Summary of Good Practices Workshops

The following is a brief summary of the learning from a series of workshops organized by Nonviolent Peaceforce with the purpose of exploring and documenting good practices as well as building the field of practice, in unarmed civilian protection/accompaniment. These workshops were part of a larger project to document, validate and expand the use of unarmed civilian protection. The workshops were preceded by the publication of 4 case studies (Wielding Nonviolence in the Midst of Violence). The international gathering, which is the 3rd phase of this project is split in two parts- the first taking place online between November 12 and 21 and followed by an in-person gathering tentatively scheduled for June, 2022.

Nonviolent Peaceforce organized six regional workshops (South East Asia, Sub Sahara Africa, Middle East, Latin America, North America and Europe) to examine good practices in unarmed civilian protection/accompaniment, also known as protective presence or the work of peace teams. As used by many organizations, accompaniment implies more than physical accompaniment. In keeping with the spirit of 'being with' it may include advocacy, legal, psycho-social accompaniment and more. As noted in the introduction to each of the reports on the workshops, Nonviolent Peaceforce suggests the following definition: "Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP), sometimes called civilian peacekeeping or protective accompaniment, is the practice of deploying specially trained unarmed civilians before, during, or after violent conflict in order to prevent or reduce violence, to provide direct physical protection to civilian populations under threat, and to strengthen or build resilient local peace infrastructures." Although the emphasis in this description is on organized efforts implemented with specially trained civilians, the workshops also included people representing local efforts that grew out of local knowledge, implemented by communities often without any special training.

Different organizations and different communities have called this work by different names. In this summary this field of practice will be called accompaniment/unarmed civilian protection, and will be referenced with the acronym A/UCP. This is not meant to discount other terms, but only to find a brief way to reference the work. What follows is a summary of what emerged in the workshops of how organizations approach their work and what practitioners understand is 'good practice'. While frequently confirming the initial case studies, the workshops have added a great depth and breadth to the understanding of good practices. And in some cases, they have also contradicted those findings in important ways. In the interests of brevity, this summary is a simplified version that reduces much of the complexity and richness of the discussions. Reports from each of the workshops can be found here - https://nonviolentpeaceforce.org/what-we-do/developing-and-expanding-the-field . There you will find the details and nuances not included here.

Diversity

There was great diversity among the people and organizations and efforts represented. The workshops included over 160 people in addition to the organizers and facilitators. Participants came from 60 different organizations, some of which were represented at more than one workshop, and approximately 40 different countries. Most of the participants were people active in A/UCP, as well as a few academics whose work relates to the field, a few funders, and a few other interested people. The

Southeast Asia, Middle East, Sub Sahara Africa, North America, and Central/South America workshops were all held in person. The Europe workshop, held in November, 2020 was held via zoom

The participants represented different ways that civilians protect other civilians and/or themselves, without relying on the threat and/or use of violence. Some of the self protection work represented included women's peace teams in South Sudan, a peace community in Colombia, Belarusian activists seeking to prevent arrests and attacks, and formerly gang involved people preventing violence in the United States. Other work was undertaken by people in their own communities, to protect others such as several US peace team's work to protect demonstrations, NGOs in the Philippines monitoring a ceasefire, French organizations' work to address police violence against refugees in their communities, Burundian's working to prevent violence during their elections, or Northern Irish activists work during 'The Troubles'.

Much of the work represented involved internationals – people from other countries, going to areas of active violence or significant threat of violence, to protect people there. The reality of course, is that the protection was often mutual. Many of the international organizations operate from a principle of nonpartisanship or 'equiproximity' as Operazione Colomba terms it. Though understood differently, this generally implied being nonpartisan for specific political solutions or parties to a conflict, but being active to protect human rights, including the right to life, as well as manifestations of self determination. However, a number of organizations start from a principle of solidarity, with protection being the, or one of the, manifestations of this. This included the Balkan Peace Team, trying to prevent violence during the Balkan wars, US organizations working on the US/Mexico border to protect asylum seekers and other refugees, different groups active in Palestine, and work in Greece to protect refugees on Lesvos. Some of the work of international organizations is focused on protecting specific political activists whose lives are threatened, or more broadly civil society organizations. Some of it is focused on internally displaced people (IDP) camps/settlements, whole communities, or somewhat larger regions. As discussed below, this approach to the work – solidarity, self protection, and/or nonpartisanship – impacts the kinds of relationships developed in the work.

