



Nonviolent Peaceforce

Interrupting Cycles of Violence

Unarmed Civilian Protection in Practice 2022

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This publication sheds light on a people-centred, relational approach to protection of civilians in practice. It provides concrete examples of initiatives taken by Nonviolent Peaceforce and local communities over the course of 2022 to interrupt cycles of violence in different situations and stages of conflict through the application of Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP).

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Above: Women Protection Team and other delegates traveled across eastern South Sudan from the Greater Pibor Administrative Area areas, Akobo East, and Akobo West for a peace conference. Pibor, South Sudan, July 2022. © NP

Cover: Ridha conducts a training. Ridha is one of the leaders from Titayan Youth, and organisation founded after NP trained youth in the area. Maguindanao, Philippines, 2022. © Denise Rafaeli Cadorniga/NP

Foreword

The international community has come under increased pressure to do more to keep people safe in violent conflict. While soaring numbers of civilian casualties in violent conflict serve as a stark reminder of the protection gap, progress has been made as well. There is growing interest among military and humanitarian actors in approaches that put communities at the centre of protection. Developments in Protection of Civilians (PoC) policy showed several defense ministries making advances in formulating a “people-centred security”.ⁱ There are also growing calls for more holistic approaches to peacekeeping missions that “build inclusive mechanisms for civil society participation in transition processes” and for community engagement to be “the foundational element around which the entire rest of the mission would revolve”.ⁱⁱ



Above: Activity with Titayan Youth, and organisation founded after NP trained youth in the area. Maguindanao, Philippines, 2022. © Denise Rafaeli Cadorniga/NP

The humanitarian community advanced in a similar direction in 2022. The Global Protection Cluster designed its campaign “Access that Protects” on the complementarity between efforts to improve humanitarian access and those to strengthen protection for and with people affected by crises. Nonviolent Peaceforce and the Permanent Mission of the Netherlands in Geneva started the 2022 Global Protection Forum with a discussion on Forward-Leaning, Relationship-Based Access, shifting the focus from the access that humanitarians seek to the access that communities need. In the same forum, the Human Rights Engagement Task Team organised an event on “protection by presence” that emphasised the critical role of communities as protection actors. This increasing interest in protection by presence – the core of Unarmed Civilian Protection – shows a shift in thinking among humanitarians, who have long held the position that only military actors provide direct physical protection, whereas civilian actors protect civilians from the effects of armed conflict.

This publication sheds light on a people-centred, relational approach to protection in practice. It provides concrete examples of initiatives taken by Nonviolent Peaceforce and local communities over the course of 2022 to interrupt cycles of violence in different situations and stages of conflict through the application of Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP). Countries include Ukraine, Myanmar, Sudan, South Sudan, Iraq, the Philippines, and the United States.

The articles on Ukraine and Sudan both highlight how NP teams gained and provided access through proactive engagement with communities in two countries where NP had not held an active presence prior to 2022. The article on Ukraine also highlights the centrality of Ukrainian volunteer groups that operate at the front lines to protect civilians and provide lifesaving aid. The article on Sudan provides an example of UCP in the context of the withdrawal of UN peacekeeping forces in 2021-22. NP established protection teams in areas of Darfur where the withdrawal and subsequent protection gap was felt most intensely by communities.

The article on South Sudan zooms in on the role of youth in local peace processes in a country where NP has been operating for nearly 15 years and holds its largest presence. It highlights the dynamic between national and local peace processes as well as the mutually reinforcing roles of direct protection (to interrupt violence) and peacebuilding (to address issues that fuel cycles of violence).

The article on Myanmar highlights a small project that brought Rohingya and Rakhine youth in Myanmar together in a community protection network, as the country struggled to cope with political upheaval. Situated in a context that is sliding back to violent conflict, it shows how space for connection and healing can open up in the midst of crises.

The articles on Iraq and the Philippines

provide examples of UCP in more advanced stages of the conflict cycle and highlight the role of women as protectors and peacemakers. The article on Iraq focuses on the difficult return and reintegration processes in Talafar that communities are experiencing post ISIS occupation. It is an example of programming on the humanitarian-peacebuilding nexus. The article on the Philippines follows the journey of women in Mindanao from combatants to peace facilitators and shows programming at the peace-development nexus.

The article on the United States focuses on the efforts of NP and local partners to disrupt anti-Asian violence in New York through unarmed civilian protection methods, reimagining safety that doesn’t come from the barrel of the gun.

[1] The U.S. Department of Defense presented its first Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Action Plan in 2022, putting a greater priority on the protection of civilians in conflict and calling for the establishment of a Civilian Protection Center of Excellence to be the hub of a reinforcing institutional framework. The Dutch Ministry of Defense has developed a similar action plan.

[2] Wendy MacCinchy and Daniel Levine-Spound “Prioritizing the Protection of Civilians during Peacekeeping Transitions: Lessons Learned from MONUSCO”: <https://civiliansinconflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Prioritizing-the-Protection-of-Civilians-During-Peacekeeping-Transitions.pdf> and Carver, Fred. “Linked Up Peacekeeping: Community early warning of atrocity risks as MONUSCO prepares to withdraw” 2022. <https://protectionapproaches.org/linked-up-peacekeeping>

Ukraine

SUPPORTING FRONTLINE RESPONDERS TO STAY SAFE

Yana has two daughters who fled to Slovakia at the beginning of the war. "They asked me to come with them but what would I do there? I am 75 years old, I do not know the language." As she could not leave the country with her daughters, she lives by herself with her cat. Her daughters named him Balushka. "He is the man of the house, I have conversations with him. There is nobody else to check in on me."

The NP team assisted Yana and other Ukrainians like her as she collapsed at one of the distribution points due to extreme heat and exhaustion. NP provided Yana with immediate care and accompanied her back to her apartment on the outskirts of Mykolaiv.

Challenges of access to frontline communities

The war in Ukraine has caused mass harm for civilian populations. As of December 2022, 7000 people had been killed, and 11,000 injured, with these figures set to increase as the conflict progresses.¹ Reports from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) show that more than 17 million people remain in urgent need of humanitarian assistance, with the actual figures of those in need estimated to be much higher.² While the war has increased humanitarian needs in Ukraine, security risks and access difficulties have also obstructed access for humanitarian actors, preventing protection activities and assistance to communities that are most in need. In response, Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP)'s activities in Ukraine are geared toward safer access to humanitarian assistance.

Putting local actors at the centre of the humanitarian response

Successful counteroffensives by the Ukrainian military in the second half of 2022 allowed international humanitarian actors to re-establish a presence in the Northeast and Southern regions of the country.³ However, civilian populations and humanitarian actors

Right: NP's Kristina Preikšaitytė with civilians at food distribution. Mykolaiv, Ukraine, July 2022. © Joachim Kleinmann/NP





Top: Evacuation of civilians from de-occupied areas. Kharkiv, Ukraine, September 2022. © Help Kharkiv Foundation
Left: Victoria (quoted on top right of this page). Mykolaiv, Ukraine, 2022.
Right middle: Tatiana and Konstantin. Kharkiv city, Ukraine, 26 May 2022. © Tetiana Gaviuk/NP.
Right bottom: Nina (right) and Valentina (left). Chuhuiv, Ukraine, 26 May 2022. © Tetiana Gaviuk/NP

“Now that I will have a passport, I will be able to register in Mykolaiv and at the social center to receive a free referral for rehabilitation due to my disability.”

in de-occupied territories continue to face safety and security threats from intensified retaliatory shelling and the presence of mines and Unexploded Ordnance (UXO). Furthermore, various civilian infrastructures have been booby-trapped. These threats have made it difficult for civilians to move around and restricted humanitarian access in de-occupied territories. While humanitarian presence in de-occupied territories has increased in the course of 2022, this increase has been limited. In addition to the abovementioned security threats, many international humanitarian agencies have strict security protocols that limit their movements. Local organisations are the first and main responders in de-occupied territories.

