-19 outbreak.

	1980s (Onset of the path)	2004 (Critical juncture)	2005-2007	2008-2010	2011-2013	2014-2017	2018-2019	2020
Actors	- Women in kinship-based groups. - Women in non-formal Islamic education entities.	Informal and community-based women's groups.	- Early formation of women's CSOs. - Local CSOs cooperated with Bangkok-based organization. - External parties (International agencies).	- Women's CSOs (registered). - CSOs Council - External parties (King Prajadhipok Institute as prominent supporter to CSOs).	- Women's CSOs - SBPAC and its Chairperson.	- Women' CSOs (PAOW) - Party A (Gen. Aksara) - Party B (MARA Patani) - International donors (Asia Foundation)	- Women's CSO's from former PAOW members - International donors (UN Women)	- Women's CSOs
Issues	- Women demand to	- Solidarity with the victims of violent	- Humanitarian assistance - Emergency responses	- Decentralization and special autonomy - Trauma healing	- Demand on fairness amount of the compensation	- Safe public spaces - Recommendation on safe public	- Women and children welfare - CSOs	- The impact of health,

1980s (Onset of the path)	2004 (Critical juncture)	2005-2007	2008-2010	2011-2013	2014-2017	2018-2019	2020
wear *hijab*. - Welfare and inheritance.	incidents	- Increased distrust issues among the communities. - Public fear over being "target person" by the military.	- Monitoring for the unfairness of the compensation program due to the impact of martial law. - Human rights abuse.	- Increasing participation and training for CSOs.	spaces sent to the peace talks and both parties agreed to adopt implement this proposal in a pilot project of "safe space"	working with *Soporoso* faced lack of freedom to run program independently.	economic and social welfare of women affected by the pandemic.

CHAPTER IV

IMPACTS OF WOMEN'S CSO PROGRAMS ON WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN THE DEEP SOUTH OF THAILAND

This chapter presents the survey results of 309 women and 10 women's CSOs in the three provinces of Yala, Patani, and Narathiwat (the DST). However, due the type of the questionnaire and technical hinderance during data collection process, information on specific location such as villages or sub-districts were unavailable. The analyses begin with a comparison of empowerment levels between women who have participated in CSOs programs (CSOs participants) and those who have never participated (CSOs non-participants). This section demonstrates to what extent and in which areas women's empowerment has been effectively impacted by CSOs programs. The following section then discusses the aspects of inclusiveness and the impacts of conflict experiences on women's CSOs.

A. Women's Empowerment: Personal, Relational, and Environmental

Although the definition of women's empowerment may vary, it agreed that it is a critical aspect of achieving gender equality. According to VeneKlasen and Miller (2002), women's empowerment defined as a process whereby the lives of women and girls transformed from a situation where they have limited power to one where their power enhanced. Thus, the transformation of women's lives seen through the changes is important. Women's empowerment includes her decision-making power, improvement of self-worth, ability to make an impact on changes, and having power and control over her life both in domestic and public spheres (UN Women, 2017).

To measure the empowerment level of women regarding the impacts of programs conducted by CSOs, this study adopted the Women's Empowerment Index (WEI) introduced by Oxfam GB (2017). This tool developed from the framework ideas of women's empowerment by VeneKlasen and Miller (2002). It recognized the three levels of changes that can take place as a sign of empowerment, including personal, relational, and environmental (Lombardini et al., 2017). Personal changes are defined as empowerment that occurs within the person as a woman. This

empowerment also includes how a woman defined herself, perceived her role in society, made decisions and acted for herself and others, and had strong self-esteem.

Meanwhile, the changes at the relational level referred to the empowerment within the relationships and power relations of women's networks. This empowerment included the capacities of women in their interactions of power with the household, community, local authorities, markets, and decision-makers. Lastly, environmental changes were more likely the broader areas of empowerment where women could be agents of change towards social norms and attitudes of society, political and legislative institutions, as well as socio-economic welfare (VeneKlasen & Miller, 2002).

While previous studies have analysed CSOs' performances (Molnar, 2014; Abdulsomad, 2017; Buranajaroenkij, 2018), this study focused on examining the changes in women's perceptions themselves after they participated in various programs conducted by CSOs. By looking at the nexus between programs on women's issues conducted by CSOs and women's empowerment, this chapter explicitly investigated the empowerment perceptions in four areas: 1) women's self-esteem, 2) women's human rights, 3) gender roles, and 4) gender equality. The study had 142 respondents who participated in CSOs and 167 respondents who did not participate in CSOs. The statistical results referred to a *p-value* < 0.05, which considered significant.

