



NP Philippines staff in Bato Mapoteh. ©NP

Bringing Families Home

How one community advocated for peace negotiations, ending a 6-month violent pursuit.

On September 15, 2022, three Philippine Army soldiers were ambushed and killed by a group led by Abbas Jangkatan, associated with Abu Sayyaf. On the run, Abbas's group chose Bato Mapoteh, a small community in the Philippines, as their hideout. Quickly, it plunged into chaos.

For six months, the relentless pursuit of Abbas's group by the Philippine Army caused immense suffering in Bato Mapoteh. Around 250 families scattered in fear, fleeing their homes to seek refuge in the mountains or with relatives as the fighting persisted.

As Ramadan approached, displaced families yearned to return home. Their desperation to celebrate the holy month in peace reached the Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) team and local Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) leaders.

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Because of too much fear, we ran in different directions without carrying anything, some went to the mountain.

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NP has worked with the Philippine government and the MILF to maintain a ceasefire and facilitate a peace process for years. Having built deep relationships and trust, NP and MILF leaders launched a bold mission of what we call “shuttle diplomacy” to resolve the conflict in Bato Mapoteh.

The first step was to form a negotiating team. Made up of MILF leaders and NP staff, the team met with Abbas's group and documented their demands. Some of these demands included:

- No mention or talk of surrender.
- Abbas's group can retain their firearms and return to the community.
- The Army must withdraw from the community.

The negotiating team then relayed these demands to the Vice Mayor of the community and the Army, who created their counter positions. Their counter positions included:

- There doesn't need to be a surrender but there should be some supervision of Abbas's group.
- The Army will withdraw, but an agreed upon security team must replace the Army.
- Firearms may be retained if they are documented.

After days of negotiations, a peace dialogue was held on March 22, 2023 in the community gym. All parties to the conflict, including displaced families, were present. NP co-facilitated the dialogue and presented the agreement's conditions, which were signed by all.

But the work didn't end with finalizing the agreement. NP then helped those who were displaced safely return to their homes. Civilians received relief packs from the Vice Mayor, the Ministry of Social Services, and the regional Bangsamoro government. Most importantly, families were able to observe Ramadan safely in their homes.

"It is very important to us—the effort that NP makes. Their presence has a good impact on us. Truly helpful," said Hadji Samad Ahaddin, an MILF leader involved in the negotiations. "(NP) has always been the partner I contact whenever there's an incident or whenever I need help talking to the government... NP becomes my partner in resolving different matters."

Because the work of peace is ongoing, in May 2023, NP embarked on another mission to support the rebuilding of Bato Mapoteh. Partnering with various local government ministries, the NP team connected community members impacted by the conflict to educational services and skills training. The team also worked with community leaders to rebuild. For example, the Vice Mayor provided materials for rebuilding the mosque, while the Army provided the people to build.



Home in Bato Mapoteh. ©NP

Reflecting on NP's support, Ganie Amlain, NP Team Leader, shared, "I feel that helping is not only done by giving relief goods but also facilitating peace dialogue. I feel satisfied and happy to see evacuees return to their community. If you see them, I feel pride that we are one of the catalysts of this intervention."

The work in Bato Mapoteh showcases the various unarmed civilian protection methods that can be used to interrupt cycles of violence—facilitating diplomacy, intervening in conflict, providing protective accompaniment, and linking relief and rehabilitation. Now, through courage and relentless pursuit of peace, the community of Bato Mapoteh, once shattered by violence, has begun to heal.



Women-led Protection in Sudan

BACKGROUND AND CURRENT SITUATION FOR WOMEN PROTECTION TEAMS IN SUDAN

One year after the breakout of civil war in Sudan, El Fasher, located in North Darfur, is facing a severe escalation in violence. Clashes are intensifying between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). This conflict threatens approximately 2.8 million civilians, including 1 million internally displaced persons (IDPs). The violence has disrupted transit routes, creating a potential siege situation, exacerbating shortages of food, medicine, and humanitarian aid.

Amidst this ongoing violence, local community groups, supported by NP, have been at the forefront of protection efforts. Women's Protection Teams (WPTs) in North Darfur, consisting of trained female residents, play a crucial role in identifying protection risks and developing local responses. These teams provide survivor-focused support, organize collective safety measures like group firewood collection, and share early warnings about conflict dynamics. They also engage in nonviolent conflict resolution to maintain peace within the community and with neighboring groups.



"We can reach out to all people and they know where to find us 24/7. We are trained in providing survivor-focused support and connecting community members to services, such as medical, psychological, and legal support – although this is extremely difficult at the moment."

- Ishrava, WPT member

Speak Out on Sudan

Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) highlights the urgent need for international intervention to prevent further atrocities and respond to the humanitarian crisis in Sudan. Our advocacy team has been working to influence key decision-makers at the United Nations and in the United States government. Join us in our efforts and ask your representatives to prioritize:

- Negotiation and implementation of safe passage routes for civilians.
- High-level governmental representations, including from the U.S., to push for adherence to International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and an immediate ceasefire.
- Increased humanitarian funding directed to local groups and INGOs with access to affected populations.
- Investigations and cataloging of IHL violations and public media reports to illuminate civilian harm and prevent atrocities.
- Investing in community-led protection mechanisms to address civilian risks.
- Adopting approaches that support localized protection efforts with funding, technical support, and decision-making power.
- Prioritizing conflict-sensitive humanitarian responses that integrate protection and increasing access to mental health and psychosocial support services, especially for marginalized groups.

SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT



Jan Wiersma & Bob Hoxie

For **Jan Wiersma and Bob Hoxie**, one of the most rewarding parts of being friends and followers of NP has been learning how expansive the practices of unarmed civilian protection (UCP) truly are. "This work is so complex and so beautiful. It is an empowering and bringing together of community."

Jan first became a supporter of NP when she and her sisters received a trust from their father. "We felt it was really important to remember our father and his legacy and use the fund to donate to nonprofits," she shared. Rooted in their values of nonviolence, Jan and Bob have also been fortunate to support the Apache Stronghold with protection efforts as they protest a copper mine that violates their ancestral spiritual lands.

As conflict continues to erupt and frustrations grow, Jan says: "What helps me with my own agitated feelings is doing something about it. Giving to NP is something to do. Steven Charleston, a Native American elder and retired Episcopal bishop says it best, ***"No matter what you do, no matter how small, you add to the balance of hope."***



Our world doesn't have to be violence and taking up arms – it can be peace. And I would like to leave that legacy of hope.



Make Nonviolence Your Legacy

Go to nonviolentpeaceforce.org/planned-gifts to learn more.

With planned giving, you can invest in peace without any immediate cost, creating a lasting impact for generations. Will you join others in helping communities live free from fear by including NP in your fund, trust, or will?

Here are four options for making a charitable planned gift to NP:

Make a Bequest Give a specific dollar amount or percent of your estate that you designate to NP through your will or trust.

Give a Gift of Assets Give appreciated assets now, including stock or property, and deduct their full fair market value to avoid capital tax gains.

Lifetime Income Gift A charitable gift annuity or charitable remainder trust provides regular payments to you and/or others for life and helps reduce your taxes.

Qualified Charitable Distribution If you are 70 ½ or older, you can designate a gift to NP directly from a taxable IRA or life insurance policy.

For more information on ways to give, go to NonviolentPeaceforce.org or call +1 612-871-0005