Despite the leading role played by local actors in frontline humanitarian efforts, the vast majority of resources are concentrated with international agencies. The majority of donor

resources have been channelled through the UN and other big international organisations, many of which left Ukraine at the beginning of the invasion. As these organisations return to the country, they have to re-establish their operations and departments on the ground. This has delayed the distribution of resources. Furthermore, due to insecurity, international organisations often drop off their aid in the outskirts of oblast city centres, leaving local authorities and volunteers to figure out the logistics of bringing aid to neighbourhoods in the city and to remote rural areas. The limited coordination between international and local actors has meant that much of the local knowledge is not being fed into the broader humanitarian architecture. Some

international representatives expect local frontline groups to seek them out and learn their language, instead of localising their support systems. Thus, opportunities to support people alongside a changing frontline are being missed.

In response to escalating humanitarian and protection needs, NP arrived in Ukraine in April 2022 and prioritised fostering connections among international and local responders to improve humanitarian coordination, with the support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). Concrete efforts include the establishment of multisectoral working groups in Odesa and Mykolaiv that bring together local and international humanitarians to address the challenges described earlier.⁴ NP also organised security briefings and conducted service mapping exercises that identified 106 national and international NGOs and local volunteer collectives that are currently operating in Mykolaiv, Kharkiv, and Odesa. Through these exercises, NP is able to identify and refer civilian protection needs and priorities to the humanitarian response cluster system and other local partners. The service mapping exercises also provide opportunities to distribute information directly to civilians on where to access various forms of services as well as brochures on how to reduce the risk of injury from mines and UXOs.

NP's collaboration with local organisations and volunteer collectives has been key to facilitating access for protection. Through its collaborations with local volunteer collectives, NP has provided Personal Protective Equipment and First Responder Training to strengthen the safety capacities of local volunteers as they embark on humanitarian missions in highly insecure environments. NP has also provided volunteer stipends and covered the transportation costs of volunteer collectives to support the distribution of essential aid to civilian populations, as well as facilitate urgent evacuations. These activities

have also helped to increase access to humanitarian assistance for people living in isolated and less-served areas within Mykolaiv and Kherson. Operating in service of local initiatives has helped NP earn the trust of local communities and organisations. Civilians and local volunteer collectives feel confident in reaching out to NP with their needs and concerns, and we now work directly together with more than 10 partner organisations on civilian protection and humanitarian response. Through strong relationships built with local actors, NP has also been privy to the latest developments on the ground. This access to information increases our access to communities in hard-to-reach areas, as it allows us to directly contribute to rapid responses.

Supporting evacuations from de-occupied territories

Evacuations are one of the main civilian protection needs in de-occupied territories. Given the security risks in these territories, Ukrainian authorities have advised civilians, especially those with children, medical conditions, and limited mobility as well as older people, to evacuate. However, civilians are faced with several challenges in their attempts to evacuate. One of these challenges is limited access to transport as public transportation is no longer operational. Although local volunteer collectives provide transportation for civilians evacuating high-risk areas, their activities are constrained by high fuel prices. Volunteer collectives also struggle to cover their operational costs and lack of capacity to embed safeguarding and Do No Harm considerations in their responses. NP has helped offset these challenges by facilitating the operational costs of volunteer collectives, including fuel and other transport costs for civilian evacuations. NP has also provided community safety trainings for volunteer collectives with a focus on safeguarding and Do No Harm principles. Furthermore, NP has directly facilitated transport for civilians by purchasing and providing train tickets for evacuation from de-occupied Kherson. In

2022, NP supported more than 200 civilian evacuations from de-occupied territories in Kharkiv Oblast, namely Kupiansk, Schevshenkove, and Kovsharivka towns.

Increasing freedom of movement and safer access to aid

Limited access to identification documents is also a protection risk for people in the de-occupied territories of Ukraine. In Kherson and Mykolaiv, many residents and displaced people lost their identification documents while fleeing shelling and Russian occupation, or had them expire before or during the war. These documents are necessary for accessing banking services and applying for humanitarian assistance. Identification documents are also needed to exit de-occupied areas, cross military checkpoints and evacuate abroad. However, locally accessible government services have not been operational for most of 2022, with the nearest immigration services situated in Odesa. Given the requirement of identification documents to cross checkpoints, the risk of discrimination and abuse in an unfamiliar city, and high transportation costs, civilians from Mykolaiv struggled to access immigration services in Odesa. NP responded by accompanying civilians across checkpoints as they made the journey from Mykolaiv to Odesa and covering transportation costs. NP supported more than 100 civilians in applying for identification documents in 2022. In collaboration with The Tenth of April – a national NGO focused on providing legal assistance – NP continues to conduct accompaniments of civilians from Mykolaiv to Odesa twice a week to ensure they can apply for new documentation and safely return to Mykolaiv. Follow-up trips are scheduled in time for the applicants to pick up their newly issued documents. Accompanied civilians are now able to access humanitarian services that were previously unavailable to them and enjoy greater freedom of movement.

[1] OHCHR, "Ukraine: Civilian Casualty Update 3 January 2023," OHCHR, January 2023, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/news/2023/01/ukraine-civilian-casualty-update-3-january-2023>.

[2] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Ukraine: Civilian Casualty Update 28 November 2022," OHCHR, accessed December 9, 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/news/2022/11/ukraine-civilian-casualty-update-28-november-2022>.

[3] Data Friendly Space, "Ukrainian Crisis - Situational Analysis 18 Nov 2022 - Ukraine | ReliefWeb," Situational Analysis (Data Friendly Space, November 18, 2022), <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/ukrainian-crisis-situational-analysis-18-nov-2022>.

[4] NP also participates in the National and Sub-National Protection Cluster as well as the Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Sub-Cluster and acts as a Protection Sub-Cluster lead in Mykolaiv and Odesa.

Myanmar

CONNECTING ROHINGYA AND RAKHINE YOUTH AGAINST VIOLENCE

"I must admit that I carried some prejudice towards the Rohingya people myself. This made our meeting with them all the more impactful for me. When I entered the house of a Rohingya family, I greeted them with "Salam". An elderly man shook my hand with tears in his eyes and said to me "it has been a very long time since anyone greeted me in that way". It brought tears to my eyes. Then we both cried."
NP staff member 2022

August 25, 2022, marked the fifth anniversary of the military campaign against the Rohingya people that forced millions to flee their homes in Rakhine State, Myanmar. The violence triggered an exodus of Rohingya people into Bangladesh, resulting in the creation of the world's largest refugee camp.¹ More than 1 million Rohingya survivors continue to live in

overcrowded camps. Many others have attempted to make their way towards Malaysia, risking human trafficking, drowning, and starvation. The conditions for many of the Rohingya people who remain in Myanmar are equally challenging. Women who are going into labour in some rural areas may first need to obtain a travel permit before they can access the nearest clinic. After their child is born, some parents need 10 recommendation letters to obtain a birth certificate. If the newborn isn't registered within 6 months, they will be listed as an illegal immigrant. Similar hurdles exist for getting access to education or work.