Table 7 The Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Characteristics	Participated CSOs (n=142) %	CSOs non-participants (n=167) %	*P value*
Ethnicity			
Malay	62.8	55.1	0.689
Thai	47.2	44.9	

Characteristics	Participated CSOs (n=142) %	CSOs non-participants (n=167) %	P value
Origin			
Patani	35.9	24.0	0.067
Yala	33.8	38.3	
Narathiwat	30.3	37.7	
Age (years)			
< 30	19.0	23.4	0.671
30-34	20.4	21.6	
35-39	23.2	18.6	
≥ 40	37.3	36.5	
Marital status			
Single	33.1	26.9	0.239
Married	66.9	73.1	
Educational attainment			
Middle school	24.6	25.1	0.503
High school	45.1	50.3	
University	30.3	24.6	
Major of education			
Social science	76.8	75.4	0.788
Natural science	23.2	24.6	
Occupation			
Employed	80.3	76.0	0.371
Unemployed	19.7	24.0	

Table 6 presents that most of the respondents (participated CSOs 62.8% and CSOs non-participants 55.1%) belonged to Malay ethnicity, and the rest were Thai. Based on their origins, the participated CSOs group was mostly from Pattani (35.9%), while 38.3% of the CSOs non-participants group were from Narathiwat. In terms of age, both groups of respondents were mostly over 40 years old, with the minimum

percentage of the participated CSOs group being 19.0% younger than 30 years of age, and 18.6% of the CSOs non-participants group were between 35-39 years old. The marital status of both groups was married (participated CSOs 66.9%, CSOs non-participants 73.1%). Regarding the characteristics of educational attainment, both groups mostly attained high school degrees, majoring in social sciences. As for occupation, most respondents were employed (80.3% and 76.0%). Overall, the statistical results of this study showed that the demographic characteristics (ethnicity, origin, age, marital status, education attainment, major of education, occupation) of the respondents in the individual survey with a *p-value* >0.05 were not significantly different. Thus, the similarities and characteristics between the two groups of participated CSOs programs and CSOs non-participants were statistically comparable.

In the area of personal empowerment, the change that occurred in women through their participation in CSOs programs could be measured by their perception of self-esteem. The result of a woman's self-esteem demonstrated in Table 8 below.

Table 8 Women's Perception towards Self-esteem

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
I feel I have not enough talents	Equal variances assumed	.001	.979	7.466	307	.000	.985	.132	.726	1.245
	Equal variances not assumed			7.486	301.894	.000	.985	.132	.726	1.244
I feel inferior to others (family or friends)	Equal variances assumed	3.060	.081	3.727	307	.000	.452	.121	.213	.690
	Equal variances not assumed			3.762	306.331	.000	.452	.120	.215	.688
I am good at my study	Equal variances assumed	1.133	.288	4.518	307	.000	.486	.108	.274	.698
	Equal variances not assumed			4.503	294.607	.000	.486	.108	.274	.698
I am good at my job	Equal variances assumed	5.550	.019	4.407	307	.000	.398	.090	.220	.576
	Equal variances not assumed			4.410	299.941	.000	.398	.090	.221	.576
I am equal to my peers (sisters, friends, colleagues, etc.)	Equal variances assumed	1.816	.179	4.027	307	.000	.482	.120	.246	.717
	Equal variances not assumed			4.023	298.011	.000	.482	.120	.246	.717
I am worthy	Equal variances assumed	.070	.792	4.252	307	.000	.331	.078	.178	.484
	Equal variances not assumed			4.293	306.452	.000	.331	.077	.179	.483
Personal Empowerment	Equal variances assumed	.387	.535	13.976	307	.000	3.134	.224	2.693	3.575
	Equal variances not assumed			13.971	298.600	.000	3.134	.224	2.692	3.575

Regarding women's self-esteem, the t-test results (p<0.001) showed that there are significant differences between the two groups of women (CSOs participants & non-participated CSOs) in all indicators, which consisted of I feel I have not enough talents; I feel inferior to others (family or friends; I am good at my study; I am good at my job; I am equal to my peers (sisters, friends, colleagues, etc.); and I am worthy. The result shown in Table 8 reflected empowerment at the personal level. Women who joined CSO programs obtained more confidence in themselves; they can value their self-actualization, which could significantly impact their performance when they contribute to their community.

Furthermore, regarding women's empowerment at the relational level, this study presented an analysis focusing on the appraisal of gender roles and women's basic human rights (Table 9 and Table 10).

Table 9 Perception on Gender Roles among Household's Members

	Participated CSOs (n=142) %	CSOs non-participants (n=167) %	*P value*
Cleaning the house both indoors and outdoors			
a. Men	1.4	5.4	<0.001
b. Women	16.2	48.5	
c. Men and women	82.4	46.1	
Cooking: breakfast/lunch/dinner			
a. Men	1.4	2.4	<0.001
b. Women	23.2	56.3	
c. Men and women	75.4	41.3	
Childcare			
a. Men	3.5	6.6	<0.001
b. Women	13.4	35.3	
c. Men and women	83.1	58.1	
a. Elderly care			

	Participated CSOs (n=142) %	CSOs non-participants (n=167) %	P value
b. Men	0.7	6.0	<0.001
c. Women	11.3	34.7	
d. Men and women	88.0	59.3	
Laundry			
a. Men	2.1	4.2	<0.001
b. Women	22.5	65.3	
c. Men and women	75.4	30.5	
Driving vehicles: motorcycles or car			
a. Men	8.5	25.1	<0.001
b. Women	6.3	16.8	
c. Men and women	85.2	58.1	
Goes to market for groceries.			
a. Men	0.7	4.2	<0.001
b. Women	19.7	47.3	
c. Men and women	79.6	48.5	
Attend the community gatherings.	12.0	25.1	<0.001
a. Men	5.6	19.2	
b. Women	82.4	55.7	
c. Men and women			
Visits to relatives or friends			
a. Men	3.5	3.0	<0.001
b. Women	11.3	25.7	
c. Men and women	85.2	71.3	
Attend religious or cultural events.	0.7	3.6	<0.001
a. Men	13.4	21.0	

