

BUILDING INCLUSIVE DIALOGUE IN DANAAN

Exploring opportunities for women in peacemaking

Executive Summary

Emerging from over twenty years of civil war, Danaan is a country divided and scarred by a violent conflict between the Tarim-led government and an allied Nurul-Warod opposition. The Tarim-led ruling party has held a tight grip on power since independence in 1975 and has politically and economically marginalized the Nurul and Warod communities in order to maintain this power. Growing anti-government sentiment fueled by accusations of corruption and fraud, led to the formation of a joint Nurul and Warod armed opposition movement, sparking a civil war that has resulted in mass casualties and displacement.

The civil war has severely damaged the country's social fabric. Although the conflict is, at its core, a clash of government and anti-government forces, Tarim communities have turned against Nurul and Warod communities, neighbors have turned against neighbors, and the conflict has driven deep and lasting divisions between these identity groups.

Over the past year, the United Nations (UN) and the Regional Organization for Economic Integration (ROEI) have led efforts to de-escalate the conflict in Danaan. A fragile ceasefire was brokered six months ago, and the parties are scheduled to meet again soon to discuss the terms of a comprehensive peace agreement.

You will be taking part in a series of activities related to these peace talks. This background brief will give you the information necessary to understand the conflict, your role, and how you can help create lasting peace in Danaan.

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Timeline

1895:	Danaan becomes British colony
1974:	Richard Marwat elected as president
1975:	Danaan gained independence
1980:	John Nam elected as president
1990:	Escalation of violence around 1990 elections; start of the civil war
2015:	UN-REOI Joint Mission established
Present:	Temporary ceasefire; peace negotiations ongoing

Danaan: Country Profile

Official Name: The Republic of Danaan

Capital: Caana

Major cities: Mos, Laag, Warod

Area: 580, 367 sq km

Population: 30 million

Ethnic Makeup: Tarim (55%), Nurul (25%), Warod (20%)

Government and Politics

According to the constitution, Danaan is a multi-party, democratic republic. However, the Tarim-led Danaan People's Party (DPP) has controlled the government for over 40 years and this has led to unrest, particularly among Danaan's ethnic Nurul and Warod minority populations.

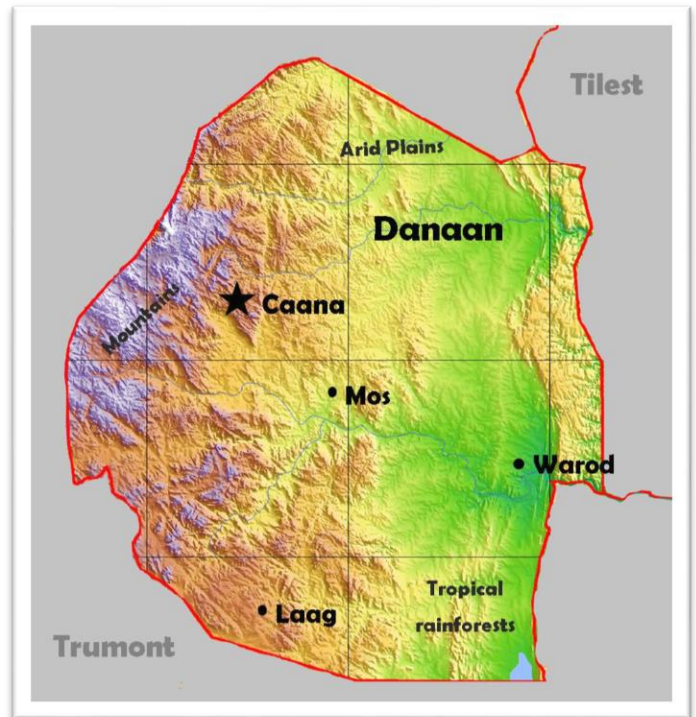
Presidential and legislative elections are held every five years. In every election since independence in 1975, the DPP has won the presidential election as well as over 60-percent of the seats in the legislature.

The remaining seats in the legislature are typically divided among several other political parties, many of which are closely allied with the DPP.

Out of the 120 seats in the legislature, two are held by women. Both women are members of the DPP and have strong family ties to the DPP leadership.

Economy

Danaan's economy is primarily based on revenue from oil and natural gas, which totals around 65 percent of its GDP. Although agriculture is the third-largest sector in the economy, Danaan still depends on imports for most food items. The agricultural sector prioritizes high-value commercial crops for export, such as coffee, tea, and cotton.