Many organizations and self protection efforts rely on volunteers. Some volunteers are paid a small stipend, a few receive benefits such as health insurance and/or paid holiday leave. Only a few organizations pay staff a salary somewhat similar to other humanitarian or NGO salaries.

Organizations are structured in different ways. Some have little or no hierarchy and use consensus decision making. Others have a more structured, or even highly structured hierarchy, with various degrees of clarity about what decisions are made where within the organizations. A few are informal, community-based efforts and a few are based in or relate to in some way, local level governance.

A broad range of types of violence are addressed by the different organizations and efforts. Some are protecting activists from violence targeted specifically to these individuals and/or their organizations more broadly. Some are addressing violence targeting specifics groups such as refugees or a particular ethnic group in a community/region. Others address violence that attempts to silence resistance to a regime, or that attempts to impose a political order. And yet others are, or were, active in midst of civil wars, with a very few active in the midst of international wars (i.e., Balkan Peace Team). Organizations also varied in terms of limitations on kinds of violence – be it only addressing gang related violence, including or excluding 'domestic' violence, or concluding they don't have the capacity to influence corporate violence but only state-based violence.

While all the organizations used physical presence as part of their work, some understood this presence as limited to monitoring, others limited to physical accompaniment, and still others employed a wide variety of strategies and practices. At the end of this summary is an analysis of the practices discussed in five of the six workshops, demonstrating the wide range of activities. No organization implemented all of these.

Common elements

While there was much diversity, there were shared core elements among the many organizations, projects and efforts. These perhaps indicate some of the boundaries of what makes A/UCP different, when combined, from other fields. One of the core elements was the practice of being unarmed, referred to here within the broader frame of nonviolence. Although not all groups and organizations embrace this concept, in practice all were unarmed. It seems that some might condone violence in some circumstances, just not in their work. Some may cooperate with or defer to armed actors in certain situations, others seek to keep a distance from actors like police or (national or international) military. There are many different paths to the practice of nonviolence, some primarily strategic and others reflecting a fundamental organizational commitment to the principle. For some being nonviolent is the only way to resist the violence without becoming complicit, or taking sides. For others their use of nonviolent strategies is the only way to be present or be effective in an area – they don't pose a threat to armed groups. For some the commitment to nonviolence as a principle is one of the fundamental cornerstones of their work. In many cases being nonviolent, for whatever reason, opens the possibility of relationships that might not be available otherwise, and that influence the prevention of or decrease violence against the civilians in question, or increases their protection.

The practice of A/UCP takes place in a field or network of relationships. This is obviously not unique to A/UCP, as much of human activity takes place in overlapping fields of relationships. What is particular about these relationships is that their main purpose, or in some cases, one of several purposes, is civilian protection without the use or threat of use of weapons or other forms of violence. The organizations and efforts also do not have the kind of 'soft power' other protection actors may have, such as threats of sanctions or promises of aid. Which is not to say they have no power, but not the particular form of what might be seen as the violence of 'power over'. Relationships are the process/mechanism/instrument for providing protection, the vehicle for influence. Power develops within networks of relationship. While some relationships are more focused on deterrence – something unwanted might happen if an armed group commits violence against those protected, other relationships are more focused on encouragement – finding shared purposes that prevent or decrease violence. These approaches are not exclusive, rather interactions may move between one or the other, or combine them. And while protection that includes violence and the threat of violence, also occurs within fields of relationships, using or threatening the use of weapons shapes those relationships differently, and has different constraints on acceptance and trust.