	Participated CSOs (n=142) %	CSOs non-participants (n=167) %	P value
b. Women	85.9	75.4	
c. Men and women			
Join the workshop or training on capacity building.			
a. Men	13.4	34.1	<0.001
b. Women	6.3	16.8	
c. Men and women	80.3	49.1	
Join the training on micro-business or entrepreneurship.			
a. Men	7.0	22.8	<0.001
b. Women	8.5	18.6	
c. Men and women	84.5	58.7	
Goes to health services.			
a. Men	4.2	4.2	<0.001
b. Women	9.2	28.1	
c. Men and women	86.6	67.7	
Goes to public or governmental administration offices.			
a. Men	1.4	6.0	<0.001
b. Women	10.6	33.5	
c. Men and women	88.0	60.5	
Withdraw cash from the bank.			
a. Men	14.1	26.3	<0.001
b. Women	6.3	23.4	
c. Men and women	79.6	50.3	

Table 9 displayed the respondents' perception of the division of work in domestic and public spheres within the gender roles of household members. Statistically, there was a significantly different response between the two groups, with

all indicators having a *p-value* <0.001. In the group who did not join CSOs, 48.5% and 56.3% stated that only women do cleaning and cooking, respectively, in their households. On the other hand, the group who joined CSOs shared their work for cleaning and cooking with both men and women in 82.4% and 75.4%, respectively. There was a slight improvement in the aspects of childcare and elderly care; the group who did not join CSOs responded in 58.1% and 59.3%, respectively, sharing these responsibilities with both men and women, while more than 80% of the group who joined CSOs responded similarly. The laundry work in the households of the group who did not join CSOs done by women only (65.3%), while 75.4% of the group who joined CSOs did the laundry work with both men and women.

Furthermore, Table 9 showed that almost 90% of the group who joined CSOs programs were able to drive vehicles and reallowed to do so in their households, both men and women, while 58.1% responded so in the group who did not join CSOs. Likewise, in grocery shopping, both men and women in the households of the two groups responded 79.6% and 48.5%, respectively. Interestingly, the results showed that men and women in the group who joined CSOs tended to participate in roles in public spheres such as attending community gatherings, visiting relatives or friends, attending religious or cultural events, joining workshops or training on capacity building, joining training on micro-business or entrepreneurship, going to health services, as well as going to public or governmental administration offices, with a percentage of higher than 80%. In contrast, less than 70% of respondents in the group who did not join CSOs tended to participate in those roles. However, regarding withdrawing cash from the bank, both men and women in the group who joined CSOs responded at 79.6%, and 50.3% of those who did not join CSOs responded similarly.

Table 10 Women's Perceptions towards Gender Equality

	Participated CSOs (n=142) %	CSOs non-participants (n=167) %	*P value*
Leadership			

	Participated CSOs (n=142) %	CSOs non-participants (n=167) %	P value
a. A woman can be a leader.	59.9	13.2	<0.001
b. Men are better leaders than women	40.1	86.8	
Livelihood skills			
a. It is unnecessary to train women to be a leader as they are better to be housewife or care givers.	14.8	48.5	<0.001
b. Men must be a leader because they must provide household needs.	85.2	51.5	
Family decision making			
a. Decision making in the family must agree by both men and women.	88.0	61.7	<0.001
b. It is better when only men make decisions in the	12.0	38.3	

	Participated CSOs (n=142) %	CSOs non-participants (n=167) %	*P value*
family.			
Family welfare			
a. Family welfare is better when men and women have occupations.	85.9	50.3	<0.001
b. Having only men who have job is enough for family welfare.	14.1	49.7	
Education attainment			
a. Women should pursue higher education as men.	88.7	49.7	<0.001
b. It is better if men have higher education than women.	11.3	50.3	
Safety			
a. Woman is safer to stay home.	12.0	52.1	<0.001
b. It is fine for both men and women having activities outside.	88.0	47.9	

Regarding gender equality, all indicators (leadership, livelihood skills, family decision-making, family welfare, safety, and education attainment) in Table 10 showed statistically significant differences in responses between the two groups ($p<0.001$). 86.8% of the group that had not joined CSOs preferred men as better leaders than women, while 59.9% of the group that had joined CSOs believed that women could be leaders too. Regarding livelihood skills, only 14.8% of respondents who had joined CSOs vs. 48.5% of those who had not joined CSOs tended to agree that women do not need to own livelihood skills.

In terms of their perception of family decision-making, 88.0% of those who had joined CSOs agreed that both men and women should make decisions, while only 12.0% preferred that only men made decisions in the family. In contrast, the group who had not joined CSOs responded that 49.7% of them favored having only men who have a job in their family. However, there were 85.9% of those who joined CSOs who strongly tended to prefer that it is better to have men and women working for family welfare.