Historical Context

Pre-Colonization

The area now known as Danaan was home to several nomadic pastoral and settled agricultural groups for many centuries prior to colonialization. The two largest groups were the nomadic *Tarim* and agriculturalist *Nurul*, with the *Warod* seasonally occupying land in eastern Danaan. The relationship between the Tarim and Nurul was relatively peaceful. Inter-marriage across these two groups also became common as the Nurul and Tarim became vital trade partners. The Warod traded regularly with the Tarim and Nurul, yet maintained their nomadic lifestyle until the British arrived in 1895.

The Colonial Period

Danaan became a British colony in 1895. Upon establishment of the colony, the British took ownership of farmlands mostly occupied by the Nurul, and transformed those lands from food crops to high-value commercial exports like coffee and tea. Unable to maintain their nomadic way of life under British rule, the Warod were forcibly settled and provided low-wage labor alongside Nurul farm workers for Danaan's new agricultural industry. The Tarim, on the other hand, were greatly favored by the British, above all other groups in Danaan. The British believed the Tarim were more intelligent, hardworking, and trustworthy.

The formerly positive relationship between the Tarim, Nurul, and Warod was fundamentally altered when the British installed a system of indirect rule, where Tarim chiefs administered the country on behalf of the British. Animosity between the Tarim, Nurul, and Warod increased as the Tarim-British relationship grew stronger and the Tarim elite cemented their hold on power. The Nurul and Warod could not understand why the Tarim were favored by the British and resented the elevated status of the Tarim elite. Even those Tarim who had not directly benefited from British favoritism were viewed with animosity by many within the Nurul and Warod communities.

The Struggle for Independence

In 1960, a group of Nurul and Waord led militias formed a coalition, called the Danaan Liberation Front, that targeted British military compounds and outposts. Several members of the Tarim elite spoke out against the Liberation Front, which divided the Tarim community among those who wanted to join the growing independence movement and those who sought to maintain the status they had received as a result of colonial rule. As the attacks escalated, British officials increasingly viewed all Danaanians with suspicion, which soured the relationship between the British and Tarim elite.

In the years following, a fervor swept across Danaan as individuals from all ethnic groups rallied for independence. The Liberation Front continued its armed insurgency against the British and the Tarim elite

formed a political wing, called the Danaan People's Party (DPP), which was led by a charismatic and seasoned politician named Richard Marwat.

In 1970, Richard Marwat and the DPP convinced the Liberation Front and other armed factions that the only way to defeat the British was to coordinate efforts and create an environment of chaos and unrest to overwhelm British forces. Under Marwat's leadership, this new multi-ethnic alliance proved successful and after a bloody and brutal five-year war, Danaan gained independence in 1975.

Women's roles in the struggle for independence

Women across all ethnic groups played a crucial role in the independence movement. Rooted in traditions of cross-community trade, women were often seen as connectors between communities and women's networks served as a vital channel for communication. In markets across Danaan, women shared information across ethnic lines about the movement of British troops and plans for mass protests. As the insurgency escalated, women also smuggled weapons for the Liberation Front. Women in trade unions organized strikes. Women also organized boycotts of government-run schools and coordinated with teacher associations to open informal schools for students affected by the boycott.

Women members of the Liberation Front fought on the front lines, helping to coordinate and carry out attacks against British troops. Some also supported armed units as scouts or medics, while others helped to maintain remote base camps.

Post-Colonial Danaan: Growing DPP control and emerging unrest

In 1975, the British administered an election to establish the new Danaan government. The DPP won a majority of seats in the parliament and Richard Marwat was elected president. At this time, the DPP was a multi-ethnic coalition party, based on alliances formed during the struggle for independence. However, over time, Tarim leaders began assume greater influence over internal DPP decision-making processes. The most important decisions and deals were brokered behind the scenes through informal Tarim channels. This led to growing frustration and in-fighting within the party.

In 1979, President Marwat died and the fragile DPP alliance began to fracture as members disagreed on who would replace him at the party's helm. After much debate, party leaders selected Joseph Nam, a wealthy Tarim businessman, as its candidate for the 1980 elections. Longstanding Nurul and Warod party members who were pushing for a non-Tarim candidate took this as a direct insult.

Joseph Nam won the presidential election by a landslide. After his election, Danaan experienced a period of strong economic growth. This increased cash flow directly benefited the predominantly Tarim DPP leadership and those close to President Nam and his Tarim clan. As members of the Tarim elite built luxurious homes in the foothills around the capital, working class Danaanians struggled with increasing levels of unemployment, high food prices, poor living conditions, and crumbling infrastructure.

The growing wealth of DPP elites led to controversy in the months before the 1985 elections. Six months before the elections, stories began to circulate about the DPP bribing local leaders and distributing cash in exchange for votes. President Nam and the DPP swept the 1985 elections amid accusations of corruption and fraud.