The military coup that shook Myanmar in February 2021 has added additional hardships. Myanmar ranks among the countries that saw the most intense levels of violence and conflict deaths in 2022, next to Ukraine. The two countries share equal numbers of people in need, but the disparity in aid between Ukraine and Myanmar is stark.² Many national and international support structures have collapsed or withdrawn, while prominent civil society leaders have fled or have been imprisoned. Local communities are increasingly driving the humanitarian response in Myanmar. Young people have stepped into the humanitarian response



Above: Rohingya refugees head to makeshift camps after crossing into Bangladesh from Burma. 2017. © Jorge Silva/Reuters

vacuum at great personal risk as their activities are viewed with suspicion. Young people have been the driving force behind popular resistance to military rule.³

It is within this context that NP supported its local partners in 2022, mainstreaming protection into humanitarian aid operations and broadening the scope of their work in Northern Rakhine State. NP has been active in Rakhine State since 2017, first engaging with Rakhine and Rohingya groups separately, later connecting Buddhist women from Rakhine with Muslim women from conflict-affected areas in Thailand and the Philippines. NP's role in the 2022 project focused on enhancing the protection capacity of 34 volunteers in 18 villages around Maungdaw and Buthidaung, two townships with a Rohingya majority that have been at the centre of military and inter-communal violence.⁴ NP and our partner

carefully recruited a diverse group of youth volunteers from Rakhine, Rohingya, Chakma and Hindu communities to establish an inter-communal protection team.⁵ NP trained and coached the volunteers in various aspects of Unarmed Civilian Protection and assisted them in drafting their own strategic plan that included: awareness raising on civilian protection; relationship building with key stakeholders; monitoring and reporting; and direct responses to immediate protection concerns.⁶

The volunteers engaged with village administrators, religious leaders, and NGO workers, sharing relevant information, and connecting communities with humanitarian services. A number of them advocated within their communities for nonviolent responses to conflicts, discussing issues such as sexual and gender-based violence, domestic violence, and abduction cases.

They also provided physical accompaniment to civilians, for example, to a village administrator's office to settle a conflict about debt or to engage in cases of child abuse or domestic violence. When eight fishermen were beaten by the Border Guard Police for fishing in a river considered off-limit, the youth network brought the case to the village administrator. After the administrator engaged directly with the head of the police, the villagers were given permission to fish in the designated river.

This project had an impact on various levels, personal, relational, and cultural. In addition to concrete problems being identified and (in some cases) addressed, the project made the volunteers more aware of the various layers of violence within their own community and that of other communities. They felt empowered to be able to assist communities in meaningful ways and became more security conscious. Coming from different ethnicities and religious backgrounds across extremely divided communities, it was very hard for some volunteers to communicate and collaborate with others at first, but levels of trust grew steadily over the course of the project. As the trust of communities in the volunteers grew, villagers started approaching the volunteers to talk about their problems, and village administrators began to see their potential. Some of the volunteers even managed to build relationships with military officers, which helped them to get better access to the local justice system. While relationship-building across religions remained a challenge, the youth group set an example in front of all villagers that people from different ethnic or religious backgrounds can work together to solve issues, despite histories of violence.

Finally, the project is a reminder of the opportunities for peace that so often present themselves in the midst of a crisis. Processes that seem stuck or progress at a snail's pace in peacetime, suddenly open up as conflict dynamics shift. When the Myanmar military removed the elected government in

February 2021, members of the Rohingya community walked side-by-side with saffron-robed Buddhist monks, leather-clad punks, construction workers, drag queens, and taxi drivers in the biggest protests against military rule ever seen in Myanmar. Burmese youth, many of whom had grown up with hateful Facebook messages about the Rohingya people, used social media to express regret over not acting in the wake of the 2017 atrocities. The project is also an example of a different way of thinking about security. Instead of relying on barriers and technology that allow the privileged few to enjoy their safety in separation from the dehumanised other, it shows that security can also be found in greater connectivity and proximity with fellow human beings that we have labelled as the 'enemy other'.

[1] Eleanor Albert and Lindsay Maizland, "What Forces Are Fueling Myanmar's Rohingya Crisis?," Council on Foreign Relations, accessed December 21, 2022, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/rohingya-crisis>.

[2]<https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/opinion/2023/02/01/Myanmar-coup-Ukraine-cross-border-aid>

[3]<https://www.crisisgroup.org/sites/default/files/2023-02/b174-gender-and-age-myanmar.pdf>, page 8

[4] The surrounding of three police stations in Buthidaung by Rohingya insurgents was the trigger that led to the military campaign against the Rohingya in 2016-17.

[5] Among the 34 volunteers 68% are Rohingya, 20% Rakhine, 9% Chakma and 3% Hindu.

[6] From January to June the youth group reached out to total of 2584 people

Sudan

INITIATING UNARMED CIVILIAN PROTECTION AS UN PEACEKEEPERS WITHDRAW FROM DARFUR

Farid is a nomadic pastoralist from Tarshana who lives in Kereinik, a town in West Darfur that witnessed brutal attacks on civilians and health workers in April 2022. In the attacks, 200 people were killed, including two health workers. As a result, farmers could not access their lands, while nomads could not access the town and markets out of fear of reprisals. It is not unusual for large outbursts of violence to be triggered by small incidents between community members. Farid mentions that his Arab nomad community has never been approached by any international organisation before Nonviolent Peaceforce invited him to participate in a training on Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP). This training covered key methods of proactive engagement, monitoring, and relationship building.

After the training, Farid

decided to apply UCP directly by proactively engaging with farmers, despite the existing tensions between nomads and farmers in Kereinik and Tarshana. He noticed a group of farmers loading watermelons from their farm onto a truck and offered his support. As they exchanged phone numbers, Farid invited the farmer to alert him in case he found any animals from the nomads trespassing on his farm, which is a common source of conflict during the current agricultural season across Darfur. A few days later, the farmer called Farid for help as 60 cattle had

"If ... we stand together and advocate for unarmed solutions, we gradually will succeed."



Above: NP staff meet and share food with nomadic community members. Outside of Kereinik locality, Sudan, July 2022. © NP

invaded the farmers' land. He had urged his fellow farmers not to take any violent response, but let him call Farid first. Farid quickly mobilised other Tarshana residents to remove the animals from the farmland. Now he is eager to scale up these efforts and urges NP to help them establish an early warning early response system in the area.

