

# Field Notes

Winter 2014



*transforming the  
world's response  
to conflict*

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## A Crucial Step for Peace in the Philippines *Nonviolent Peaceforce Plays a Significant Role*

by Kate Smart, Program Officer, Nonviolent Peaceforce in the Philippines

**A** crucial and long-awaited step on the path to peace in the Philippines was made on January 25, 2014 when the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) signed the final annex and addendum for the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB). The FAB was initiated on October 15, 2012. In the 15 months following, the MILF and GPH engaged in ongoing dialogue and complex negotiations to finalize this agreement, which paves the way for the autonomous Bangsamoro state. Now that all points in the FAB have been agreed upon, the comprehensive peace agreement can be signed by the GPH and MILF and the country can move forward to the next phase of the peace process, developing Bangsamoro Basic Law.

This monumental event is the result of peace talks between the GPH and MILF. The peace talks occurred with the facilitation and support of Malaysia and highly credible work of the International Monitoring Team (IMT) in Mindanao, Philippines. Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) has had the privilege of being a member of the Civilian Protection Component (CPC) of the IMT, since its creation in 2010. As a member of the IMT-CPC, NP is charged with carrying out the CPC mandate. This focuses on civilian safe-



AP PHOTO/LAI SENG SIN

*Miriam Coronel-Ferrer, seated left, chairperson of Philippine Government Peace Panel, and Mohagher Iqbal, seated right, chief negotiator for the Moro National Liberation Front, sign documents with Malaysian facilitator Abdul Ghafar Tengku Mohamed, seated center, as witness during the 43rd government-MNLF Exploratory Talks in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, January 25, 2014.*

ty and security in situations of armed conflict.

NP was invited to Mindanao by the Mindanao Peoples' Caucus and Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society and deployed its team in May 2007. This established the first international field presence in the most critical conflict areas in Datu Piang and Jolo, Sulu. NP teams are out in Mindanao every day addressing concrete problems on the ground, de-escalating tensions and supporting the peace panels and the IMT with real time reports. This ground-breaking work in the Philippines resulted in NP being

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invited to Myanmar to support local initiatives for effective ceasefire monitoring.

While the signing of the framework agreement is a success for the Philippines as a country, it most directly impacts the people of Mindanao, the second largest island in the Philippines. This is an area that has lived through decades of violent conflict and numerous failed peace agreements.

The finalization of the FAB is a significant step in resolving a historic conflict and bringing in a new era of peace for the citizens of Mindanao and the country of the Philippines. The Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, Teresita Quintos Deles, shared these words following the successful conclusion of the framework agreement, “In a world looking for peaceful solutions to all troubles, we are grateful that we have found ours. Let us all seal it – and nurture it. The best is yet to come.”

**Nonviolent Peaceforce extends heartfelt congratulations to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the Government of the Philippines, and all the actors involved in the peace process. We champion the dedication and perseverance of these parties and the people of Mindanao in achieving peaceful resolution for the country of the Philippines.**

See the full text of the agreement here: <http://www.gov.ph/2014/01/25/statement-of-secretary-deles-on-the-signing-of-the-annex-on-normalization-and-addendum-on-bangsamoro-waters/>

# 34 Families Brought to Safety

**by Nonviolent Peaceforce Team  
in Maguindanao, Philippines**

*by Chayie Maligalig, Information Officer in the Philippines*

In July 2013, the barangay (district) captain of Kulasi, General Salipada K. Pendatun (GSKP), contacted Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) to request support in an evacuation. Thirty-four families were caught in the midst of hostilities because of an ongoing land-related rido, or clan conflict.

In the months prior to the request, the rido among the communities of Kulasi, GSKP and Bagumbayan, President Quirino (a municipality) had significantly escalated and resulted in the displacement of 1600 families. NP maintained regular visits to the area during this time, conducted needs assessments of the displaced population and verified registered concerns on civilian protection issues. These visits were critical in fostering stakeholder acceptance and rapport necessary to employ civilian protection interventions during hostilities. Rido can turn into large scale armed violence if not addressed at its earliest stages.

The NP Civilian Protection Component (CPC)\* in Maguindanao was the first to receive a call from the barangay captain of Kulasi, GSKP. GSKP reported that 34 families were trapped due to the violence and requested NP’s support in facilitating their safe passage. The other NP teams based around the area also immediately engaged; they contacted relevant local and regional stakeholders to initiate an intervention.

