



*transforming the world's
response to conflict*

Field Notes

Third Quarter
September 2015

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Mukesh Kapila, Nonviolent Peaceforce Board Member and Vice Chair, Adviser on World Humanitarian Summit

On a hot, dusty, and unbearably humid day scores of people line up to receive humanitarian food aid. Malnourished children push and shove each other in their desperation to get to the food. A young boy repeatedly kicks another boy in his way. The boy, weakened by malnourishment, dies from his injuries. This is not a personal account, it's a summary from the true testimony of Sudanese refugee Valentino Achak Deng, as described in his biography called *What is the What* by Dave Eggers.

In situations like these Nonviolent Peaceforce can act to protect vulnerable people before tragedy occurs. By providing unarmed protective presence during food aid distribution, our field staff ensures that food is distributed equitably, that the distribution does not cause further conflict, and that aid workers follow basic humanitarian principles.

Last year, our newly elected Board Member and Vice Chair Dr. Mukesh Kapila wanted to see for himself how it is possible for our field staff to protect others using unarmed strategies. In August 2014 he reviewed our operations in South Sudan, and in November supporters in Minneapolis had the opportunity to meet Mukesh in person as he elaborated on his experiences visiting the South Sudan program.

During his tour, Dr. Kapila described an experience where some children disappeared within a protection site provided by the United Nations (UN). Immediately tensions between two ethnic groups escalated as rumors began flying that one group had kidnapped the other group's children. Armed conflict was about to break out, but someone sought Nonviolent Peaceforce's assistance. The field staff investigated the rumors and found that the children—being chil-

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Mukesh Kapila with journalist Peter Moszynski in South Sudan.



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dren—had just wandered off to explore the market and got lost. After re-uniting them with their frantic parents, the staff went on to do shuttle-diplomacy between the two groups, reassuring and cooling tempers. A big deal for the local community but just a day's work for the staff of Nonviolent Peaceforce who are working all over South Sudan to prevent violence and protect people from harm.

The world is currently facing humanitarian needs on a massive scale and better ways are needed to meet the needs of millions of people affected by conflicts and disasters. Dr. Kapila has worked with the UK Government, the United Nations, and International Red Cross Red Crescent. He has put his 30-year long humanitarian experience at the disposal of the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon as a special advisor to help with the first ever World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) to be held in Istanbul on May 23-24th, 2016.

This summit, of unprecedented size and scope, aims to bring the global community together to find new ways of working together to save lives and reduce hardship. Extensive consultations are being held to “gather the perspectives, priorities and recommendations of all stakeholders on what must be done to make humanitarian action fit for the future.” See <https://www.worldhumanitariansummit.org/>.

The World Humanitarian Summit convened a consultation on “Protecting People in Conflict” in London in July. Doris Mariani, Chief Executive Officer of Nonviolent Peaceforce, also attended the meeting. Discussions focused on why there has been such deterioration in respect to civilians caught up in crises, why international systems are failing and what recommendations could be offered to strengthen the protection of civilians. When Doris shared with the group examples of Nonviolent Peaceforce field work, a UN official from New York par-

ticipating by phone commented that “this Nonviolent Peaceforce work is really innovative and good.”

Advocating Nonviolence at the United Nations

Another way Nonviolent Peaceforce aims to have a bigger impact on global conflict is through advocacy and outreach at the United Nations (UN). As the result of this work, an independent high-level panel convened by Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to review UN peace operations recommended, “Unarmed strategies must be at the forefront of UN efforts to protect civilians.”

The UN has 16 peacekeeping operations around the globe, half of which are in Africa (Nichols, 2015). If even a portion of these huge and costly operations were shifted to unarmed civilian protection, armed violence would be much reduced and more lives saved. We must influence the UN peace operations policy to place unarmed methods in the forefront of their efforts to protect civilians if we want to “transform the way the world responds to conflict.”

Nonviolent Peaceforce is trying to do just that. In July, Congressman Rick Nolan of Minnesota

called for the United States government to provide more support for unarmed civilian protection (UCP) through initiatives at the State Department and USAID, as well as in positions at the UN.

He stated on Congressional Record “When confronted with such atrocities (as in Syria and South Sudan), our typical response is to send in the bombers and drones, ship military equipment, train ‘the good guys,’ or even put our own troops on the ground. By doing these things, we create a state of on-going war. Is it any wonder the result is more violence, rather than less?”