In 1989, nine months before the end of President Nam's second term, the DPP-controlled legislature passed a controversial constitutional amendment to eliminate the presidential two term limit, allowing President Nam to stand for elections indefinitely. Nurul and Warod civil society organizations responded by organizing large scale demonstrations against the constitutional amendment. Protests denouncing President Nam and the DPP drew large crowds, and clashes with the police devolved into riots. When, despite this unrest, President Nam and the DPP still won the election with over 80-percent of the votes, violence erupted across the country, leading to the outbreak of a civil war that would last over twenty-five years.

The post-colonial women's movement

In the 1980, an organization called the Danaan Women's Unity League (DWUL) was formed, as a way to elevate women's voices in shaping Danaan as a new, independent country. DWUL began as an inter-ethnic coalition, although most of its members were from the Tarim elite. The League's first major campaign was to advocate for women's voting rights, which it won in 1984. Then, leading up to the 1985 election, DWUL launched a nationwide civic education campaign to help women better understand the electoral process, how to register to vote, location of polling centers, etc. and opened offices in each of the regions to coordinate local efforts. Soon after, new women's groups started to emerge, particularly within Nurul and Warod working class communities. In an effort to bolster solidarity, DWUL urged these new groups to join their coalition; DWUL hoped to become the central leader and hub for women's organizations in Danaan. Some groups, however, were suspicious of DWUL and felt that its Tarim leaders didn't fully understand the issues that rural and working class women faced.

The Danaanian Civil War

Conflict drivers

The civil war was the result of a number of factors, including conflict drivers rooted in Danaan's colonial history. In addition to high levels of poverty, corruption, and economic inequality, many Nurul and Warod carried a deep-seated resentment, and even hatred, toward the Tarim and their perceived privileges and status. They believed the Tarim received unfair political, social, and economic advantages, while the Nurul and Warod were marginalized, first at the hands of the British and then the DPP. Conversely, the Tarim felt victimized by the episodes of violence leading up to the 1990 election. Many Tarim felt that they did not personally benefit from colonialism or the DPP's dominance, and feared that the Nurul and Warod intended to harm them simply for being Tarim.

Political and armed factions used these deep-rooted societal divisions to create hateful and threatening messaging campaigns, demonizing other ethnic groups and encouraging violence. The lucrative oil industry further provided incentive for groups to fight for political power; whoever controlled Danaan would also control millions of dollars in oil revenue.

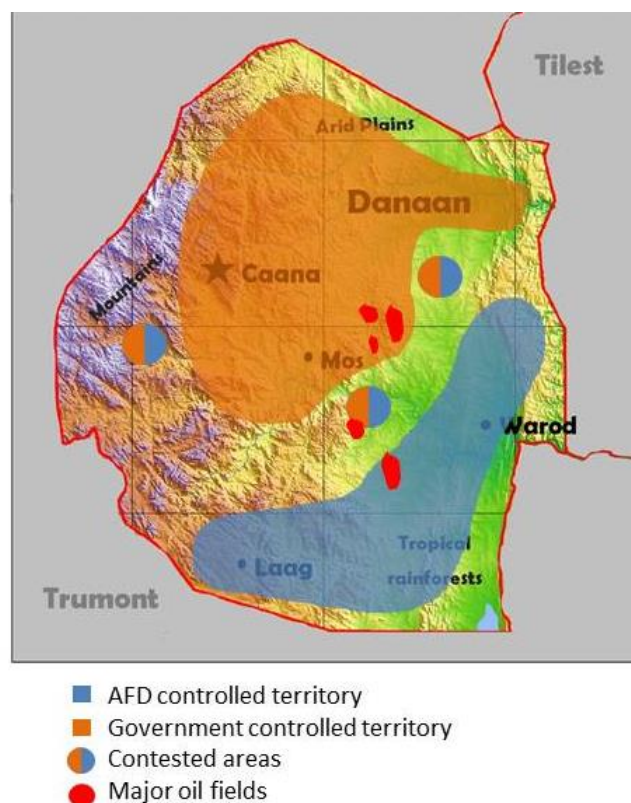
Formation of the AFD and escalating violence

In 1995, Nurul and Warod armed factions formed a coalition called the Alliance for Freedom and Democracy (AFD), based on their shared resentment of the Tarim-led DPP government. From 1995 to 2000, the AFD launched a guerilla campaign, attacking government buildings and military barracks. The government responded by raiding Nurul and Warod homes in the capital and detaining those suspected of supporting the AFD. This tit-for-tat quickly escalated, fueling revenge attacks across Danaan, pitting Tarim communities against Nurul and Warod communities for the actions of the Government and the AFD.

