

Prepare Southeast Asian Women to Participate in Peace Processes



Background and Rationale:

More than a decade has passed since the United Nations adopted Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1325 to ensure the inclusion of women in all peace and security processes. Yet when critical decisions are made – about security, governance, justice, and more – women are often left out. Despite their significant contributions in both fighting war and building peace, women are not considered vital decision makers or constituents whose participation in peace and security processes is essential for stability. Research demonstrates time and again that broad, meaningful, and effective inclusion of women increases the durability of peace accords. This is critical not only during peace talks, but also in a post-conflict context when a country is rebuilding as well as in the time before peace talks take place.

Nonviolent Peaceforce has been providing civilian protection, cease fire monitoring, and training of civilians in nonviolent methods on the island of Mindanao in the Philippines, in Myanmar, and most recently in Southern Thailand. Women in these countries are especially determined to learn leadership skills especially those needed to implement UN SCR 1325 Women, Peace and Security Action Plans in their own countries. The inclusion of women in peace processes is at different stages in the three countries, as are the opportunities to learn

such skills, so NP is now including an exchange visit of women from the three countries in the training plan.

Myanmar • Participation of women in leadership and decision-making positions is extremely low in Myanmar. There are less than 1% of women among the 330 township administrators in Myanmar and violence against women is widespread. In the formal peace process structures, representation of women is low too, despite promises of having at least 30% women represented.

However, civilians at the grassroots level are determined to prevent violence to women and make a contribution to peace in their communities but lack the confidence or the ability to influence the country's current decision-makers.

Nonviolent Peaceforce in Myanmar has an ongoing project on Increasing Women's Participation in Decision Making Processes and Initiatives for Peace and Reconciliation where it has been working with 80 women in four states. With this new project Nonviolent Peaceforce Myanmar aims to increase their skills as advocates, increasing the number of women participating in addressing the issues. Previously, with the support of USAID, NP conducted a 6-months pilot project in the second half of 2018 to strengthen the advocacy skills of 150 emerging women leaders among peace observer and local civil society organization (CSO) networks from seven states and regions in Myanmar and from this initial training, adjustments were made to improve future offerings.



Mindanao in the Philippines • In the Philippines, there is greater recognition of women's role in nation-building, peace and development compared with other Southeast Asian countries. Gender equality and women's rights are among the most vibrant and enduring advocacy of civil society that has resulted in various laws that protect women and children and promote gender mainstreaming in the country. Philippines is the first in Southeast Asia that has fully developed a National Action Plan on implementing UNSCR 1325. Women's participation in governance is high with many women in local and national government positions. The peace process in Mindanao has been lauded internationally for having a woman peace negotiator to have signed a peace agreement, the first in the world.

While challenges in implementing the Philippine National Action Plan on SCR1325 remain, initiatives continue to be undertaken towards addressing the situation of women in conflict-affected areas especially in Mindanao, and in strengthening women's abilities in peacebuilding, conflict prevention and resolution. For its part, Nonviolent Peaceforce in the Philippines implements a project that strengthens women's capacity in community participation and peace mediation. It also works toward the integration of gender perspective in civilian protection.

Southern Thailand • In Southern Thailand, while civic organizations involve women from both Malay Muslim and Buddhist communities, opportunities for greater role and participation in decision-making and peacebuilding are quite limited. The national government has a standing policy on UNSCR 1325 implementation with a directive to all government to ensure the promotion of gender equality especially with the passage of their 2015 Gender Equality Act. Thailand's National Measures and Guidelines ensures the implementation of UNSCR 1325. It sets down an inter-departmental framework that provides measures for adoption by relevant agencies into its operational plans and actions to include the following outcomes: 1) increased number of women's participation at all levels of peace process; 2) better protection of women in conflict-affected areas; 3) inclusive and participatory process for peace and security by CSO, religious leaders, community and the public; 4) mechanism established for women's participation in conflict resolution and peace process; and 5) availability of central data base system on women, peace and security.

A distinct civil society led by women is emerging in Southern Thailand which Nonviolent Peaceforce has been requested to assist. Nonviolent Peaceforce has started to work with academic and civic organizations to support a women's initiative on the promotion of safe neighborhoods in most vulnerable communities in the Southern Border Provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat. The women's network composed of Buddhists and Malay Muslims from the three provinces has articulated the need for building their capacities to push forward their advocacy on safe neighborhoods. They need to harness their potentials and exercise leadership in promoting women's role and participation in ensuring peace and security of their

communities. They wish to be accompanied in evolving the process of gaining broader support and constituency among the population. They need to learn from other experiences on how to build a peace constituency and launch effective advocacy actions to support the peace process in Southern Thailand and ensure civilian protection in the province.