Establishing and maintaining relationships is thus critical for A/UCP effectiveness. While organizations and groups differ on which actors they relate to, they often use similar practices for establishing and maintaining relationships. Organizations that work from a position of solidarity or that work in highly fractured and/or violent contexts, may choose to relate to only certain actors. They may not relate to non-state armed actors, nor even officially with state actors, or others they deem counter to their work

of building trust with those they wish to protect. That said, they use similar strategies to develop and maintain chosen relationships. In many cases this includes being invited to work in the community, if they are outsiders. Many of the good practices detail how trust is built and maintained, often based on respect for and listening to local people, as well as building on local strengths. An array of relationships aims to be inclusive, but also to support space and opportunities for local people to address tensions and violence, through nonviolent means.

All of the organizations were either themselves local – i.e., working in their own communities and countries – or committed to involving local people in the development of their work. Some have a practice to only (or usually) go where they are invited by the local community or civil society organization. This is sometimes expressed as primacy of the local. While some groups didn't relate to that phrase, all worked to raise the voices of local civilians and to respond to the self articulated needs and wants of those they worked to protect.

An often-mentioned manifestation of this commitment to including local wants and strengths in programming, was the focus on capacity enhancement, rather than capacity building. Enhancement recognizes and builds on existing capacities and includes this in training and other practices. This distinction of and emphasis on, enhancement, surfaced in the lists of most important good practices – see the table below.

One critical aspect of the commitment to local inclusion, as previously noted, is that all of the organizations, groups and efforts represented at the workshops are to a large degree physically present in the communities where they work. Although since March 2020 some organizations have been constrained in their presence due to Covid 19 (and it isn't clear when this may change at time of writing), previous to this, all at least based their work on relationships and analysis developed in their specific contexts.

The focus on relationships, being present, and including local needs and wants, feeds the capacity to do frequent context and conflict analysis. The capacity to base work on an intimate knowledge of the situation, the ability to be quite flexible in response to analysis, and the commitment to engaging in frequent analysis, were repeatedly referenced as essential good practices. This analytical practice contributes to a deep understanding of the potentials and limitations of what any organization can do, and how this changes in fluid contexts. It also allows them to have security practices that are tailored to the immediate needs and situations.

This frequent analysis is possible both because of how organizations situate themselves in relationship to local communities, building networks of trust and influence, but also reflects that all of these organizations (except the few international alliances described in the Europe workshop report) are independent of nation state and international agendas. They are working outside the mandates and confines of many of the other protection actors in the field. Of course, while they are independent of some constraints, they are dependent on the mutuality of protection in many communities, the mutual networks of relational trust, and the paths of influence they have developed. For the vast majority that require funding, they are also dependent on their funding sources. Organizations are situated differently within this continuum of independence and mutuality.

Challenges

There were many challenges discussed at the workshops. The following are highlighted as affecting many organizations and efforts, though none impacted all.

Globally, though not universally, there appears to be shrinking space for A/UCP, as part of the growing authoritarianism and disregard for human rights evident in many places. This manifests in many ways such as organizations needing to choose whether to limit their work or lose permission to operate in a foreign country, or the violent attacks on people trying to protect demonstrators or monitor police interactions with refugees. One response by sone, has been to emphasize capacity enhancement for local efforts at self protection, seeing this as more sustainable and more appropriate. Yet the potential for self protection in many contexts is also shrinking in the face of extreme violence perpetrated by state and non state armed groups who appear to have no regard for human rights or basic human life.

Those organizations that base their work in a principle of solidarity with the civilians they work to protect, may experience these pressures more acutely. But working in a nonpartisan manner, not being partisan for any of the armed groups or political solutions, may not make a big difference, as any attempt to protect targeted civilians is seen as partisan.

Funding is a chronic and profound challenge for all the organizations and efforts that have expenses (a few small local groups are purely volunteer). While the world is willing to spend enormous sums on violence in an attempt to ensure peace, there is very little funding available for unarmed, nonviolent civilian efforts to protect themselves or others. And accessing funding impacts what work is done or not done and how it is done. The impact of these related challenges cannot be overstated.

Related to funding is the challenge of doing long term work. While some situations resolve more quickly, most of the efforts and organizations require long term presence. Often the funding cycles of 2-3 years and an emphasis on discrete projects undermine this.