Meanwhile, the NP CPC team in Maguindanao contacted the conflicting parties. They inquired about the situation and expressed concern for the well-being of the civilians in the area. NP’s management team in Cotabato City

then alerted the CPC Coordinator and Team Site 1, the Security Component of the International Monitoring Team (IMT) in Cotabato City, of the situation. While they communicated with government forces, NP contacted local community leaders asking them to engage in dialogue with the armed groups. This facilitated a temporary ceasefire that allowed civilians to move to safety.

While stakeholders were being contacted, NP's SOCKSARGEN mobile team made up of NP teams in South Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani and General Santos City, traveled to the area in preparation for accompanying the civilians. The SOCKSARGEN team also assessed the impact of the hostilities on adjacent communities.

Once a temporary ceasefire was secured, the NP team met with the barangay captain to inquire about how the community wished to proceed. The captain and the community decided to temporarily evacuate to a nearby building; the NP team accompanied the displaced families to ensure their safe arrival. The team returned to base to continue monitoring the situation and report updates to the IMT.

In the months following this situation, the area has been violence-free, and NP has continued its commitment to enhancing civilian protection strategies for the local population. On August 5, 2013, a peacekeeping ceremony was conducted with both parties of the conflict coming together and sharing ceremonial duties. NP hosted a community orientation on child protection and the CPC mandate shortly afterward. Furthermore, NP (with the support of MILF and the Armed Forces of the Philippines) facilitated the creation of a technical working group; this group is dedicated to finding a sustainable solution for the long-standing land conflict.

On a wider scale, this situation has served as a catalyst for the team to engage and begin to address the larger dynamic of Christian communities within the area of responsibility. Every new area NP engages with serves as an access point to connect with and support more communities in establishing sustainable, locally-based civilian protection mechanisms.

\* In the Philippines, Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) is a member of the Civilian Protection Component (CPC) of the International Monitoring Team (IMT). The IMT monitors the ceasefire, humanitarian, rehabilitation and socio-economic agreements between the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). As a member of the CPC, NP regularly supports communities in addressing civilian protection concerns.



*Nonviolent Peaceforce national civilian peacekeeper Gonsul in conversation in Kulasi*

*Nonviolent Peaceforce staff meeting with Kulasi civilians*



## A New Governance Structure for Nonviolent Peaceforce

After ten successful years, it became clear to the International Governance Council, (NP’s primary governing body) as well as Nonviolent Peaceforce staff and stakeholders that it was time for NP’s governance structure to evolve. Therefore, at the recent International Assembly held from January 24th through February 8th, the International Governance Council (IGC) brought forth a recommendation for a new governance structure designed to promote ongoing organizational stability and better position NP for growth. At the virtual assembly held via the internet, delegates from 29 of NP’s 41 member organizations reached a consensus, allowing the recommended changes to the governance design to go forward. The new approach was originally proposed by an international committee of experts and then modified by the IGC to include extensive feedback from NP’s member organizations and key stakeholders.

Prior to this assembly Nonviolent Peaceforce was governed by three bodies. The overarching committee was the International Governance Council (IGC), which was composed of representatives from NP’s member organizations across the world but was not legally registered with any country or government. The IGC worked closely with two legally registered entities: NP-USA and NP-Belgium (both of which are registered as non-profits in their respective countries).

There was no formal agreement between these three governing bodies.

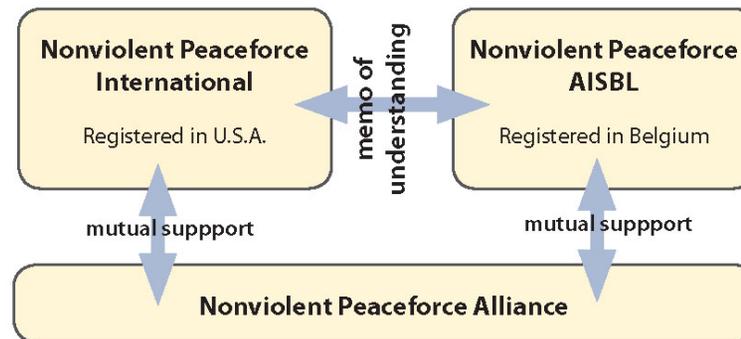
Once the new governance design is implemented, Nonviolent Peaceforce will have two legally registered governing bodies – one in the U.S and one in Belgium with a clearly documented understanding of the relationship between them. The NP-USA Board of Directors is also considering changing the name of the US entity to Nonviolent Peaceforce International to more clearly reflect the global nature of NP’s work. In

addition, the member organizations will transition to an advisory role through the creation of the NP Alliance which will be open to any organization or individual who would like to support NP’s work in the world.

