The alarming number of conflicts and associated civilian casualties worldwide emphasizes the need to find resolution through peaceful means. The many methods of unarmed civilian protection (UCP) often prove successful in solving or calming conflicts with the long-term benefit of strengthening communities, infrastructure and ongoing dialogue that are needed to sustain hard-earned peace. Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) is a global civilian protection agency, working in some of the world’s most troubled zones to promote peace through civilian protection, reduction of community violence, and self-protection, conflict prevention, conflict management capacity development. Currently, NP has approximately 300 protection officers deployed in our programs in Iraq, Myanmar, Philippines, and South Sudan and we are collaborating with more than 50 implementing community organizations in 24 countries. To interrupt cycles of violence and facilitate sustainable peace, we work through five avenues, one of which is inclusive ceasefires and peace processes.

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This summary is based on the full version of the NP core competency program document “Inclusive Ceasefires and Peace Processes” that contains additional examples of interventions, methods, and guidance as the basis of work in this field by NP, partners, and other collaborating bodies.

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4. Inclusive Ceasefires and Peace Processes

Inclusive ceasefires and peace processes view all stakeholders as having a role in shaping peace and strives to bring stakeholders into discussions, negotiations and the search for solutions. Maximizing this approach means taking a strategic look at the role of different actors or stakeholders, their viewpoints and needs, their potential subsequent actions, and the timing or juncture of their involvement. Also crucially important is the involvement of women so that not only are they represented in these processes but they take leadership and be active participants.

The three stages of ceasefires

1. **Ceasefire negotiations** that result in a temporary or more lasting ceasefire agreement and determine the parties involved, the duration of the ceasefire, coverage areas, and commitments and actions to implement and monitor the ceasefire.

2. **Establishment of a ceasefire architecture** that includes setting up offices, writing job descriptions, recruiting personnel and monitors, establishing coordination mechanisms, codes of conduct, reporting templates, and composition of verification teams and problem-solving bodies.

3. **Ceasefire implementation** that includes ceasefire parties’ carrying out agreed upon commitments, coordination of the various bodies within the ceasefire architecture, compliance monitoring, and resolution of disputes where needed.

Our approach

NP’s main involvement in the implementation and monitoring stage means we can inform and strengthen the monitoring aspects that are also crucial in the earlier negotiation and planning stages. NP takes a unique approach to civilian-led ceasefire monitoring and methods of unarmed civilian protection: we strive for communities to be at the helm of efforts to stem violence and reinstate peace. This approach differs from ‘conventional’ ceasefire monitoring that is usually militarily led and is often met with skepticism when it includes civilians who have military backgrounds or ties. Community-based ceasefire monitoring seeks to involve stakeholders and foster engagement among the groups most affected by violence and often marginalized in the very decisions aimed at reinstating peace.

In situations where a ceasefire is in place as well as in situations where a ceasefire might not, NP contributes to peace efforts that entail ongoing dialogue, equipping stakeholders to intervene,
negotiate, and be community watchdogs. In turn, this ‘dialogue to peace’ approach serves as a useful tool in the setting up and monitoring of ceasefires if they become necessary and allows time and space for the results of dialogue to take hold.

**Community-based ceasefire monitoring**

NP has developed guidance for community-based monitoring projects. Several considerations are outlined, for example, identifying needs and capacity, defining geographical scope, engaging key stakeholders, defining roles and responsibilities, and analyzing the ceasefire agreement.

Community-based monitors perform in three main situations:

1. On a day-to-day basis when no incidents are taking place.
2. During hostilities.
3. After hostilities.

Basic functions throughout the process include:

- Submitting regular situation reports on ceasefire implementation.
- Conducting regular area visits to communities and groups of the different sides.
- Coordinating monitoring activities with different sides.
- Performing outreach and advocacy activities in the community to raise awareness and generate support for the ceasefire agreement.
- Monitoring and reporting during and after actual incidents of armed hostilities and helping to ensure that the rights of affected civilians and internally-displaced persons (IDPs) are protected and they have access to assistance and protection at all times.
- Providing regular updates including during incidents of armed hostilities, or the occurrence of unusual or suspicious events that may affect the ceasefire (including specific criminal or illegal activities that both sides agreed to eradicate).
- Gathering information and facts, conducting interviews, and other activities that will help provide the details or circumstances of the incident being verified.

**Who, when and how?**

In an environment of conflicting viewpoints and tightly held beliefs, inclusiveness can dissipate blockages, correct perceptions, and address actions that might have exacerbated tensions in the first place. Inclusiveness is about ensuring the appropriate stakeholders are involved and at a meaningful time; it requires seeing the potential for involving the array of groups and interests that are affected by the crisis or conflict. As figure 2 shows, the range of potential participants is extensive.
Ceasefire talks have been historically exclusive processes among state or non-state military actors and have focused mainly on military matters. In recent years, however, more attention is given to civilian protection within ceasefire agreements as well as the inclusion of civilians as monitors of these agreements. Several studies have demonstrated the importance of inclusion of a diverse set of actors in developing a durable peace. While civil society organizations (CSOs) are often a recognized broker, inclusiveness entails involving the very groups that are often among the first to be marginalized in conflict: women and youth.

**Peace dialogue**

Comprehensive peace agreements aim to address the root causes of the conflict and needed structural changes. These changes might include the drafting of a new constitution, the design of a federal system, educational reform, and re-distribution of natural resources, to name a few. Implementation can often take decades and may be accompanied with additional dialogue. The process leading up to a comprehensive peace agreement is often referred to as peace dialogue or political dialogue.

In addition to models that are focused on formal monitoring and dialogue mechanisms, other informal or complementary strategies also foster inclusivity in ceasefire and peace processes. These strategies can encompass support from neutral technical advisory bodies to review draft accords, mapping, polling among marginalized groups or the general public to identify needs and concerns and distributing information to marginalised groups such as women and ethnic minority groups.
Tangible work in ceasefires and inclusive peace dialogue processes

Inclusion of consistently marginalized groups such as women, youth and ethnic minorities must be central to peace efforts if these efforts are to take hold and endure. Across our program locations of Iraq, Myanmar, Philippines and South Sudan, NP has designed ceasefire architectures, trained monitors in ceasefire mechanisms, strengthened the capacity of women and youth in their areas of skill or interest to be part of the ceasefire effort, and served as a nonpartisan and trusted convener of meetings or processes:

- NP has played a role in building the capacity of women involved in peace dialogue processes and facilitated dialogue and information exchange between these women and civil society groups or women at the grassroots level, so that they have access to a steady flow of relevant information. Alternatively, NP can facilitate dialogue between male negotiators and women or youth leaders, making these representatives spokespersons for the needs of women or youth.

- In Myanmar, for example, we mapped the capacity of women around the country who were well placed to contribute to the peace process and encouraged peace negotiators and decision-makers to include more women in the peace process. In Myanmar and in South Sudan, NP has increased the capacity of emerging women leaders to advocate for issues of concern and helped to connect them to decision-makers at the national or international level. We have also established village peace committees.

- In the Philippines, and other program locations, NP has supported the creation of vigilant and responsive peace committees with representation from all tiers of society. This included boosting efforts of moderate leaders through grassroots discussion forums to steer aggrieved youth away from taking recourse to violent solutions. These forums have disseminated the philosophy and practice of nonviolence according to local values.