Main objective

Overall Objective: To enhance women's participation in peace process, protection and advocacy efforts by building their capacities.

Specific Objective 1: Increase understanding about the activities, challenges and opportunities of emerging women leaders in Myanmar, Southern Thailand and Mindanao, in the Philippines.

Specific Objective 2: Increase communication and collaboration between emerging women leaders and relevant actors, women leaders, and decision makers in Myanmar, Southern Thailand and Mindanao.



1. Activities

1.1. Specific Objective 1:

1.1.1. Exchange visit between emerging women leaders in Myanmar (5-10 participants), southern Thailand and Mindanao, the Philippines (5-10 participants) generating new ideas that can be applied in their own communities. The exchange visit will be conducted in partnership with Prince of Songkla University (PSU) in Pattani, southern Thailand. NP has a MoU with PSU.

1.1.2. Conduct workshops to build the capacity of women leaders on local decision-making processes and community-based initiatives for peace and reconciliation

1.1.3. In partnership with PSU, conduct a public lecture on Women, Peace and Security Outcomes:

1. Increased confidence and credibility among emerging women leaders (as viewed by their communities) among hosts and visitors
2. Increased knowledge on specific issues regarding peace and reconciliation
3. Increased skills in building relationships, creating allies, and crafting advocacy messages
4. Increased skills and understanding of values that are needed to engage with actors that are difficult to reach or not viewed as allies



2.2. Specific Objective 2:

2.2.1. Map out women with influence in three provinces of southern Thailand, Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) which will contribute to networking among women organizations and leaders resulting in their increased influence by reaching out to a diverse group of stakeholders.

2.2.2. Identify the areas of expertise and reflect on the geographical and thematic patterns and gaps

2.2.3. Conduct a base line survey or focus group discussion on current leadership roles among women as well as needs, challenges, and opportunities of influential women to increase their own influence and that of emerging women leaders.

2.2.4. Distribute the maps to women leaders, various stakeholders and key decision makers.

Outcomes:

5. Increased understanding about the roles that the identified women have played or are currently playing in Myanmar's, southern Thailand, Mindanao, the Philippines peace process (formally and/or informally) and the gaps and patterns that they observe (geographically or thematically) about women's participation
6. Increased understanding about the needs, challenges and opportunities of influential women to increase their own influence (and that of emerging women leaders) in the peace process.
7. Identified recommendations from influential women about threats, opportunities and effective ways that the maps can be used as well as interest in expanding the maps to township levels.
8. Increased dialogue among women leaders about the role and influence of women in the peace processes.
9. Increased understanding among women leaders about protection /security efforts undertaken by civil society.
10. Identified opportunities for future programming around women peace and security

2. Project general information

2.1 Target groups/beneficiaries

- Influential women leaders from Myanmar, Mindanao and southern Thailand
- Emerging women leaders from Myanmar, Mindanao and southern Thailand
- Women's networks often focus on service delivery or issues associated with women
- Universities in Thailand
- Stakeholders and service providers

2.2. Partners

Myanmar: NP Myanmar, Women Empowerment & Development Organization (WEDO), Shan: Se Loun Kham (SLK), Tine Yin Thu (TYT), Kachin Women Union (KWU)

Philippines: NP Philippines, UNYPhil-Women, KMMKM/United Women of Matigsalog, Manobo and Kulamanen Tribe

Thailand: Prince Songkla University, Thammasart University, Duayjai Group

2.3 Estimated Costs

Air Travel	Myanmar 350 USD return ticket/person	5 x \$350 USD	\$1,750 USD
	Philippines 500 USD return ticket/person	5 x \$500 USD	\$2,500 USD
Hotels	7 rooms x 7 days (including transit nights in Yangon, Bangkok and Manila)	7 rooms x 7 days x \$30 USD	\$1,470 USD
Travel costs for Pattani participants		\$8 USD x 10 participants	\$80 USD
Lunch and 2 breaks		\$10 USD x 25 participants x 2 days	\$500 USD
Per diems		\$10 USD x 25 x 5 days	\$1,250 USD
Local Transportation for Myanmar and Philippines participants			\$200 USD

Venue costs in Pattani		\$100 USD x 3 days	\$300 USD
Total Project Cost			\$8,050 USD
Less Costs Covered by NPM			\$3,030 USD
Total to Raise			\$5,000USD