



Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) – Case Study July 2019

Bentiu POC

Nyadeep Wagak Puot, “Ambassador of Peace”

Empowering Women Through Unarmed Civilian Protection Training

Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) works to increase women’s role in peacebuilding in the Bentiu Protection of Civilians site (Bentiu POC) by building the capacity of women to resolve conflicts without violence. NP believes that local actors are the experts of their context and must be at the center of efforts to achieve a just and sustainable peace. Accordingly, NP’s Bentiu POC team has helped women’s groups become Women Protection Teams (WPTs) so they can increase the safety and security of their own communities. One element of that transformation has been providing WPT members with Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP) training to build their capacity.

Nyadeep Wagak Puot, who refers to herself as an “ambassador of peace”, has received UCP training from NP which built her capacity as a community peacebuilder. A mother of six children, she uses a wheelchair and was widowed 15 years ago when her husband died during a conflict in Koch. Following the Nuer practice, after becoming a widow, she and her children came under the auspices of her in-laws. She has lived in the Bentiu POC since 2016. During that time she became a member of ‘Unity of Women’, a WPT in the Bentiu POC. As a member of Unity of Women, Nyadeep has participated in regular trainings from NP. One of those trainings focused on UCP which develops the capacity of participants to aid their communities to resolve conflicts without violence.



Figure 1. Nyadeep Wagak Puot

Of the many instances when Nyadeep was called upon to be a community peacebuilder, the most personal was when her own daughter was involved in a fight with their neighbors. Despite some of her friends encouraging her to violently confront those who vexed her daughter, who like her, also has a disability, Nyadeep decided to remain calm. She resolved the issue with neighbors peacefully. She chose to remain calm because she could recall countless incidents when a simple quarrel between two people escalated into conflict among clans and counties. She had developed the tools to resolve the conflict without violence through her training with NP. According to her, “NP taught us the value of peace, we preach love, respect and (to) value one another, and above all we support each other.”



An active member since first joining the Unity of Women WPT, Nyadeep was later selected for a leadership role within the team. From the very beginning of her Unity of Women membership Nyadeep has been a foremost advocate for resolving conflicts without violence. Nyadeep has also been deeply involved in the group's community protection activities such as spreading information about the referral pathways for gender-based violence survivors. Due to the leadership she displayed during the group's activities, Nyadeep was elected as a chairperson of Unity of Women in 2017.

"The disability I have does not hinder me from protecting my own community." - Nyadeep Wagak Puot

The empowerment Nyadeep gained through being a community peace builder has spread to other areas of her life. The support she gets from her fellow Unity of Women members has enabled her to develop the resilience necessary to meet the challenges of daily life in the Bentiu POC. She has also stated her appreciation for NP treating her, and other women with similar disabilities, with respect, as well as acknowledging their potential. That support encouraged Nyadeep to start selling dried okra, sugar and mandazi to support her family. In turn, her role as her family's provider has made her an advocate for livelihood opportunities for women living in the Bentiu POC and a role-model for other women with disabilities.

Like Nyadeep, individual WPT members have been empowered through their participation in their team's activities and that has had a positive impact on their lives and their communities, including creating an enabling security environment and encouraging positive gender norms. As with Nyadeep, the WPTs, with assistance from NP, have built their capacity as peacebuilders and use those skills to increase the safety and security of their communities. The WPTs conduct patrols at hotspots for Gender Based Violence and other safety issues. Nyadeep, with her WPT, keep the NP Bentiu POC team abreast of community protection concerns and coordinate with NP when they need additional support or advocacy to resolve issues. The Bentiu POC team has also been meeting Nyadeep through her WPT to identify ways these women can increase the impact of their peacebuilding efforts. During those meetings WPT members have expressed great interest in connecting with women that are from other groups, represent different churches, and hold community leadership positions. WPT members actively participate in Women Block Leaders meetings organised by IOM for each block in the Bentiu POC. There are 4 WPT members who are the Block Leaders, 1 WPT member who has a leadership role in her sector of the POC, and 1 WPT member who is a part of the local court within the POC. Additionally, NP's Bentiu POC team plans to link Nyadeep and the WPTs with the organizations that enable women to participate in income generating activities so that they can better provide for themselves and become self sufficient.