In 2000, an influx of arms and funds flowing across the Tilest border enabled the AFD to change its tactics and develop strongholds in eastern Danaan. With resources from Tilest, the AFD focused on expanding territorial control to demonstrate its growing strength and legitimacy as an armed movement.

Between 2000 and 2010, the AFD gained control of two key cities along Danaan's main trade routes, Laag in the south and Warod in the east. This territory also included two of the five major oil fields. Since 2013, fighting has been concentrated in these oil-rich central regions.

Figure 1 - Current territorial control



International elements of the civil war

The Warod-majority Tilest government has thus far turned a blind eye to the cross-border arms trade. Some media sources have even suggested that the Tilest government was a direct sponsor of the AFD's armed rebellion, anchored in a longstanding dispute over the Tilest-Danaan border.

Viewing Danaan as a potential ally in the region, the United States has supported the AFD in its fight to topple "an undemocratic and brutal DPP regime." While the US has publicly called for a peaceful resolution to the Danaanian conflict, it has also quietly provided the AFD with technical support and military training in hopes that any resolution of the conflict will result in an AFD-led government.

The United Kingdom has thus far remained relatively neutral in the conflict. Colonial ties place the UK close to the Government of Danaan, but hardliners in the Danaan government have accused the British of playing both sides. To date, there has been no publicly known British support to either side of the conflict.

Women's roles in the civil war

The civil war mobilized women from across all ethnic groups. The AFD formed women-only brigades who fought against government forces on the front lines in Central Danaan. Two Nurul women became well known after they posed as secretaries to gain entrance into the Ministry of Interior and detonated a destructive car bomb. This attack spurred many Tarim women to join the police and armed forces, driven by a desire to protect their communities.

Women also played important roles in the delivery of humanitarian aid to communities on the front lines. One Warod-led women's group, 4Peace, organized groups of doctors, nurses, and other volunteers to circulate among villages and towns in Central Danaan to provide desperately needed medical aid, food, and water. In one instance, leaders of 4Peace negotiated a ceasefire between government and AFD forces in the city of Mos. The success of the ceasefire received international media attention, and 4Peace became a symbol of Danaanian resilience and a force for peace.

The civil war altered the structure and operation of the Danaan Women's Unity League. Prior to the conflict, DWUL had a strong leadership council in the capital, led by Michele Aboko, the wife of the Finance Minister. As the country became more unstable, Aboko and many of DWUL's central leadership fled the country with their families. This departure left the national office significantly weakened. DWUL's regional branches filled this gap and became hubs for local activity, organizing aid deliveries, re-opening schools, and finding homes for orphans and IDPs.

Civil society peace efforts

As part of its 2013 offensive, the AFD detonated a car bomb in the capital near a busy Saturday market frequented by Tarim families, killing an estimated 40 civilians and injuring 100 others. Civil society groups and university students organized large non-violent demonstrations demanding justice for the victims and calling for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Many of the demonstrations were led by an interfaith group composed of Muslim and Christian religious leaders called the Danaan Interfaith Dialogue Group. The Danaan

Interfaith Dialogue Group organized events around the country, publicly opposing the violent tactics used by the government and AFD. The head of the Danaan Interfaith Dialogue Group is now well known and revered as a leader for the peace movement. Around the same time, a network of Danaanians from across all sectors of society began to form out of frustration toward the escalating violence and failure of international parties. This network, later named the Peace Action Group for Danaan, grew with the mission of bringing peace to Danaan by fostering peace talks that incorporate the voices of all Danaanians, not just the warring parties.

The Danaan Interfaith Dialogue Group, the Peace Action Group and 4Peace were the first to start informal dialogue processes in communities significantly affected by the conflict. The Danaan Interfaith Dialogue Group and Peace Action Group worked together on an initiative to host dialogue sessions between community leaders in the war-ravaged city of Mos. In Mos and the surrounding suburbs, 4Peace trained women to become peace leaders in their community and hosted sessions for Tarim, Nurul, and Warod women to discuss how to rebuild their communities.

Working toward a ceasefire

In 2015, noting a growing stalemate between the government and AFD forces, the United Nations in partnership with the Regional Organization for Economic Integration¹ (ROEI), established a Joint Mission supported by an international Contact Group to create momentum around a new peace process. Prior efforts by the UN to broker a ceasefire in 2009 and 2012, including a short-lived ROEI peacekeeping mission, had failed to produce lasting results.