Regarding safety, 48.5% of those who had not joined CSOs believed that women should be responsible for their own safety, while the majority of those who had joined CSOs (70.7%) believed that both men and women are responsible for ensuring women's safety. Moreover, the results showed that the two groups had different views on education attainment, with 52.8% of those who had not joined CSOs stating that a university degree is unnecessary for women, while only 9.6% of those who had joined CSOs agreed with this statement.

Likewise, 88.7% of the group that joined CSOs tend to respond that women should pursue high education than men, and only 11.3% of them preferred high education is better for men. The majority (88.0%) who joined CSOs were confident enough to have activities outside for both men and women, yet 52.1% of the group not joined CSOs preferred that staying home is safer for them.

B. Inclusive Women's CSOs

In this section, the study identified the inclusiveness characteristic of women's CSOs which had implications for the success of their empowerment programs. In the DST, although identities were not the sole source of conflict, religious and ethnic

identities were heavily involved in conflict situations and people's perceptions towards each other. Malay-Muslim and Thai-Buddhist were the two main identity group compositions in DST society. Statistically analysed based on 142 women from the participated CSOs group (group A), the inclusive compositions of women's CSOs and their trends towards the level of empowerment are available in Tables 11 and 12, respectively, presenting both religious and ethnic aspects.

Table 11 Religious Inclusiveness within Women's CSOs

CSOs / Inclusiveness (Religions)	Personal			Relation			Environmental		
	Less Empowered n (%)	Adequate Empowered n (%)	Empowered n (%)	Less Empowered n (%)	Adequate Empowered n (%)	Empowered n (%)	Less Empowered n (%)	Adequate Empowered n (%)	Empowered n (%)
Muslimah Leadership Club of Narathiwat									
– Buddhist (n=0)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
– Muslim (n=25)	5(21.8)	18(71.9)	2(6.3)	17(68.8)	8(31.2)	0	22(87.5)	3(12.5)	0
Civic Women									
– Buddhist (n=9)	0	0	9(100.0)	0	0	9(100.0)	0	0	9(100.0)
– Muslim (n=20)	0	0	20(100.0)	0	0	20(100.0)	0	0	20(100.0)
Muslimah Social Welfare									
– Buddhist (n=0)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
– Muslim (n=24)	0	0	24(100.0)	0	6(26.7)	18(73.3)	0	6(26.7)	18(73.3)
Duayjai									
– Buddhist (n=0)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
– Muslim (n=10)	1(10.0)	8(80.0)	1(10.0)	5(50.0)	5(50.0)	0	7(70.0)	3(30.0)	0
Buddhists for Peace									
– Buddhist (n=12)	2(16.7)	10(83.3)	0	10(83.3)	2(16.7)	0	11(91.7)	1(8.3)	0
– Muslim (n=0)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Patan Satree of Yala Municipality									
– Buddhist (n=10)	0	0	10(100.0)	0	0	10(100.0)	0	0	10(100.0)
– Muslim (n=8)	0	0	8(100.0)	0	0	8(100.0)	0	0	8(100.0)
Nusantara									
– Buddhist (n=0)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
– Muslim (n=7)	0	5(71.4)	2(28.6)	2(28.6)	5(71.4)	0	3(42.9)	4(57.1)	0
We Peace									
– Buddhist (n=3)	0	0	3(100.0)	0	0	3(100.0)	0	1(33.3)	2(66.7)
– Muslim (n=7)	0	0	7(100.0)	0	0	7(100.0)	0	1(14.3)	6(85.7)
Perwani									
– Buddhist (n=0)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
– Muslim (n=3)	0	1(33.3)	2(66.7)	1(33.3)	2(66.7)	0	1(33.3)	2(66.7)	0
Foundation for Education and Human Resources Development									
– Buddhist (n=0)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
– Muslim (n=4)	0	2(50.0)	2(50.0)	0	4(100.0)	0	0	2(50.0)	0

Table 10 displays that the CSO Muslimah Narathiwat considered a less inclusive women's CSO as it only included Muslim respondents. Among the 25 respondents who participated with the CSO, this study found that the majority of them were in the categories of less and adequately empowered in all three empowerment levels: personal (21.8% less empowered, 71.9% adequately empowered, 6.3% empowered), relational (68.8% less empowered, 31.2% adequately empowered), and environmental (87.2% less empowered, 12.5% adequately empowered). In contrast, different empowerment trends shown in women's CSOs, such as CSO Civic Women, Patan Satree, and We Peace, which included participants of different religions (Islam and Buddhism). The study found that nearly all respondents who participated in these CSOs were in the empowered category for all three empowerment indicators (personal, relational, and environmental).

Generally, the results showed that women affiliated with CSOs that had both Muslim and Buddhist identities tended to be more empowered compared to CSOs that exclusively consisted of one religion, either Muslim or Buddhist only. CSOs such as Muslimah Leadership Club of Narathiwat, Muslimah Social Welfare, Duayjai, Nusantara, Perwani, and FERD consisted of only Muslims, while Buddhists for Peace consisted of only Buddhists. These CSOs showed that most of their empowerment levels across all three indicators were less empowered and adequately empowered.