The protection gap in Darfur

In 2007, the United Nations African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) was established with the core mandate of providing protection to the civilians caught in the conflict. UNAMID, a hybrid mission from the UN and African Union, was one of the largest and most expensive peacekeeping missions ever deployed. By 2019, the UNAMID mission had brought some stability, with a large peacekeeping presence deterring violence by armed groups. After the nonviolent revolution of 2019 and the subsequent removal of Omar Bashir's government, it seemed as though there would be a new era of stability in Darfur. The signing of the Juba Peace Agreement (JPA) in October 2020 further cemented the path to peace, leading to the withdrawal of UNAMID forces in 2020 and 2021. However, an attempted takeover by the military on 25 October 2021 led to a new wave of resistance and protests. Even prior to the attempted takeover, violence was erupting once more in West Darfur after the withdrawal of UNAMID, which led to a growing gap in the protection of civilians.¹ This has been exacerbated by ongoing economic and political challenges, alongside intercommunal tensions and violence. What's more, the conflict in Darfur has been labelled the first climate change conflict. The underlying environmental factors bringing herders and farmers into conflict have become more intense as climate change puts increasing pressure on dwindling natural resources such as land and water.

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Gaining access to Kereinik through proactive engagement

"If together with trained UCP practitioners we stand together and advocate for unarmed solutions, we gradually will succeed and positively contribute to silencing the guns in our communities..."

Maha Abdalla Mohamed Sherif, El Daein (East Darfur), participant in the UNAMID-Nonviolent Peaceforce training course on Unarmed Civilian Protection, July 2020.

In response to requests from civil society groups and the encouragement of the UN Security Council, endorsing the application of UCP in UNSCR 2579 (2021) in Darfur, NP established a presence in Darfur in 2022 with the support of the European Union (EU). The NP team identified the

underlying intercommunal tensions threatening the protection of civilians following the withdrawal of UNAMID as one of the immediate priorities for protection programming. For unarmed civilian protectors to gain access to affected communities, building trust and acceptance is essential.

Over the course of 2022, NP staff met with over 1,000 different stakeholders including state and tribal leaders, women, youth, and men in IDP camps as well as nomadic groups. NP was the first INGO to return to Kereinik after the April 2022 violence, negotiating independent access with local authorities. Crucially, it has done this without relying on armed actors, something many international agencies had not considered feasible. NP now serves as an important partner by providing reliable information about the local context, allowing for response coordination in a variety of contexts. Other organisations have now returned to Kereinik as well, often without armed escorts. According to reports from community members, the enhanced humanitarian presence and reduced visibility of armed actors have helped to increase their sense of security.

Providing protection by presence in Zam Zam IDP Camp

Building on its acceptance NP began to provide patrols and maintain a regular and visible presence in IDP camps in North Darfur, including Zam Zam. First established in 2003, Zam Zam IDP camp is one of the largest in North Darfur. Over 400,000 people reside in the camp. When NP initially engaged with the camp, very few humanitarian actors were able to deliver services to the camp. Insecurity within and surrounding the camp was a big challenge. In addition, Zam Zam IDP camp was a difficult environment to enter because it is comprised of multiple communities that have each arrived at the camp at differing times as violence has travelled across Darfur.

Well accustomed to traditional forms of humanitarian services for nearly two

decades, the concept of protection by presence was novel to the communities in Zam Zam. Some community leaders were initially sceptical and suspicious. NP teams persevered through ongoing engagement, relationship building, and active listening. This enabled teams to understand the existing community structures within the camp and the need to respect these structures by engaging with each section individually and equally. The teams then began to organise community protection meetings with the central leadership and other community members from each section, during which they elicited community protection concerns and elaborated on NP's role and the UCP methodology. From these conversations, they gained more clarity on patterns of threats, with some groups being more exposed to security threats than others. This understanding is needed in order to scale up protective accompaniment and presence activities, which are largely preventive methods. Thus, protective presence is first used to gain acceptance, then to deter imminent violence.

At the height of volatility and unrest in Zam Zam IDP Camp, NP conducted protective patrols, which increased feelings of safety and gave several camp inhabitants the courage to pursue nonviolent action. While other humanitarian agencies had paused their operations in the camp during the unrest, NP maintained a physical presence at the camp.

This gave other humanitarian agencies confidence to return and resume their operations in the camp soon after. When the government brought leaders from both communities together for a peace agreement in November 2022, both parties reported to NP that if it wasn't for their work, they wouldn't have attended the meetings leading to the agreement. When the agreement was broken 10 days later, the nomads held back at the outskirts of Zam Zam Camp to engage with camp's leaders instead of attacking the camp directly.

Advocating for a more inclusive humanitarian response

In addition to facilitating access for humanitarians through proactive presence, NP also advocated for a more inclusive humanitarian response. Through its engagements with local stakeholders, NP identified gaps in the humanitarian response in Darfur. One of these gaps is limited humanitarian engagement with Arab nomad communities relative to African farmer communities. By not considering the humanitarian needs of one group in such a situation, humanitarians may unintentionally exacerbate conflicts. Therefore, NP conducted an outreach mission to the Arab nomad areas around Kereinik and in Gallab localities in West and North Darfur respectively. Through the outreach mission, NP collated protection needs and concerns from nomad communities for advocacy on humanitarian presence. NP then leveraged its relationship with other humanitarian actors in the region to advocate for better inclusion of Arab nomad communities in the humanitarian response.

Fostering Nonviolent responses to conflict

A major advantage of unarmed civilian protection is that communities are leaders in the protection of their own communities. Building on the model of women protection teams in South Sudan, NP initiated community protection training in Kereinik and Zam Zam IDP Camp, mobilising people such as Farid to co-create early warning early response networks.

While focused on civilian protection, these trainings have also reinvigorated the spirit of nonviolence that drove the 2019 revolution in Sudan. Whilst protection trainings were held in Zam Zam Camp, threats continued to affect the lives of camp residents and inhibit the collection of much-needed firewood and grass in the areas surrounding the camp. Several security incidents, including the abduction of women and children from outside the camp, triggered members of

Zam Zam camp to pursue nonviolent action to demand attention and change under their own initiative. In doing so, members of the camp made use of the UCP tools promoted in the trainings. These included tactics like division of responsibility, visibility, building networks of relationships, collaborative action across sections and camps as well as nonviolence. Clear demands were drafted, and when negotiations were held with the government, these were prioritised with security being the main issue. Furthermore, when UCP-trained community members observed small incidents of tension during the sit-in escalating towards potential violence, they quickly intervened to prevent escalation.

Several camp residents have stated that before being trained in UCP, such an initiative would likely have disintegrated into violence. A female IDP concluded about the training that it allowed her "to think outside the box and find creative approaches for community protection. We protect each other in the community instead of waiting for others to protect us."

[1] UNAMID, a nearly 10,000 strong peacekeeping mission in 2020 was replaced with a UN Special Political Mission (SPM) UNITAMS (The UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan) with 425 staff, that was created to support and guide the transitional government towards the civilian rule and free elections. Its mandate was established at a time when stability and peace were seen as achievable goals following the revolution. It is much smaller in size than UNAMID and operates without peacekeeping troops. Its proposed Office of Civilian Protection and Rule of Law has fewer than fifty staff to cover human rights, child protection, Woman Peace and Security, and protection of civilians for the entire country.

South Sudan

YOUTH BREATHE LIFE INTO THE PEACE AGREEMENT

The international community urgently needs to pay more attention to the escalating violence proliferating at a local level all over South Sudan, warned representatives of the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan in September 2022. "At present, South Sudan is a haven for those who commit the most atrocious violence," said the Commission's Chair, Yasmin Sookai.¹ In 2018, government and opposition forces signed a deal that committed the two sides to share power and forming a unified national military. Since then, armed violence by the signatories has fallen significantly, and some provisions of the accord have been implemented successfully. But many South Sudanese people are deeply disappointed with the lack of inclusion and progress on key provisions of the peace agreement, including the unification of security forces and the

establishment of transitional justice bodies dealing with truth, reconciliation, and reparation. Moreover, violence between rival communities and smaller militias continues to flare, often triggered by disputes over grazing areas, water, and other resources.