An increasing number of international organizations, as well as some local/national organizations are addressing the manifestations of neo-colonialism, racism, and gender issues within their organizations and their work. Positionality – skin color, nationality, gender identity, religion, etc. impacts how effective a person can be at protecting another, dependent on the contexts. It is a challenge to be aware of this and use it with consciousness externally in the work, but also to be aware and address these issues internally, within an organization. A related challenge mentioned by some, is the tension between respecting local cultures and practices and yet challenging some such as the acceptance of domestic violence or revenge killings.

Although not mentioned in every workshop, the pressure to 'prove' that A/UCP is effective is a challenge. There is little research in the field, and of that, very little addresses the question of 'is this effective at protection?' There is little funding for evaluation in the tight organizational budgets, and the variety of research and evaluation methodologies make if difficult to compare results that are published. Additionally, few organizations share their evaluations openly, so learning together is limited.

Most organizations struggle with needs much larger than they can respond to, given their size and capacities. This requires thoughtful parsing of who to protect, when, and overall, what kinds of violence to respond to. Some groups address domestic violence and more broadly gender-based violence, seeing it as often involved in, or leading to, other kinds of violence. Some look particularly to protect the most

oppressed. Others focus on protecting specific activists in the community, trusting that if they can stay alive and active, these local activists will address what is crucial in their communities. But even the most narrowly focused groups have more requests or see more need, than they have capacity to respond to.

Many groups face increasing challenges in recruiting suitable volunteers and staff. While organizations active in the 1980's to early 2000's often had volunteers and staff motivated by solidarity and larger political concerns, today many are joining as a stepping stone to careers in international humanitarian aid or related fields. Some organizations that started out with only globally Northern and white volunteers/staff have started to include volunteers and staff from the Global South. However, given the global imbalances in privilege and income, such inclusion has raised the need to pay the practitioners engaged in A/UCP. And more than that, many organizations are finding there simply are fewer people interested in doing this work. Hiring and training appropriate people is critical for the work to be effective.

Good Practices

The first five workshops – in Southeast Asia, Middle East, Sub-Sahara Africa, North America and Latin America - were held as three-day events in person. As part of the final day, participants were asked to name one practice they felt was most important or valuable. Participants then indicated their top three choices. The following table shows, in their own words, the top seven choices for each workshop. Clearly there are themes that are repeated – the importance of relationships, the need for frequent analysis, the emphasis on working with local people, and strengthening self protection. Others, though mentioned less often are no less important such as self care, sharing policies and evaluations, and creativity. These are a snapshot in time, and can't be seen as a definitive statement of the most important good practices. Nonetheless, the repetition across five regions of the world, of the importance of the repeating practices seems indicative of both shared practices, and their centrality. Those that are closely related or identical are highlighted in colors.

Bogotá Workshop		Paynesville workshop		Nairobi Workshop		Beirut Workshop		Manila Workshop	
Permanent analysis	16	Primacy of those most affected	11	Relation-ship building	15	Relation-ship building	10	Primacy of local groups	15
Strengthen Communi-ty self-protection	12	Take the risk of bringing different groups together	10	Empower-ing communi-ties	13	Well-trained teams	9	Multi-level relation-ship-building	14

Bogotá Workshop		Paynesville workshop		Nairobi Workshop		Beirut Workshop		Manila Workshop	
Care of accompaniers / accompanied	10	Use whatever identity might protect but coupled with deep anticolonialism work	8	Identify and strengthen local coping mechanisms	11	Primacy of local actors	8	Capacity enhance-ment for all – local actors and all of us	9
Share policies and evaluations	7	Systematic analysis, critical and contextual analysis	7	Context analysis	10	Learning from local communi-ties / experien-ces of others	8	Ongoing context analysis	7
Solidarity networked	5	Relationship-building	6	Continuous process of actor mapping specific to interventions	7	Be proactive in our monitoring and evaluation and learning	8	Co-Creation (instead of implementa tion)	5
Open your mind without holding onto the mandate	5	Self-care	5	Active learning of existing local practices of self-protection	7	Analysis	4	Seeking the humanity in the other	5
Mutual support of accompanying organizations	5	Cultural and contextual appropriateness	4	Staff security	6	Non-partisan-ship	3	Creativity	3