The trend shown in the results deemed the importance of inter-religious harmony in running organizations such as women's CSOs. Unfair partisanship exclusive to a religious group would somehow deter possible more significant impacts (such as promoting peace), similarly to what Hicks (2002) argued that in an organization, it was necessary to have organizational leadership that did not endorse a single religious framework, but rather built a structure and culture of religious diversity between leaders and followers of an organization. Especially in a conflict zone like the DST, religious exclusivism was more likely to be involved in conflict issues. Because religion often used as a source of mobilization and recruitment to run an organization in conflict zones (Isaacs, 2016). Thus, the results presented in Table 10 suggested that women's CSOs in conflict settings with a composition of religious diversity, like in the DST, needed to take religious inclusiveness into account.

Table 12 Ethnic Inclusiveness within Women's CSOs

CSO / Inclusiveness (Ethnicity)	Personal			Relation			Environmental		
	Less Empowered n (%)	Adequate Empowered n (%)	Empowered n (%)	Less Empowered n (%)	Adequate Empowered n (%)	Empowered n (%)	Less Empowered n (%)	Adequate Empowered n (%)	Empowered n (%)
Muslimah Leadership Club of Narathiwat									
– Thai (n=0)									
– Malay (n=25)	5(21.8)	17(71.9)	2(6.3)	17(68.8)	8(31.2)	0	22(87.5)	3(12.5)	0
Civic Women									
– Thai (n=12)	0	0	12(100.0)	0	0	12(100.0)	0	0	12(100.0)
– Malay (n=17)	0	0	17(100.0)	0	0	17(100.0)	0	0	17(100.0)
Muslimah Social Welfare									
– Thai (n=6)	0	0	6(100.0)	0	0	6(100.0)	0	0	6(100.0)
– Malay (n=18)	0	0	18(100.0)	0	6(23.9)	12(51.1)	0	7(27.3)	11(47.7)
Duayjai									
– Thai (n=4)	1(33.3)	2(50.0)	1(16.7)	2(50.0)	2(50.0)	0	3(66.7)	1(33.3)	0
– Malay (n=6)	0	5(88.9)	1(11.1)	3(50.0)	3(50.0)	0	4(66.7)	2(33.3)	0
Buddhist for Peace									
– Thai (n=12)	2(16.7)	10(83.3)	0	10(83.3)	2(16.7)	0	11(91.7)	1(8.3)	0
– Malay (n=0)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Patan Satree of Yala Municipality									
– Thai (n=10)	0	0	10(100.0)	0	0	10(100.0)	0	0	10(100.0)
– Malay (n=8)	0	0	8(100.0)	0	0	8(100.0)	0	0	8(100.0)
Nusantara									
– Thai (n=0)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
– Malay (n=7)	0	5(71.4)	2(28.6)	2(28.6)	5(71.4)	0	3(42.9)	4(57.1)	0
We Peace									
– Thai (n=4)	0	0	4(100.0)	0	0	4(100.0)	1(25.0)	3(75.0)	0
– Malay (n=6)	0	0	6(100.0)	0	0	6(100.0)	1(16.7)	5(83.3)	0
Perwani									
– Thai (n=0)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
– Malay (n=3)	0	2(66.7)	1(33.3)	1(33.3)	2(66.7)	0	1(33.3)	2(66.7)	0
Foundation for Education and Human Resources Development (FERD)									
– Thai (n=1)	0	1(100.0)	0	0	1(100.0)	0	1(100.0)	0	0
– Malay (n=3)	0	1(33.3)	2(66.7)	0	3(100.0)	0	1(33.3)	2(66.7)	0

Table 12 indicates that all respondents who participated with Muslimah Leadership Club of Narathiwat were of Malay ethnicity, and this composition had an impact on their empowerment level, which fell into the same category as shown in the religious inclusiveness table (Table 10). It found that all 25 respondents categorized as less empowered and adequately empowered in all three empowerment indicators, as follows: personal (21.8% less empowered, 71.9% adequately empowered, 6.3% empowered), relational (68.8% less empowered, 31.2% adequately empowered), and environmental (87.2% less empowered, 12.5% adequately empowered).

Significant levels of empowerment shown by respondents who participated in CSOs of different ethnic groups (Thai and Malay). For instance, respondents from Civic Women (12 Thais and 17 Malays) categorized as empowered in all three empowerment indicators (personal, relational, and environmental). Nevertheless, an interesting result of empowerment levels found in respondents who participated in CSOs that had both Thai and Malay ethnicities dominant between them. For instance, CSO Muslimah Social Welfare (6 Thais and 18 Malays) showed a trend where all respondents (Thais & Malays) had an empowerment level in the category of empowered personal level. However, they were in the category of adequately empowered in relational indicators (23.9%) and environmental (27.3%).