Mukesh Kapila with civilians holding South Sudan's flag

*José Ramos Horta with
United Nations Secretary
General Ban Ki-moon*



*Mel Duncan with UN peace
Operations review panel
member, Dr. Rima Salah
after the release of the
report.*

“The Panel reviewed the excellent input by Nonviolent Peaceforce which shared with us its positive experience in protecting civilians in war-torn situations. In our report we recommend that the UN engages more those brave people working in the field, unarmed, in protection of civilians.”

Panel chair José Ramos Horta, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and former president of Timor Leste.

We are also optimistic about the upcoming United Nations General Assembly in September. The new Sustainable Development Goals will be officially adopted there, including goal 16, which focuses on peace and justice. These new goals, replacing the Millennium Development Goals at the end of the year, focus on peace and sustainability as a means to tackle global poverty and need.

With the new recommendations focusing on unarmed strategies to protect civilians made by the UN Independent High-Level Panel on Peace Operation in June, and a new focus on peace in the Sustainable Development Goals, hopes have been raised for a positive outcome at the UN General Assembly.

Take Action

On September 28, President Obama will convene a summit of world leaders on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly to “help catalyze a wave of new commitments” to UN peacekeeping (Nichols, 2015). Before the meeting, we encourage

you to send a message to President Obama. Ask him to advocate that unarmed civilian protection be a prominent focus on UN peace operations.

Your message can help reduce violence and save more lives. Call the White House at 202-456-1111 or email through <https://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/write-or-call>. Tell President Obama that you want the UN to seriously consider recommendations by the Independent High-Level Panel on Peace Operations to use unarmed strategies to protect people. You can also make a donation, which allows Nonviolent Peaceforce to continue promoting peace, reducing violence and saving lives.

Sources: Eggers, D. (2006). What is the what: The autobiography of Valentino Achak Deng: A novel. San Francisco: McSweeney’s.

Nichols, M. (2015, March 9). U.S. urges Europe to commit more troops to U.N. peacekeeping (S. Orlofsky, Ed.). Retrieved August 26, 2015, from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/09/us-usa-europe-un-peacekeepers-idUSKBN0M522O20150309>

Women's Peacekeeping Team in Bor, South Sudan Tackles Alcohol Abuse

By Nonviolent Peaceforce Office in South Sudan

*Follow-up to the June article posted on our website
@ <http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/wpt-tackles-alcohol>*

During its May monthly meeting with Nonviolent Peaceforce, the Women's Peacekeeping Team in the Bor Protection of Civilians area decided to focus on tackling the high levels of alcohol consumption as a means to mitigate conflict in the area. With so many residents suffering from depression and trauma, alcohol consumption has become a cheap and accessible, albeit negative, coping mechanism.

In response, the Women's Peacekeeping Team resolved to provide direct support, mentorship, and informal case management to those abusing alcohol. In its most recent monthly meeting with Nonviolent Peaceforce, the Women's Peacekeeping Team began sharing stories of its successes and challenges.

One woman recounted how she is supporting an alcoholic young man recently diagnosed with tuberculosis. She ensured that the young man was admitted to the International Rescue Committee (IRC) clinic for proper treatment and that he abstains from alcohol during that time. Since the young man has no relatives in the Protection of Civilians area, she is also volunteering to bring him food while he is recovering.

Another woman explained that she is mentoring an alcoholic woman who is now showing a great willingness to change her behavior and is attending church on a regular basis. Meanwhile, others lamented that they are struggling to make any significant breakthroughs. The people that they are supporting may pledge to stop drinking, but then resume the next day.

While the successes may be few and the changes only incremental at this stage, the women claim the overall level of alcohol consumption has decreased in the past month. In an effort to promote this trend, the women have to continue their case management and continue utilizing the Women's Peacekeeping Teams as a forum for sharing their stories, discussing mutual challenges, and brainstorming possible solutions.

UPDATE



Women's Peacekeeping Team in Bor, South Sudan

Profile of the Conflict in Myanmar and the Response of Nonviolent Peaceforce

1948 Myanmar (also known as Burma) gains independence from Britain. Civil wars break out almost immediately as ethnic people demand greater autonomy.

1962 Army general Ne Win stages a coup against the elected government and creates a one-party state. Civil wars continue. In subsequent years, some ceasefire pacts are signed, but conflict also continues in many areas.

1995 The military leaders had by then signed several ceasefire agreements with ethnic-armed organizations.

2008 A new constitution is introduced.

2009 The military leaders demand that all "ceasefire groups" transform into "Border Guard Forces" and accept the command of the Myanmar army. Many armed organizations refuse.