These changes will help NP attract new board members who will bring with them much needed influence, expertise, resources and experience. The new design will also create greater transparency, position NP for continuous growth, and help NP become an even more important voice

promoting unarmed civilian peacekeeping throughout the world.

As Eric Bachman, former IGC Member and NP International Facilitator says, “With the new governance structure we will be creating a more stable and effective organization with which to carry out our very important mission.”



## Diary of a Peacekeeper

by Francisca da Silva,  
Child Protection Project Coordinator,  
Nonviolent Peaceforce in the Philippines



Francisca and other NP staff meet with community Early Warning and Early Response (EWER) monitors in Poona Piagapo, Lanao del Norte.

People often speak of a conflict in terms of statistics or overarching issues and fail to acknowledge the most important element, the people for whom the conflict is a daily reality. When I reflect on Nonviolent Peaceforce's (NP) work in the Philippines, it is the close connection with communities and partner organizations that stands out. We address conflict through constructively engaging the people who have experienced it and are the true experts. The focus is on building trust, ensuring non-partisanship and gaining acceptance from communities, local civil society organizations and conflicting parties. This multi-level approach is a critical aspect of the work we do.

We follow a straightforward mandate focused on protection of civilians. Rather than imposing protection measures that we believe are viable, we work with communities to identify strategies that are relevant to their needs. This community-based approach is something that drew me to NP. I am convinced that real solutions come from the actors themselves and are not imposed by an outside entity. This is often challenging, as it is natural for us to seek immediate answers and solutions. We want to put things into boxes, but the reality of conflict is not black and white. There are no boxes, particularly in Mindanao. This is why working with NP as a civilian peacekeeper is such a demanding and interesting job.

NP staff live in local villages and visit communities in times of conflict, as well as in times of calm. We meet with actors from the grassroots to governing structures. We travel to often-visited communities and to communities never before visited by a

non-governmental organization. Often this does not feel like work at all! But this is what allows us to understand the context and complexities of the conflict. It helps us understand the challenges in a comprehensive way and subsequently address situations according to realities on the ground.

I began in the Lanao field office as an international civilian peacekeeper and now serve as the Child Protection Project Coordinator, based out of our Main Office in Cotabato City. It's interesting to see the work from an overall point of view, from supporting teams to liaising with other organizations. We work with government structures, UN agencies and other international NGOs to respond to the challenges and violations we uncover at the field level.

Whether I'm in the field or main office, the same fundamental principles remain: curiosity, diplomacy, constructive engagement, trust building and non-partisanship. These principles and the relationships built through them are what allow us to help prevent or mitigate conflict and provide response when violence or violations occur.

Relationships among team members are equally important. I have had the privilege of working with and learning from a great cast of characters; the diversity of background, personality and passion of NP staff is one of our strongest assets. I am deeply grateful to the national staff who have been affected by this conflict, for welcoming us internationals. They are unparalleled resources and teachers for understanding the culture, issues and complexities which compose the rich reality of Mindanao. Without them our work would be impossible!

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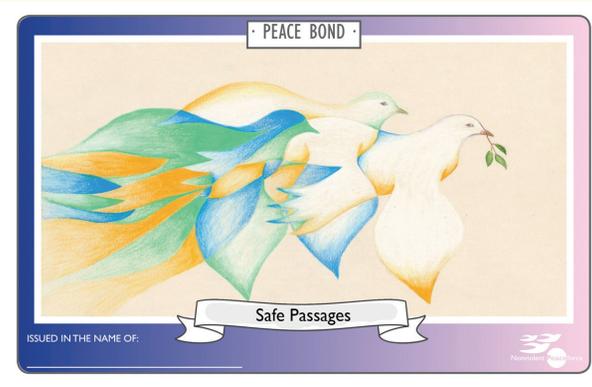
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