Therefore, it is evident that the trend shown in Table 10 is similar with Table 11, where ethnicity compositions of women's CSOs affected empowerment levels. The more inclusive or diverse ethnic compositions in women's CSOs, the higher trend (empowered) they could reach at all three levels of empowerment (for instance: Civic Women and Patan Satree). One thing to note from Tables 11 and 12 is the characteristics of women's identities. Ethnicity has often been confused with religion. A general phenomenon in the DST society was that all Malays were Muslims, but not all Thais were Buddhists. During the fieldwork, the researcher met a few women of Thai ethnicity and Muslim background, yet none who were of Malay ethnicity but Buddhist.

Regarding aspects of ethnic diversity in a conflict situation, such as in DST, Novta (2016) highlighted her argument that there was a strong association between ethnic diversity and conflict. Although in the context of DST, the notion of "ethnic conflicts" could not be generalized (Brown, 1993), since the Malays and the Thais

were not exclusively conflicted parties but were more into ethnopolitical struggles of the Malay ethnic groups in the Thai nation (Norsworthy, 2008).

Table 13 Women's Conflict Experiences and Motivation to Join CSOs

Conflict Experiences	Motivation to join CSOs		Total n (%)	P-value
	Yes n (%)	No n (%)		
Direct experiences				
Yes	68(76.4)	21(23.6)	89(100.0)	0.024
No	32(60.4)	21(39.6)	53(100.0)	
Indirect experiences				
Yes	41(78.8)	11(21.2)	52(100.0)	0.065
No	59(65.6)	31(34.4)	90(100.0)	

Table 12 above specifically investigated the motivation of women who joined or participated in CSOs. Within the participated group (group A), all women had experienced conflict in both direct and indirect ways. Direct experiences considered when they or their family members were victims of violent incidents, such as shootings, bombings, forced disappearances, widowhood, intimidation, personal data, and property raids, etc. Indirect experiences included living in fear, damage of public facilities due to violent incidents, lack of development and economic stability due to security instability, prejudice among different identity groups, etc.

This study found that 89 respondents directly experienced conflict, while 53 indirectly experienced conflict. In the "direct experience of conflict" group, it found that 76.4% of them admitted that their conflict was a major reason that motivated them to join women's CSOs. Women believed that by joining CSOs, they could fight for their rights and make efforts to promote peace. However, this finding does not necessarily suggest that direct experience in conflict is a prerequisite for women to join CSOs or any women-led organizations.

Despite having been victims of conflict, women also played a crucial role in promoting peace in conflict zones (Anderlini, 2007). Thus, women in the DST collaborated to address issues that which significantly resulted from the conflict. For instance, Duaijay focused on promoting human rights and providing legal assistance to wives, mothers, and families of detainees.

The findings in this chapter explained their relation to women's CSOs' institutional processes. It appeared to varying extents in each area of empowerment levels: personal, relational, and environmental. For example, Chapter III (Table 5) shows how women consolidated from informal women's groups to well-established women's CSOs. This aspect was related to the indicator of the level of women's self-esteem (personal empowerment). In relational and environmental levels, the results showed that gender equality and the division of gender roles (leadership and decision-making) were relevant to supporting women's CSOs in becoming change agents through their formal participation. As an example, women's CSOs were able to influence peace-related policy (decision-making) through their policy recommendations. Thus, the legacy of the last sixteen years (2004-2020) proved that institutionalized women's CSOs contributed (although gradually) to elevating women's empowerment and promoting peace in the DST.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This chapter presents the conclusion results of the entire study on how women's CSOs evolved from 2004 to 2020 and the extent to which their empowerment programs have influenced women in the DST. Narrative investigations and statistical analyses utilized to address the research questions and test five sets of hypotheses. Additionally, this chapter provides implications of the study's findings and offers recommendations for further research.

A. The Institutional Evolution of Women's CSOs in the Deep South of Thailand.

By utilizing the lens of Historical Institutionalism to examine the historical legacies, path dependence, and critical juncture, this study was able to explain the institutional evolution of women's CSOs in conflict-affected areas of the DST. Theoretically, there was an initial condition when women in the DST historically used to have female leaders (queens) during the Patani sultanate. However, women's activism differed since Patani fell under the control of Siam or modern Thailand. The issues shifted to how women express their cultural and religious identities as Malay Muslims. Although women's groups were relatively less powerful, events and narratives of women who attempted to fight for their rights in the public sphere in the past became the historical legacy for women's activism in the present. The women's CSO institutionalism process elevated when women's groups rose in the critical juncture of the escalation of the 2004 conflict. Along with associated factors, the path of women's CSO institutionalization continues, allowing actors to benefit from the path, which results in increasing returns.

In conclusion, the findings of this study answered the following questions: *First*, the study asked how women's CSOs in the DST evolved to increasingly address women's empowerment. From 2004 to 2020, the study investigated the pattern of institutional change that occurred in the evolution of women's CSOs. Though the onset of the path was the 1980s, the historical legacy in the past and the escalation of

conflict in 2004 catalyzed women's groups to strengthen their public roles by establishing CSOs. Before the violent incidents in 2004, there were few official women-based organizations in the DST. However, since 2008-2010, their numbers have been growing, marked by the establishment of the CSOs council, where some of the CSOs in this study were founding members. Deep Southern women preserved this legacy from the past, recalling how women struggled to carry the burden of conflict and continued striving for changes toward building peace. Additionally, major actors, both internal and external, played critical roles in defining the directions of women's CSOs in the DST. These findings can justify the hypothesis (WH1) that the more women preserved their historical legacies, the more likely women's CSOs can perpetuate over time.