"South Sudan's peace process cannot implement itself; the people of South Sudan whose lives depend on it want to see more energy expended on breathing life into this document", shared Sookai.

"The people of South Sudan whose lives depend on it want to see more energy expended on breathing life into this document."



Above: YPT member speaks at meeting, South Sudan, 2022. © NP

Connecting informal grassroots movements for peace with the national peace process

Nonviolent Peaceforce has been operating in South Sudan for nearly 15 years, providing direct protection and supporting women and youth groups to establish local community protection teams across the country. In 2020, NP mobilised local protection teams to raise awareness about the ceasefire agreement. In this way, it connected informal grassroots movements for peace with the national peace process. Taking note of the stagnating national peace process, as well as increased levels of violence at the community level, NP teams focused a lot of their efforts in 2022 on peacemaking processes at local levels, where there is more space to address issues of concern. By combining immediate protection and de-escalation with peacebuilding efforts NP has been able to create safer spaces for dialogue on some of the same issues that the signatory parties struggle to resolve at the national level, such as reconciliation and transitional justice.²

Below are examples of planting the seeds for peace while reducing risk, but that doesn't mean a one-time unarmed civilian protection initiative can function as a panacea. It is for this reason that continued presence and consistent work is essential.

Peace and reconciliation in Yei County

One place Nonviolent Peaceforce has supported peace and reconciliation efforts in 2022 is Yei County, Central Equatoria State with the support of the Smartpeace Foundation and USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance. Just outside Yei's main town in Gimunu Boma, the clans of Atende, Paite, and Marakonye have a history of conflict. Following outbreaks of violence in 2016 many people were displaced and some of the youth joined rebel groups, which deepened existing cycles of violence. In 2021 the Gimunu Youth Association, along with leaders from the three clans,

approached NP to help them address intracommunal conflict as well as social issues among youth (i.e., early pregnancy and substance abuse) and harassment from military personnel stationed in the area. As many of the people displaced in 2016 were returning, disputes over land and resources further increased tensions. The leaders asked NP to help them establish a safe space where the three clans could host dialogue and resolve disputes because, as one of the chiefs stated, reconciliation "requires collective responsibility to manage peace amongst ourselves". In response, NP mobilised key figures across the three clans and organised meetings in designated shared spaces for clan leaders and others to map out issues of concern. NP also trained women and youth, drawing them into the reconciliation process as active participants, and coached the Gimunu youth group in facilitating the process.

In May 2022, with the support of NP and Reconcile International, more than 300 people gathered in Atende for an inaugural dialogue on truth, forgiveness, and reconciliation, facilitated by leaders from the Episcopal Church of South Sudan Anglican Communion and the Gimunu Youth Association. Local authorities, chiefs, and women leaders played a key role. Their ability to clarify historical events and diverging views, share personal experiences, and identify solutions helped the gathering move away from finger-pointing towards constructive action. One main concern in the dialogue was the reintegration of former youth combatants of the Sudan People's Liberation Army-In Opposition. These youth had been branded outsiders when they killed community members in 2016. After slaughtering a sheep and burning the carcass, community members touched the ashes and put a cross on the face of the youth as a traditional way of washing away the sins and bloodshed in their community. While NP stepped back during the event, the team stepped forward as soon as it was concluded to assist in the implementation of resolutions and support the youth group

to advocate on issues that were identified during the dialogue, such as education for youth or support programmes for orphans, widows, and people with special needs.

Engaging armed youth

The engagement of youth is an important part of NP's strategy to interrupt cycles of violence in Yei. Yei is close to one of the stronghold areas of the National Salvation Front (NAS), a non-signatory armed group that regularly clashes with Government forces. The conflict has created an environment in which unaccompanied or separated children and disenfranchised youth form gangs that create additional cycles of violence. In response, NP teams frequently conduct patrols or provide protective presence to keep people safe from attacks by these youth gangs, while at the same time trying to reach out to them as part of their efforts to protect children and youth. The establishment of four Youth Protection Teams in the area specifically targets youth who are in gangs or at risk of joining one, offering them a purpose and a different sense of community. Too often dismissed without being attempted, 'transforming enemies into allies' is a powerful strategy of nonviolence that remains very applicable in the context of South Sudan.

When NP engaged in 2021 with members of the notorious Nuer White Army in Jonglei, many of them were eager to join a nonviolent protection team. As the current leader of the Walgak youth protection team and former White Army member stated "This is the first time an organisation has engaged us, the uneducated youth in its activities. Previously, it has been a common practice by organisations when they come to Walgak to always target educated youth, leaving us, the White Army youth, on the other side of the fence."³ In 2022 his team initiated the conversation with county authorities to work together in support of a weapons-free zone for Walgak town. Another youth commented, "It is good if you tell someone

why you don't want them to do something they see as good and this is what NP is doing by talking to us, the youth, about violence. [It] is showing us how to solve our problems peacefully. We want to try to use this means [and], if it succeeds, we shall continue with it. If it does not, then we shall see what other means are available to solve our issues in the community..."

On 4 August 2022, the signatory parties to South Sudan's 2018 peace agreement signed a two-year extension of the transitional governance arrangements, postponing elections until late 2024. For these elections to be peaceful and meaningful sustained effort is needed to interrupt ongoing violence and address root causes of conflict. Advancing peace and security at local levels can help to sustain momentum and contribute to a shift in conflict logic. It offers a concrete and tangible perspective of managing disputes without resorting to armed violence. By recognising the potential of youth as essential agents of protection and peacemaking and helping them define their own issues and act upon them, new life can be breathed into South Sudan's peace agreement.

[1] <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/09/un-experts-warn-south-sudans-peace-process-needs-urgent-attention-prevent>

[2] An NP initiated meeting led to the creation of a full set of recommendations for future court martials and a co-ordination plan involving the government, UNMISS, NGOs and CSOs, in order to improve the safety of survivors during the process.

[3] Engaging the Lou Nuer White Army leaders, traditional chiefs, local authorities, and the local prophet helped to stop looting and cattle raiding related attacks on Murle in April 2022



Above: YPT Football match for Peace: Sopiri Youth Protection Team (YPT) vs Kondeko YPT. Kondeko Boma, Greater Yei River Count, South Sudan, 2022. © NP
Right and below: YPT meeting, South Sudan, 2022. © NP



Iraq

CONFLICT SENSITIVE PROTECTION IN RETURN AND REINTEGRATION PROCESSES

"The majority of women see this as something that they need not be a part of. When we ask about Female Headed Households [including widows with ISIS affiliation], then women have an opinion about it. Then they want to have a voice," shared a subject matter expert, February 2020.

Recovering from ISIS occupation

2022 marked the fifth year since Iraq was liberated from ISIS control. However, the country continues to

"[It] became the link between society and those charged with security duties and local authorities."