2009 Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi begins talks with Myanmar's military leaders and is allowed to meet Western diplomats.

2010 Federal elections are held, which introduce the first civilian government. Twenty-five percent of the Parliament seats are allocated to the military.

2011 The Myanmar government starts a 3-phased peace initiative with ethnic groups (ceasefire, confidence-building and political dialogue, and agreement for eternal peace).

2012 By mid-2012, 13 groups across the country have signed bilateral ceasefire agreements with the government.

2013 Leaders of 17 ethnic armed groups establish a Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT), which will represent them in negotiations with a government peace negotiation team, the Union Peace Working Committee (UPWC).

2015 16 ethnic-armed organizations and the government sign a draft ceasefire agreement. Negotiations continue.

Nonviolent Peaceforce Response

Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) supports the peace process by enhancing local efforts to protect civilians in areas of Myanmar that have been affected by decades of armed conflict between state armed forces and multiple non-state ethnic-armed organizations.

Local civil society organizations in Myanmar were inspired by the active participation of civilians in the peace processes in Aceh, Indonesia, and Mindanao, the Philippines.

When delegates from civil society groups from Myanmar met with Nonviolent Peaceforce in Mindanao and observed the role of NP in the monitoring of ceasefire agreements, they requested NP to come to Myanmar and support them in doing similar work.

In August 2012, following a scoping mission, NP received an invitation from the Government of Myanmar to work in the country.

Currently, NP focuses on four states in Myanmar, these being: Mon, Chin, Kachin and Kayah States.

NP is currently comprised of 10 staff; 6 international staff and 4 national--5 women and 5 men. International staff come from Nepal, the United Kingdom, the United States, Kenya, the Netherlands, and Costa Rica.

NP is working through local partners, both national level civil society and community based organizations working in conflict-affected areas.

NP supports its partners by providing technical advice on the establishment of monitoring mechanisms (networks), and building the capacity of partners and monitors in unarmed civilian protection and/or ceasefire monitoring.

NP builds relationships with all sides of the conflict including the government and ethnic-armed organizations and supports civilian monitors in building their own relationships with key actors in their areas.

Monitors trained by NP and local partners have facilitated dialogue between ceasefire parties about alleged ceasefire violations, engaged with authorities about International Humanitarian Law to encourage fair treatment of prisoners, and negotiated with armed forces about the evacuation of injured and elderly civilians caught in cross-fires.



Legacy Circle

Give future generations a chance to live in a world without war.

Join the Legacy Circle by remembering Nonviolent Peaceforce in your will.



For more information contact Marna Anderson at (612) 871-0005 ext. 222, or manderson@nonviolentpeaceforce.org or visit: www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org and click on DONATE NOW/MAKE A PLANNED GIFT.



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Thinking Globally Acting Globally What a great idea!

Nonviolent Peaceforce is a global community of people who believe in nonviolent solutions to the world's conflicts. Our supporters come from countries all around the world and have a genuine concern for the flourishing of all of humanity. To help you get to know each other, we will feature in each issue of Field Notes one of our supporters whose personal commitment to peace and protecting others inspires us. We hope you will be inspired too.

Donor Profile: Bill Berneking

Nonviolence fits my non-confrontational nature and so my affinity to the Nonviolent Peaceforce is not surprising. As a youngster, I was strongly influenced by a do-unto-others morality. As an adult, my wife and I joined a progressive church community with ideas and projects about social action, peace, and justice. We objected to the war in Vietnam and sold peace bonds as an "investment in the future." We worked on non-violent lifestyles. We supported refugees. We worked on the Nuclear Freeze movement. We did Amnesty International. We were active in the Sanctuary Movement.

Then we heard about one of the progressive leaders in the Twin Cities, named Mel Duncan. He was starting to organize an international group of peace activists to nonviolently intervene in violent situations. We thought, *what a great idea:*

Local activists working on an international stage on a world problem -- Thinking globally; acting globally.



Over the years, I continue to be impressed by the dedication, commitment, and work of Nonviolent Peaceforce's leadership and its peacekeepers. It makes one proud to be a supporter.

The Peaceforce also means hope. As long as we continue to grow the number of people that believe violence does not solve problems there is cause for hope. As long as we continue to act on belief in nonviolence, there is hope. Hope that the arc of evolving humankind is really moving toward a nonviolent, just world.