The second question asked how women's behavior and path dependency shaped the changes occurring in CSOs as institutions. The findings show that over the past sixteen years, from 2004-2020, women's CSOs created an institutional path where changes tended to occur through consolidation and depended on the development of issues. For example, in 2015, the consolidation of the number of women-led organizations under the Peace Agenda of Women (PAOW) resulted in the first official recommendation for a "safe zone" for peace negotiation. Meanwhile, since 2004, women's groups started their public participation due to their sympathy and solidarity with the families of violence victims.

Women's participation gradually shifted towards influencing the decision-making of the peace process in 2015 and broadened to focus on mainstreaming women's empowerment agendas in 2018. The study proved that women's CSOs have played essential roles in the DST peace process, directly and indirectly. Nevertheless, the study also found that the peace process, especially the peace negotiation scheme, was less inclusive, lacking women to be involved in the peace table. Thus, bringing the potential of women's contributions to peace, the study recommends that future peace negotiations be more inclusive, allowing women to participate directly, appropriately, and conveniently. Besides Party A and Party B, the peace negotiations may consider opening opportunities for a third party to represent independent entities, such as women's groups.

During the sixteen years, this study argued that the 2004 conflict was the critical juncture specific to the DST context, where women's CSOs influenced by and shaped, creating changes since then. These findings supported the hypothesis that the more CSOs can shape their institutional path dependence through making decisions in the critical juncture, the more likely they can affect positive change (WH2), and the longer and more consistently women participated in the CSOs, the more likely they contributed towards the institutional evolution of women's CSOs (WH3).

B. Women's CSOs' Efforts and Impacts on Women's Empowerment

Statistically, this study employed the Chi-square and t-test in analysing the survey to measure women's empowerment further to study the impact of women's CSOs programs. Along the way, interviews with women in the DST also revealed significant challenges in running their programs. In this section, the study provides recommended strategies to strengthen women's CSOs' future programs in this part.

As for the *third* inquiry, this study conducted a statistical test between two groups of women: CSOs participated group (Group A) and CSOs non-participants (Group B). This area answers the question of to what extent CSOs programs impacted women's empowerment. Among the three levels of empowerment: personal, relational, and environmental, the results showed significantly different trends in all three areas. Nevertheless, highly significant different results occurred in the relational and environmental levels ($p<0.001$ in all indicators) for Group A compared to Group B. While in the personal level of empowerment, the results showed a significant difference (not all indicators of self-esteem resulted in $p<0.001$, two indicators had a *p-value* of 0.004 and 0.006). These tests helped confirm hypothesis WH4, implying that women's CSOs programs positively impacted women's empowerment to a higher level. These women proof to become change agents, promoting peace and justice in the DST. Recommended strategies to enhance women's CSOs programs identified through interviews with women in the DST who faced significant challenges in running their programs. Specifically, the results from this variable reveal a trend of progress in terms of women's empowerment and participation in the public sphere when compared to findings from a previous study conducted in the early 1990s. Back then, women in the DST, especially Malay Muslims, faced disadvantages in terms of

educational attainment (Sa-idi et al., 1993). This educational disadvantage hindered women's capacity to participate in public and policy-related spheres.

Subsequently, the *fourth* question of this study examined the aspect of diversity compositions in women's CSOs. The statistical test revealed that more diverse women's CSOs, consisting of Buddhists and Muslims, and ethnically both Thais and Malays, were more likely to result in a higher trend (empowered) at all three levels of empowerment. Thus, hypothesis (WH4) supported, indicating that the more inclusive the membership of women's CSOs, including their religions and ethnicities, the more enhanced women's empowerment.

Lastly, this study aimed to assess the correlations between women's experiences of conflict and their motivation to join CSOs. The statistical test showed that direct experiences of conflict strongly motivated women to fight for their rights by joining and working with CSOs (*p-value* 0.024). Therefore, this result supported hypothesis WH5, which states that the more intense women's experiences of conflict, the more motivated they are to participate in CSOs. However, this study emphatically clarifies that being a victim of conflict is not necessarily a prerequisite for women to become active in CSOs. This justification means that the results obtained are specific to the context of the DST and should not generalize to other conflict-affected areas. Furthermore, besides being victims of conflict, this study opens the possibility for future investigations to explore other factors associated with women's motivation to participate in collective actions or organizations actively.

C. Implications

The results of this study offered two principal conclusions that based on the fieldwork of the researcher. *First*, the study is theoretically contributed to the implementation of the Historical Institutionalism (HI) theory, which enabled this study to produce diligent documentation of the vital path and critical junctures of women's CSOs in the conflict area of the DST in the past sixteen years (2004-2020). Details of critical events, actors, and issues that influenced the institutional change of women's CSOs could benefit from deepening the understanding of the history of women's CSOs in the DST. From theoretical perspective, this study has successfully

addressed a gap by utilizing empirical and experimental data to explain the timeline of the institutionalization process of women's CSOs.