Left and Above: Gargery and Jabouri leaders sitting side by side during Domiz Peace Conference. NP attended at the invitation of Sheikh Masoud Al Sadoon, Zummar sub-district, Iraq, September 2021. © NP

struggle to recover. Tel Afar, the second most populated district after Mosul, is among the most affected areas. Indeed, by 2017, a third of the total displaced population in Iraq consisted of people from Tel Afar and Mosul. 2020 estimates show that approximately 80,000 to 100,000 people from Tel Afar had been displaced by the conflict. Many houses were destroyed and several areas in the district, including roads and farmland, remain inaccessible due to the presence of unexploded ordinances. Many internally

displaced persons (IDPs) have not been able to go home to this day.¹

The disruption of government structures has strained the social cohesion in the area and made it difficult to implement durable solutions for IDPs. With the occupation of ISIS, the government had lost effective control of several areas in the country and remained unstable due to sectarian divisions. Despite progress in government re-establishment since 2017, government structures are not yet fully functional. This delay has increased uncertainty and led to tensions about the closure of IDP camps. Several IDP camps have already been closed despite promises to postpone their closure. As a result, IDPs have been forced to return to Tel Afar. Fearing impunity and proximity to ISIS-affiliated families, several communities in the district are opposed to the return of IDPs. These fears reveal broader social disunity in the district, with families trading accusations of ISIS affiliation, whether based on fact or rumour. The perceived affiliations with ISIS, combined with the closure of IDP camps in the country, have resulted in secondary displacements of some IDPs.²

A second strain on social cohesion in Tel Afar District is inter-ethnic tensions. With the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, power shifted towards Shia Turkmen in the district, exacerbating feelings of neglect among other communities, especially Sunni Arabs and Turkmen, who benefitted more from the old regime. The Kurdish community in Tel Afar was also left feeling marginalised by the power dynamics established in this period.³ There have been reports of religious and ethnic discrimination, torture and extrajudicial killings. In the years between 2003 and ISIS' seizure of the district, Tel Afar became one of the most disputed areas in Iraq. After 2014, ISIS rule deepened sectarian divides and subjected the civilian population to atrocities, including sexual violence and mass kidnappings. Following liberation from ISIS control, tensions and feelings of marginalisation persist between communities in Tel Afar District. These

tensions obstruct have the progress of local peace processes aimed at resolving the abovementioned issues and strengthening social fabric in Tel Afar District.⁴

Increasing participation of women and youth in dialogues on peace and security

In 2020 NP began to support and monitor local peace processes, including the Peaceful Coexistence Pact of Honour for the Tribes in Al-Ayadiyah Sub-District. When its implementation became increasingly difficult, NP shifted focus to addressing critical issues that blocked its progress. This included the lack of participation of women, youth and other marginalised groups as well as challenges around return and reintegration. As a nonpartisan third party, NP was in a good position to engage with a wide variety of communities about immediate protection issues and seek practical solutions, while at the same time strengthening the participation of civilians in ongoing local peace processes. The project was implemented in two sub-districts of Tel Afar, namely Al-Ayadiyah and Zumar in partnership with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

To strengthen broader participation in the peace processes, NP held a series of community security forums that functioned as consultative sessions about existing needs and concerns with community members from various backgrounds. The forums also allowed for raising awareness of the rights of community members as well as the protection challenges of return and reintegration of IDPs. The concerns and challenges identified in the forums were used to inform community-led action plans. These informal action plans complemented the formal peace processes that provided insufficient representation or opportunity for communities to share their views. In preparation for the community security forums, NP held special mentoring sessions with women to ensure their voices were heard in the forums and their recommendations included in the action plans.

To further amplify the role of women as well as youth, NP worked with communities to establish, train, and support community protection teams. NP also provided technical support to these protection teams in developing and implementing action plans to address specific concerns raised in the community security forums. Two types of action plans were developed: action plans for increasing the role of women in public life and action plans for engaging community members in peacebuilding efforts. To support the implementation of the action plans NP teams provided protective presence and accompaniment for the local protection teams as they were finding their feet. NP also provided protective presence and accompaniment to individual women attending peace conferences.

The local protection teams engaged the police, armed actors and national NGOs to raise their protection concerns. They also advocated against child marriage and highlighted the importance of girls' education, while engaging more women to join them. The protective presence and accompaniment NP provided local protection teams and individuals, combined with advocacy for their inclusion, strengthened the meaningful participation of women and youth in the peace forums. The accompaniment and support that NP provided for the Al-Ayadiyah women's protection team, for example, made it possible for them to attend and voice their concerns in a workshop held by the Zummar Dialogue Committee. The women then used the opportunity to update the Committee about the tensions they had identified in Al-Ayadiyah regarding returns. Leading by the example of their own diversity, the women emphasised the importance of collaboration between members of different ethno-sectarian groups in addressing community protection issues. These efforts not only enhanced access to information but also challenged beliefs against the role of women in decision-making processes. The role modelling of female NP staff helped the

women find their own confidence to speak up. As one of the women shared: "I always listen and don't speak, but when I see you talking and participating in the training, I say that I should be part of this too."

Providing direct protection of returnees and de-escalating intercommunal tensions

While the institutions of the peace process provided NP and local protection teams with an opportunity to engage with decision-makers on the issue of IDP resettlement and advocate for structural solutions, NP also worked in a more direct way to address immediate protection concerns faced by IDPs and returnees. The team provided protective accompaniment to families returning to Tel Afar District. Many of them are perceived as ISIS-affiliated, which carries risks to their safety. NP was among the few actors with female staff, which allowed for more active engagement with women among the groups of returnees. NP's female protection officers informed themselves of specific needs and helped women find bathrooms, access water, and get enough resting time. The presence of women in NP's team also added a sense of reassurance for the female returnees. Following these accompaniments, the team established contacts with accompanied returnee families and followed up on their safety in subsequent weeks, while coordinating with humanitarian partners about additional forms of assistance.

Protective accompaniments are often preceded by other violence prevention methods. The team monitored, for example, possible evictions of displaced people from camps and assessed threats IDPs might face during the accompaniment or upon return. When conducting patrols and visiting potential areas of risk, NP regularly engaged with military actors about the risk of evictions, encouraging nonviolent engagement with civilians. NP also produced a series of situational reports and informed duty bearers on conditions and barriers

of returns for those living in informal settlements at risk of eviction. From the information shared with the mayor about an upcoming eviction expected to take place in Rey Al Jazeera during winter 2021/2022, it was possible to engage in advocacy efforts to postpone the eviction order to another time, avoiding further displacement of IDPs during the winter and to villages where they would not have access to proper shelter.

NP also played a vital role in controlling rumours about returns by monitoring social media. This was especially important after a Facebook post was published regarding INGOs becoming the enhancers of tension and conflict between the Ayadiyah community by only targeting a few families within the community and providing them with their services. NP met with local government actors about the post and reached out to INGOs to inform them of the message, as many organisations were considering further assistance to returnees and informal camp sites in the area. These rumour control efforts led to months-long close engagements with community members, duty bearers and NGOs to clarify planned actions, and mitigate any further escalation of tensions while promoting a safe environment for the distribution of humanitarian assistance.

[1] Jacqueline Parry, Yousif Khalid Khoshnaw, and Siobhan O'Neil, "Managing Exits from Conflict in Iraq: A Case Study of Basra and Tal Afar | United Nations in Iraq" (New York: International Organization for Migration, August 2022), <https://iraq.un.org/en/195980-managing-exits-conflict-iraq-case-study-basra-and-tal-afar>, <https://iraq.un.org/en/195980-managing-exits-conflict-iraq-case-study-basra-and-tal-afar>.