After the first five workshops, the author of this summary took the full listing of good practices from the back of each report, and analyzed them into themes and specific categories. Each category contains one or more specific explanation of good practices in that category. This analysis was done by one person. Clearly others might categorize the good practices differently. This is offered as a look at the extensive experience and knowledge which already exists as to what constitutes good practice in the field, and a hope that it will lead, at some point, to the development of some shared training resources. There are

more themes in this presentation, than in the summary above. They are presented in alphabetical order, not in order of importance.

accompaniment
- accomaning aid convoy
- accompaniment of those in prison
- accompaniment should complement self protection
- advocacy for those accompanied
- build relationships with police
- carried out by locals
- clear line between accompanied and accompanying org
- clear protocols for work between governments, embassies and acco
- combine physical, political, psychosocial accompaniment
- contributes to change via protection of activists
- coordinate among people grops increase security
- de escalation
- documentation
- encourage partners, require partners, to be noviolent
- Hide vs public sanctuary
- identification of UCP uniforms, vests, info cards
- In indigenous land careful with religious identites
- international accompaniment can dissuade

legal accompaniment
- accompany in judicial hearings
- use laws, rule of law
- limitations to accompaniment practices
- make decisions collectively with accompanied
- needs strong prepared teams
- non interference in internal decision making of those accompanied
- protect through accompaniment

protective accompaniment
- accompany indigenous communities
- communicate with select actors only
- community
- peace communities
- work long term as needed
- protests demonstrations
- religious orders accompany caravans
- requires relationships
- seek dialogue with companies
- send letters warning where accompaniers will be
- specific needs of LGBTQI non binary people

activism and advocacy
- advocate at multiple levels
- find the right language words
- politcal advocacy abroad pressures
- right messanger and right message
- UCP doing this

advocate for and promote UCP
- advocate for political financial support
- tell UCP stories broadly
- train others spread UCP
- use power of faith based groups to make noise
- widen accompaniment in a region

context analysis
- analysis and strategies re multinational corporations
- analysis based on local input
- analyze and address criminal and gang violence
- analyze change
- base intervention on analysis
- work is particular to specific situation

decoloinze anti racism
- address power imbalances
- advocate for structural changes
- be allies re racism sexism of other INGOs
- mentor promote IBPOC
- multi ethnic, age, etc teams
- non interference in decision making of local org and community
- religous ceremonies are opt in
- training
- use identities as long as requested and coupled with decolonizing trainir
- use multiple languages
- work in/with indigenous communities

Do NO Harm
- be sure international presence will do no harm

enhance community connections and capacities
- address community stereotypes
- build connections/teams
- build relationships
- capacity enhancement based on needs of local community
- educate police about peace teams
- improve aid agencies interaction with community
- listen
- local mediation and negotiation
- ongoing continous from beginning
- respond to humanitarian crises
- strengthen election and governance participation
- support increased capacity at local and regional levels
- training on UN resolutions re women
- work in home community not just int'l
- work with key stakeholders
- work with women
- work with youth

gender
- acknowledge security issus LGBTQI staff, volunteers, community
- make safe spaces for LGBTQI
- policiess for accusations of harassment or abuse by accompanied
- sensetivity to norms yet model
- specific non-negotiable gender protocols with partners
- specifics of protecting women
- understand use of gender in protection

internal organization practices
- be flexible adapt to changes be creative
- divide work between direct accomp and advocacy
- document work
- ending or firing staff or volunteers
- fundraising
- gender balance in teams
- gender equity equality other gender issues
- good care of staff - benefits, mental health, leave etc.
- internal protocols for allegations of harassment
- manage organization identity and expectations
- multi cultural multi national teams
- Need core paid staff
- not paying ransom or bribes
- organizational work to scale/expand
- plan for, prevent and respond to internal crisis
- planning for evacuation and ending
- practice nonviolence within organization
- provide external staff supervision
- qualities of good volunteers/staff