The Contact Group was established in preparation for the 2012 peace process to fund all aspects of the process, provide technical assistance to the parties and the mediation team, and help broker peace by adding pressure on the parties to come to an agreement. Although the 2012 peace process was derailed by the 2013 AFD major offensive, members of the Contact Group remained supportive of the peace process and were also instrumental in the 2014 UN Security Council resolution on Danaan.

To push both parties toward peace talks, the UN Security Council issued a resolution in 2014 calling on all member states to enforce an arms embargo, preventing the flow of weapons into Danaan. The US government took sanctions further and prohibited American companies from conducting any transactions related to Danaan's oil industry and limited the flow of goods to/from Danaan. The US economic sanctions continue to be enforced and are to remain in place until the Government participates in peace negotiations in good faith.

With external pressure on Tilest to stop the flow of weapons and continued economic sanctions on the Danaanian government, both parties reluctantly agreed to meet and negotiations began two months ago in Abayo, the capital city of Trumont. A few weeks ago, the parties agreed to a temporary ceasefire, which appears to be holding. An anonymous source close to the negotiations told reporters that tensions remain high between the parties and that little has been agreed upon thus far. **The parties are slated to discuss**

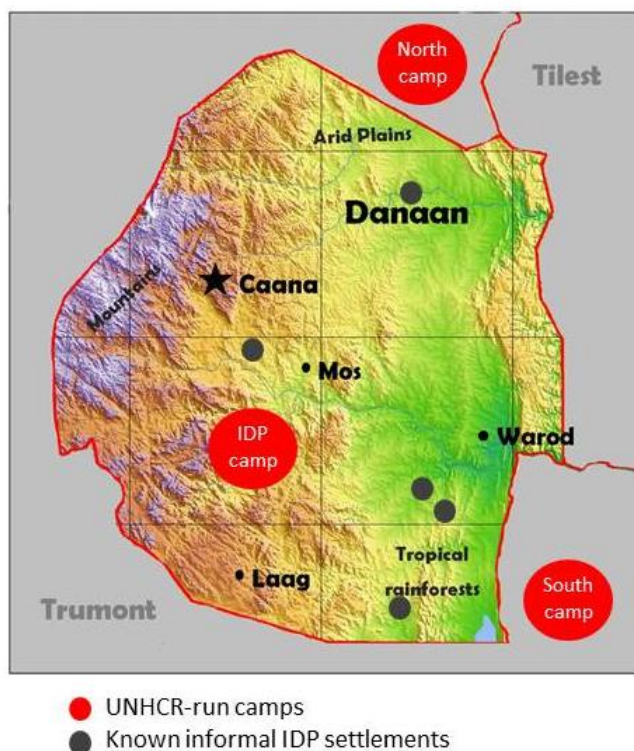
¹ Member states in the ROEI include Trumont, Tilest, Danaan, Golana, and Mindaaro.

power sharing aspects of the agreement in the next round of talks. The parties, Joint Mediation Team, and the Contact Group are currently in Abayo, Trumont.

Effects of the civil war

Roughly one million Danaanians have been killed as a result of the ongoing civil war and millions more have been displaced. Many wealthy Tarims left the country to settle in the United States and the United Kingdom, while many others have fled to neighboring countries. Since the violence escalated in the early 2000s, there has been a steady stream of refugees into Trumont.

Figure 2 - Location of IDP and Refugee Camps



In cooperation with the Trumonian government, UNHCR established two refugee camps in Trumont, one just south of the Trumont-Danaan border and another in the north. The total population of both camps is around 400,000. UNHCR also established an IDP camp in southwest Danaan. In both Government and AFD held territories there are also a number of unofficial IDP settlements. Conditions in the camps are poor, and while the UNHCR provides food and shelter for formal IDP camps, international funding is running low due to the longevity of the conflict.

The IDPs in informal settlements in Danaan have received less support from the UN and other international aid organizations and are thus more vulnerable. Aid organizations have intermittent access to those settlements due to the ongoing conflict and, thus, adequate shelter, food, water, and health services are often scarce.

In all camps, animosity between the Tarim, Nurul, and Warod remains high. The constant threat of

inter-group violence perpetuates a feeling of instability and insecurity among residents, despite the fact that the camps are 'removed' from the civil war.

In addition to being separated from their homes, many Danaanian civilians have witnessed and experienced terrible acts of violence and continue to live in fear. Rape and sexual assault have affected many communities, even though few cases have been reported to authorities. Countless families have been separated and the sheer number of orphans puts many children at risk of being recruited into armed groups. The protracted civil war has taken a heavy toll on the civilians of Danaan, across all communities and sectors of society. For any peace process to be successful, the needs of the Danaanian people must be taken into account.