[2] Nonviolent Peaceforce.

[3] Osama Ghaziri and Joshua Levkowitz, "Four Years After ISIS, Iraq's Tal Afar Remains Riven by Communal Divisions," United States Institute of Peace, accessed December 23, 2022, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2021/08/four-years-after-isis-iraqs-tal-afar-remains-riven-communal-divisions>.

[4] Nonviolent Peaceforce, "Final Operational Report: Supporting the Inclusive and Meaningful Participation of the Affected Population in the Al-Ayadiyah and Zummar Peace Agreements."



Above: Project closing event with WPTs from Zummar sub-district, Zummar sub-district, Iraq, June 2022. © NP

The Philippines

FROM COMBATANTS TO PEACE FACILITATORS

Babylyn, Johaina, and Bainisan don't remember the details of the military campaign of the Armed Forces of the Philippines against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in 2000, but they remember the sights and sounds of warplanes approaching, the exhaustion of running from one place to the next, and the chaos all around with the sound of gunshots in the background. "I remember running and finding shelter under a tarpaulin, or behind the bushes," Johaina faintly recalls. Her father is a former deputy of defence of an MILF camp, and her mother is a member of the all-women Bangsamoro Islamic Women's Brigade (BIWAB).

Johaina was born and raised in the remote jungles of Lanao where the MILF camped to

avoid the Philippines army. Like Babylyn and Bainisan, she is a member of the Islamic Women's Brigade.¹ The childhood memories of the three women propel them in their struggle for a different life, and to some extent, they are now experiencing it. While their struggle continues, their approach has changed. With the support of Nonviolent Peaceforce and the UN Populations Fund, they transformed themselves from armed combatants into unarmed peace facilitators. "People thought we were criminals: we carry guns and live in the mountains. Our work as Women Peace Facilitators changed that perception."²

After nearly five decades of conflict, a ceasefire agreement was agreed upon in 2011, followed by several years of negotiating peace agreements. In 2019 implementation of the formal peace process began, including the establishment of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). The BARMM has led to a dramatic decline in political violence and progress in disarming, demobilising, and reintegrating former combatants from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and its affiliated groups (the normalisation process). However, the region struggles to consolidate these gains due to persistent low-

Right: Members of the Bangsamoro Islamic Women's Brigade (BIWAB). BARMM, Mindanao, Philippines, February 24, 2022. © Denise Rafaeli Cadorniga/NP





Left: Members of the Bangsamoro Islamic Women's Brigade (BIWAB). BARMM, Mindanao, Philippines, February 24, 2022; © Denise Rafaelli Cadorniga/NP

"People thought we were criminals: we carry guns and live in the mountains. Our work as Women Peace Facilitators changed that perception."

level clashes, threats from extremism, and competition between political factions. Furthermore, despite the integration of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in the peace process, meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention and decision-making processes continues to be an uphill battle.

In response to these challenges, NP set out to strengthen the participation of BIWAB members in the protection of women's rights and mobilise them to advance gender and culturally-sensitive legislation, policies, and programmes. The project, carried out between 2020 and 2022 with the support of UNFPA, was a joint initiative of the UN Peacebuilding Fund and the BARMM. NP has been an active partner in the Mindanao peace process since 2009. It was the first international NGO to become a member of the International Monitoring Team (IMT), which monitored the implementation of the

ceasefire agreement from October 2004 to June 2022. NP's focus has gradually shifted from active ceasefire monitoring to increasing the participation of women and youth in Mindanao's normalisation process, as well as providing a civilian protection lens to interconnected issues such as the proliferation of small arms, inter-communal conflicts, and violent extremism.

NP conducted a range of activities to strengthen the reintegration of the community of members of the Bangsamoro Islamic Women Auxiliary Brigade (BIWAB), the all-female armed wing of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). It trained and coached the women on monitoring, conflict resolution, and community outreach as well as addressing specific protection concerns

such as gender-based violence (GBV) and forced/early marriage. NP also helped them navigate BARMM governance and legislative processes, formulate advocacy campaigns and policy recommendations, and enhance their advocacy skills.

Simultaneously, NP trained duty-bearers at the provincial, barangay (local village), and municipal levels to mobilise political support for protection issues and gender-sensitive violence response services. Additional activities included participatory action research to identify the scope of protection issues facing women and girls in the BARMM and inter-/intra-communal dialogue about the normalisation process among local government officials, traditional leaders and religious leaders, among women and men, youth and elderly, and Moro people, non-Moro indigenous people, and settlers.

Over the course of the project, the members of the Islamic Women Auxiliary Brigade increasingly embraced their role as peace facilitators, notably in areas outside the MILF camps where they reside, but among communities that had previously looked upon them with suspicion or even disdain. They first participated in community discussions, actively listening to community concerns and psychosocial grievances. Later, they assumed a leading role as dialogue facilitators and organisers of campaigns on women's rights. They also took initiative in conducting participatory action research about the needs of specific conflict-affected communities, which they presented to the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (Parliament) in December 2022³. Project evaluators who engaged with Women Peace Facilitators in Masiu town recount that "Respondents speak of increased confidence in engaging with all types of people, especially persons of authority. They exhibit a heightened sense of community and share the pride they feel as facilitators of knowledge and services for their community members."⁴

What stands out is that the Women Peace

Facilitators (WPFs) have become channels of communication between communities and the government. These engagements have further increased women's engagement in formal government processes and cemented their reintegration into social circles that were previously inaccessible to them. Jaslin Masbu, who works as a Municipal Social Welfare and Development Officer in Masiu township explains that the WPFs involved in the project have been an integral part of her own work. "Fulfilling the mandate of a government office alone is hard and their presence and their work as WPFs has made my tasks a tad easier". After the project ended, Masbu successfully lobbied for the absorption of six of the eleven former combatants into the Masiu government system by employing them as para social workers. Her plans don't stop there. "I am helping them organize into a group of women able to advocate for gender issues and implement livelihood and other projects for fellow BIWABs and the larger community of Masiu. Who knows, maybe in the future, the group may even want to contribute more to our community by joining the electoral fray. It is a dream to successfully field candidates in local government positions from their ranks!"⁵

The project has also had an impact on the broader society. Public perception of these women has changed in many places from being feared and loathed and being perceived as violent and lawless elements of society to public defenders and supporters. They are increasingly approached by community members to address issues of concern or communicate these to the authorities. Masbu explains, however, that there is still a long way to go. "Some still question the assistance provided to former combatants and communities of the MILF and the wisdom behind the new BARMM. I do not tire of explaining to them that transformation does not happen overnight and that we must give BARMM a chance to succeed by engaging in the many platforms of participation that it provides".⁶

Finally, the transformation of the BIWAB members from combatants to peace facilitators also contributes to a shift towards gender equality. As combatants, the women used to take directions from men at higher levels of the military hierarchy. As peace facilitators, the women are taking the lead in determining their own agenda. Moreover, their visible leadership in the normalisation process enacts and reaffirms the importance of gender equality and the agency of women in protecting their own communities.