Secondly, the survey results suggested practical implications for women's CSOs in strengthening their future empowerment programs, not limited to the DST but may also be relevant in any other conflict-affected settings. For instance, although 50.3% of the CSOs non-participant group (Group B) had attained a high school education, they did not equip with adequate self-esteem as the 45.1% of the participated CSOs group (Group A). These finding sheds light on the need for women's CSOs to broaden their target groups and have more inclusive programs for all women, regardless of their cultural or religious identities. Among the three empowerment levels, the results imply the need for women's CSOs to aim more at environmental empowerment, such as influencing decision-making in the peace process.

In summary, this study's findings present novel analyses, as it combines Historical Institutionalism (HI) and Feminism to provide a comprehensive understanding of the institutionalization process of women's CSOs in conflict-affected areas of the DST. The integration of these two theoretical perspectives has enabled the researcher to offer a thorough and detailed explanation.

From a macro-level perspective, the application of HI has allowed for an in-depth examination of the factors contributing to the formal institutionalization of women's CSOs. Exploring historical evidence since the era of the Sultanate of Patani in fifteen century was crucial in establishing a legacy that supports the argument that the 2004 conflict served as a critical juncture along this path of institutional evolution.

On the micro-level, incorporating contemporary perspectives of women regarding how they perceive their empowerment and its growth alongside women's CSOs is essential from a Feminist standpoint. This approach has enabled the researcher to measure three levels of empowerment—personal, relational, and environmental—and present primary results that highlight the significant impact of CSO programs on women's empowerment in specific areas.

Despite its contributions, this study is not without limitations. One significant challenge was the timing of data collection, which took place during the Covid-19 pandemic. This situation forced the researcher to rely on assistance from others to

make appointments with the study's informants during the fieldwork. While this did not impact the data itself, it may have affected the researcher' ability to fully engage with participants and collect additional information. In addition, the identification of specific location (at villages or sub-district levels) of survey questionnaire was not available due to the data collection process that conducted randomly in both ways, on-site and on-line.

Another limitation of this study was the language barrier faced by the researcher. Reviewing literature and conducting fieldwork in a language that is not one's mother tongue can be challenging and may have limited the researcher's ability to fully engage with the study's participants. The impact of this barrier is difficult to quantify, but it is worth noting that it may have influenced the study's results.

Despite the limitations mentioned earlier, this study provides valuable insights into the history and impact of women's CSOs in the conflict-affected region of the DST. It sheds light on the challenges faced, formal (such as security threats due to conflict and lack of financial support) and informal (including patriarchy, religious misinterpretation, and lack of capacity), and offers recommendations to address these challenges. *Firstly*, concerning internal enhancement, women's CSOs should work on strengthening the consolidation among women's groups by embracing a sense of identity representation, regardless of their differences. *Secondly*, in terms of building external alliances, women's CSOs should expand their network and collaboration with external entities. These efforts include engaging with male-led organizations (such as religious-based groups or political parties), governmental and non-governmental agencies, and international organizations. By doing so, women's CSOs can enhance their capacity and empowerment and gain recognition and support for their participation, particularly in the peace process.

Future research could build based on this study and address the highlighted limitations to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the role of women's CSOs in promoting peace and empowering women in conflict-affected settings. To deepen the understanding of women's CSOs in the DST conflict-affected areas, future research should include an investigation of women's agency and the impact of conflict actors on women's organizations. It is essential to understand the dynamics of conflict actors and their effect on women's organizations' activities, programs, and

sustainability. Since the quantitative data of this study focused on the women's participation, thus, future investigation might consider to analyses to what extent the memberships of women's CSOs would determine the empowerment. Additionally, future research might also explore the potential role of Thai bureaucracies in influencing women's CSOs' involvement in peace-building projects.

Moreover, the study suggests that future researchers should consider conducting interviews or surveys with male members of society to gain a more comprehensive understanding of gender dynamics and the potential impact of men's participation in women's CSOs. Such research can lead to more inclusive and effective women's empowerment programs that involve both men and women.

In conclusion, this study suggests that future research in this field should continue to explore various aspects of women's CSOs in conflict-affected areas to provide a better understanding of their impact on women's empowerment and peace-building efforts. It is crucial to continue investigate and identify effective strategies that women's CSOs can use to address the challenges they face and promote gender equality and sustainable peace in conflict-affected areas, such as the DST.

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NOTES

1. There is no specific definition of the term of 'deep state' found in Croissant's (2019) literature.
2. Source: Sydow, et al., 2009 in Schreyogg and Sydow, 2010.
3. Adopted from the Women's Empowerment Index (WEI) framework. See more details in Lombardini, S., Bowman, K. and Garwood, R. (2017). A 'How to' Guide to Measuring Women's Empowerment: Sharing Experience from Oxfam's Impact Evaluations. Oxfam GB, p 6.
4. This table is adopted from Fioretos (2011) "Dominant features of three institutional traditions" page 374. For more details see Fioretos, O. (2011). Historical Institutionalism in International Relations. *International Organization,* 65(02), 367–399.
5. The term 'Patani' written with only one 'p' refers to Malay sultanate that was part of Kelantan state in the modern Malaysia.