- recruitment
- regular team meetings
- relationships among team members
- secure communicaton
- **security management**
  - activation network for emergencies
  - assess risk vs impact and need
  - clear sops
  - get info from UN, embassies about security
  - In case of kidnapping
  - in insecure areas travel in pairs or groups
  - IT security
  - know first aid
  - know how to directly contact safety staff from field
  - local and int'l staff roles in security
  - security management with local people
  - security planning daily
  - staff security practices
  - visible identification vests hatsetc for security
- selecting and working in partnerships
- some tailor description of work to gain gov't support
- staff/volunteer training is critical
- support staff LGBTQI issues
- use good translators when needed
- use staff/volunteers based on identity, skills etc.
- use uniforms, vests for indpendence
- who speaks for the organization
- **learning and evaluation**
  - evaluate and change thru whole project
  - evaluation practices
  - expand academic work on UCP/accompaniment
  - knowledge management learning within organization
  - support learning between project and organizations
- **monitoring**
  - acceptance, nonpartisan, relationship important
  - effective by local and international
  - informal monitoring
  - moniotor weapons free zones
  - monitor social media
  - monitoring elections
  - official monitoring
  - report to all sides
  - rumor control
- **Other**
  - all forms of violence
  - avoid tone of moral superiority
  - Cooperation between different accompaniment/UCP groups
  - de-escalate armed shootings
  - deterrence and encouragement
  - forms of violence prevent micro trafficking drugs
  - **principles**
    - independence
    - nonviolence
    - solidarity even if professional
  - promote a culture of peace in high risk communities
  - refrain from material aid or make equal
  - strenght and challenge of local vs international
  - support truth and reconciliation processes
  - support visits and tours by outsiders make conflict visible

- The work can be slow, step by step
- Transnational Migrant Search Mechanicm DNA bank
- UCP is peace making, keeping and building
- work with Media
- **primacy of local**
  - acknowledge local expertise
  - be careful of who in community is 'primary'
  - capacity enhancement not building
  - communities learn from each other
  - consult with diverse community people
  - depend on partners/local for information
  - local and international should complement
  - local input into 'beneficiary' selection
  - local organizations and leaders need clear goals, plans for when interna
  - never speak for locals at meeting with third parties
  - not judging, but limits to work with nonviolent
  - only some local not all
  - protection goes both ways
  - rely on local people for implementation of plans
  - some role for internationals
  - supporting local leadership
  - those most harmed should lead, or be included in response
  - UCP org independent and respecting primacy
  - work is specific to each particular community
  - work only by invitation of local actors
- **protective presence**
  - live in the community
  - monitor specific areas
  - protective presence in community
  - work with duty bearers to improve security
  - work with high risk and vulnerable communities
  - work with IDPs and migrants
  - work with youth in community
- **relationships**
  - build maintain relationships daily basis
  - buld broadly in community many secotrs
  - develop good relationships with aid agencies
  - facilitate relationships between local conflict groups
  - longer terms of service supports relationships
  - relationship to track 1 and 2 negotiations
  - relationships with armed actors
  - relationships with authorities
  - relationships with other UCP type organizations
  - support enhance relationships between local community and IDPs
  - support relationships within community for security
- **strenghten self protection**
  - ask how UCP can help, follow local lead
  - develop or enhance early warning early response
  - help reconstruct social fabaric
  - local may be independent but not nonpartisan
  - promote human rights committees within community
  - provide training and support to strengthen
  - some don't want outside help
  - support local mediation
  - support nonviolent options
  - support self protection
  - work with youth towawrd nonviolence
- **train staff/volunteers**
  - deal with internal conflicts

- gender issues
- in person training
- include classroom, theory, practice
- LGBTQI issues
- qualities of good staff/volunteers
- security training
- self care training
- train for flexibility
- train for self awareness
- train staff in basic principles
- training should be continuous
- use former/returned staff for trainers