Now that the project has been concluded the WPFs have moved in different directions. Some have been absorbed in the formal structures of local government units, while others carried on with their education, started small businesses, or joined a cooperative. Some went back to their roles as housewives and caregivers of ailing parents. Johaina and Bainisan are working as para-social workers under the Ministry of Social Service, while Babylyn is applying to become a teacher. While there remains a lot of work to be done, they are full of hope. Bainisan shared: "By speaking in communities, by imparting knowledge on peacebuilding and women and youth issues, we are showing the communities that BARMM and its partners are hard at work in trying to change the status quo. By reaching more people there will be more support for the success of BARMM and everything we have been fighting for".

[1] The de-commissioning of combatants is still ongoing. Most of the BIWAB are still waiting for their quota, so technically they are still combatants. However, after the passage the establishment of BARMM BIWAB got registered as a civil society organisation, making all BIWAB from Central Committee an automatic member. [2] This case study is

adapted from Maria Adelma M. Montejó and Sheryl S. Danguino, Evaluation report. Sustaining Conflict Transformation Towards Effective Peacebuilding in the Bangsamoro Region, 15

[3] The findings of this research are to be presented to the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) – Parliament

[4] Adelma (2022), page 48

[5] Adelma (2022), page 44

[6] Adelma (2022), page 45

United States

DISRUPTING ANTI-ASIAN VIOLENCE IN NEW YORK

"In the past year, I felt very hopeless about the violence against our community. I am at this training because I wanted to do something. The hope that you guys gave today makes me so reassured that our communities are helping those that are vulnerable, feel alone and helpless. More helpless than me." - Michelle, Filipina American volunteer and community member.

A rise in anti-Asian hate crimes

Between 2021 and 2022 there has been a rise in anti-Asian violence across the world. The COVID-19 pandemic has been linked to a surge in hate crimes against people of Asian descent, fueled by misinformation and xenophobia. In the United States, the advocacy group

Stop AAPI Hate reported nearly 10,000 incidents of anti-Asian discrimination and violence in 2021 alone, with women and the elderly particularly vulnerable. Stop AAPI Hate's new report, *Two Years and Thousands of Voices*, showcases nearly 11,500 hate incidents reported to Stop AAPI Hate's reporting center between 19 March 2020 and 31 March 2022.¹ The report clarifies that non-criminal incidents comprise the vast majority of the harmful hate incidents that AAPI community members experience. Two in three incidents (67%) involved harassment, such as verbal or written hate speech or inappropriate gestures. One in six (17%) incidents involved physical violence. AAPI individuals who are also female, non-binary, LGBTQIA+, and/or elderly experience hate incidents that target them for more than one of their identities at once. Hate happens everywhere — in both large cities and small towns, in AAPI enclaves and in places where AAPI communities are few and far between.

"Walking on the street when a man jumped in front of me and screaming racial slurs (you Chinese b—h, f—g Asian, "Go back to your country," etc). He then pushed me to the street. The man was a stranger and was totally unprovoked." (San Francisco, CA)

Right: Hope Against Hate masks and safety pamphlets at the AAF Fall Festival. New York City, US, 6 Nov 2022. © Kimberly Young Sun/AAF





Top: Training participants practice nonviolent de-escalation skills during a simulation. Sunset Park, New York City, US, 23 April 2022. © Sheng Lin/AAF

Left: Hope Against Hate volunteer at safety training with NP. Sunset Park, New York City, US, 23 April 2022. © Sheng Lin/AAF

Right middle: NP staff and Hope Against Hate volunteers at the AAF Fall Festival. New York City, US, 6 Nov 2022. © Kimberly Young Sun/AAF

Right bottom: Hope Against Hate volunteers provide protective presence and facilitate safety at the AAF Fall Festival. New York City, US, 6 Nov 2022. © Kimberly Young Sun/AAF

"During the lockdown, I needed to go to the store, and a man stopped me in front of the store and started yelling at me, telling me this was my people's fault. I am perceived as a Vietnamese woman and he kept calling me a Chinese pest along with many other slurs. I am non-binary but haven't come out of the closet. He made comments about my haircut and how I looked like a d-e." (Lubbock, TX)

Mutual Protection Through SafeWalks and SafeZones

On August 2021, Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) started a partnership with the Asian American Federation (AAF) and their Hope Against Hate campaign in New York. AAF works with over seventy community-based organisations throughout New York state and represents the interests of over 1.5 million New York community members. NP has worked alongside local communities throughout New York state to identify potential hotspots of violence, trained community

"The hope that you guys gave today makes me so reassured that that our communities are helping those that are vulnerable, feel alone and helpless."

members and allies on Upstander Intervention strategies and have built capacity in Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens to provide a physical presence that deters perpetrators from committing violent acts through the fortification of Safe Walks and Safe Zone programming[2]. In this way unarmed civilians are protecting themselves and each other in a process of mutuality.

NP has worked closely with over 30 community-based organisations in New York state to provide **Community Safety Trainings** with the expressed intent of building protection capacities within AAPI and non-AAPI communities to disrupt anti-Asian violence in New York. We have facilitated 85 in-person and virtual trainings for over 2100 New

Yorkers to strengthen their self and mutual protection skills through responsive and proactive trainings. The responsive skills-based workshops have focused on training community members around holistic safety and security, physical and verbal de-escalation, situational awareness and Upstander Intervention. The proactive skills-based workshops have been centered on community mapping, building community threat assessments and cultivating relationships across communities to address anti-Asian racism.

Through the Hope Against Hate campaign, NP has worked with three organisations in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens to create a CBO housed and volunteer led effort to provide protective accompaniment (**SafeWalks**) for targeted AAPI community members ranging from Elders to women and femmes. Each Safewalk meets a specific need with the communities they work with. For instance, in Flushing, Queens a group called Asian American Cohesion (AAC) goes on daily patrols acting as a deterrent and de-escalation body in predominately East Asian neighborhoods. AAC is comprised of community members that are able to communicate in Mandarin, Cantonese, Fujianese and English in an effort to bridge language and cultural barriers that might potentially heighten a tense inter-community conflict.

The **SafeZones** initiative serves as brick-and-mortar sanctuaries throughout New York City, which are clearly identified through SafeZone posters that display resources ranging from mental health support to protective accompaniment for community members. Each current SafeZone participant is a local business owner who has been asked by Hope Against Hate community partners to provide support to aggressed community members in need of a safe space. In 2023 NP will focus on increasing the number of SafeZones by building the capacity of local community-based organisations to serve as SafeZones through training staff on how to provide physical and psychosocial safety

support for community members.

Along with our responsive approach to addressing anti-Asian attacks in New York City, NP has worked to help build relationships between different community groups grounded in solidarity and fostered greater understanding and empathy with those affected by the current conflict. By prioritising nonviolent and community-led solutions, Unarmed Civilian Protection interrupts cycles of violence, builds more inclusive and safer communities, and supports communities in reimagining safety that doesn't come down the barrel of a gun.

[1] <https://stopaapihate.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Stop-AAPI-Hate-Year-2-Report.pdf>; The report also includes findings from a 2021 national survey, Stop AAPI Hate conducted in partnership with Edelman Data & Intelligence.

[2] An upstander is someone who takes action when they witness acts of violence, unlike a bystander who goes about their business.



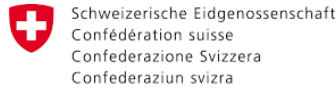
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