

Responding Together: Pandemic & Violent Conflict

Your support has been essential to communities in Myanmar facing COVID-19

The novel coronavirus continues to threaten the lives of so many around the world, especially the most vulnerable. And, sharing a border with China, many communities in northern Myanmar were asking: how could we survive a pandemic while trying to survive the violent conflict that tears across our country?

Then, community leaders trained by Nonviolent Peaceforce heard about physical distancing and the reasons why they should all stay at home. **“Even though we were ready to follow the guidelines right away, we realized that the armed groups were still moving around, traveling from village to village,”** shared Hlaing.* “So, we knew that we would have to ask them to stop if we were going to have any chance at preventing the spread of the virus. We needed to work together.”

Hlaing and other community leaders contacted the armed

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Not only are the community leaders working with the armed groups, but local governments have also asked for their support in organizing their villages' responses.

groups to ask them to stop moving from village to village, in an effort to work together to prevent spreading the virus.

“Even reaching out in the first place would have been unthinkable without a prior relationship with the armed groups,” Hlaing realized.

These relationships are possible because you supported our teams in Myanmar for

the past 6 years so that they could make those authentic connections.



“Once they heard about the WHO safety guidelines, the armed groups not only agreed to stop traveling, but they have actually been very helpful in the community’s response to COVID-19.

“The armed groups are working now to support the community in sharing information and supplies,” said Hlaing.

“There is now less fighting in the villages and townships around us, and the armed groups have even stopped collecting taxes from the communities. We really are working together.”

You supported this community-led response

Connections are what make communities stronger. The relationships that Hlaing had built with the armed groups through Nonviolent Peaceforce allowed him to make this connection during a crisis. When communities are stronger, they are better equipped to respond to emergencies like COVID-19—because they can respond together.

“During this time, even though there are no jobs in the internally displaced persons camps, we do have unity and solidarity. That is how we stay positive,” shared Chomden.*

Through your support, community leaders have found that the townships feel more connected now than they felt a few years before. You have supported communities building on their adaptability and resiliency to get through the pandemic and move towards peace. 🌊

*Name changed



Hand in Hand: Peace and Health

Pat Close became involved with Nonviolent Peaceforce after becoming intrigued by the concept of unarmed civilian protective accompaniment. “As a Quaker, it spoke to my belief in seeking nonviolent solutions to conflict,” shared Pat.

Pat was able to join NP on a trip to Myanmar earlier this year to witness our work in the field.

“The most powerful thing about the trip to Myanmar was witnessing how people of different ethnic groups all long for an end to the decades-long conflict in their country. **They long for the safety and stability that peace would bring to their families. They long for peace so that they would be able to provide their families with the basic necessities of life.**”

On the trip, Pat was able to meet some of the NP Myanmar staff and some of Myanmar’s emerging women leaders in peace and security.

“I was impressed by the tireless, talented, and fearless NP staff who see their life’s work as training people in how to achieve a peaceful end to their conflict. I was also impressed by how integral women are to the peace process. They are willing to step outside the comfort zone of their traditional roles to make that happen. The NP Myanmar staff provides emerging women leaders with the skills necessary to prevent

escalating tension between communities from developing into violence. They learn how to develop collaborative relationships and how to monitor ceasefires.”

After returning from the trip to Myanmar, COVID-19 hit close to home.

“From the perspective of both a physician and a wife whose husband was very ill with COVID-19, this has been a very stressful and daunting time in so



Pat Close in Myanmar with Nonviolent Peaceforce

many ways. It was hard to not be able to visit my loved one while he was in the hospital. It was difficult to create a safe environment for us and to care for him at home. Work in the office seemed unreal. Medical care was restricted to only those patients with the most urgent problems due to shortages of personal protective equipment and for the protection of everyone’s safety.”

With Pat's husband now recovering, Pat reflects on the solidarity she saw around her.

“Where I live and practice medicine in the New York metropolitan area, people have worked for the good of all. They have supported one another and cared for one another and, in spite of all the loss of life due to COVID-19, I feel lucky in that respect.”

While experiencing how the pandemic affected her and her community, Pat has also been thinking about how the pandemic has affected others.

“In times of a pandemic, the people who are most severely affected are those with the fewest resources. In conflict areas,

a health crisis fans underlying tensions, groups blame one another, and they compete for limited resources. **Without peace there can be no infrastructure to support healthcare.**

NP works to strengthen ties, communication and cooperation between disparate communities. This is essential in a time of crisis to advance the health, wellbeing and survival of all.” ➡

“Peace is a prerequisite for health.”

*- Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus,
Director-General of the World Health Organization*

Don't Let Anyone Be Forgotten

The physical conditions in the displacement camp in south Mosul, Iraq are rough. They often lack sufficient access to water and bathrooms.



Until recently, due to regulations, our teams have been working remotely.

With your support, our teams are returning to the communities we serve to facilitate access to food rations, medical assistance, and support to victims of domestic violence. This is where your support matters most right now.

One widow with two children told us, “We have been forgotten. No one knows our condition except God.”

Let her know she's not forgotten.

When you give to Nonviolent Peaceforce, you connect people to the lifesaving services they need. ➡

*For more information on ways to give, go to
www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org or contact our office at 612-871-0005.*