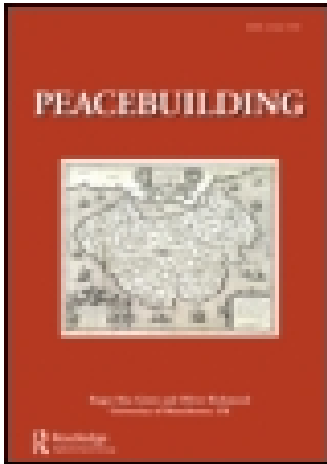


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Securing space for local peacebuilding: the role of international and national civilian peacekeepers

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Securing space for local peacebuilding: the role of international and national civilian peacekeepers

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While large multilateral peace operations arrive with agendas extending into governance, economics and other reforms, unarmed civilian peacekeeping (UCP) interventions focus on contributing to sufficiently safe space for local efforts at peacebuilding to proceed at the request of local partners. They use a variety of non-violent methods to increase the safety for local leaders and everyday people to engage in (re)building peace infrastructures and governance, within their own culture and contexts. This paper examines the potential for international interveners to support local efforts based on local invitations, local staff, conflict and context analysis, and living in conflict affected communities, followed by a case study of the Non-violent Peaceforce South Sudan project. This project helps to revitalise or create community peace infrastructures in coordination with local partners, other peacekeepers and humanitarian agencies, local government, army and other armed actors. This has protected civilians, saved lives, contributed to improved policing, improved relations between ethnic groups, supported local peace actors and increased the effectiveness of multilateral peace operations and humanitarian aid work focused on physical safety.

Keywords: unarmed civilian peacekeeping; peacebuilding; civilian protection; violence prevention; South Sudan

Introduction

Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping, also referred to as unarmed civilian protection, (UCP) is a developing practice that combines non-violence and peacekeeping by which unarmed civilians protect other civilians in areas at risk of, or experiencing, direct political violence. While peacekeeping and peacebuilding are often conceptualised as distinct stages and tasks, this paper discusses the link between them and describes ways in which the practice of UCP contributes to peacebuilding work that is grounded in local communities and follows local leadership. By peacebuilding, we mean changes in structural contradictions, relationships between conflicted parties and individual attitudes and behaviours,¹ which contribute to a more sustainable, long-term absence of direct political violence. There is a growing body of work that discusses the purpose and effectiveness of unarmed civilians protecting individual civilians such as human rights

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¹Berghof Foundation, *Berghof Glossary on Conflict Transformation*, http://www.berghof-foundation.org/images/uploads/berghof_glossary_2012_10_peace_peacebuilding_peacemaking.pdf.

defenders,² or more broadly focused on providing protection to whole communities or vulnerable groups within a community.³ Though not connected to the literature on unarmed civilian peacekeeping (UCP) referred to above, there is also growing attention paid to the challenges of protecting civilians,⁴ and to the ways in which civilians in the midst of armed conflicts, protect themselves.⁵ Recently there has been increased attention to the connections between peacekeeping and peacebuilding, focused on the challenges posed by the increasing complexity of peace operations that include both aspects in their mandates.⁶ Carriere is one of the few who addresses the connection between UCP as peacekeeping and peacebuilding.⁷ This paper attempts to weave these strands together, discussing and then demonstrating the ways in which UCP effectively protects civilians, augmenting their own protection strategies when possible, while simultaneously supporting local peacebuilding work, some of which may grow out of these self-protection efforts. In light of Paffenholz' work, which critiques support by international interveners of urban based NGOs specialised in peacebuilding strategies, finding ways to effectively support grassroots, rural, community rooted peacebuilding is particularly crucial.⁸

²Liam Mahony and Luis Enrigue Eguren, *Unarmed Bodyguards: International Accompaniment for the Protection of Human Rights*, (West Hartford: Kumarian Press, 1997); Liam Mahony, *Protective Presence: Field Strategies for Civilian Protection*, (Geneva: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2006); Patrick G. Coy, 'Shared Risks and Research Dilemmas on a Peace Brigades International Team in Sri Lanka', *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 30, no. 5 (2001): 575–606; Lisa Schirch, *Civilian Peacekeeping Preventing Violence and Making Space for Democracy*, (Uppsala: Life & Peace Institute, 2006).

³Ed Griffin-Nolan, 'Witness for Peace', in *Nonviolent Interventions across Borders: A Recurrent Vision*, eds. Yeshua Moser-Puangsuwan and Thomas Weber (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), Chapter 15; Christine Schweitzer, 'Introduction: Civilian Peacekeeping a Barely Tapped Resource', in *Civilian Peacekeeping a Barely Tapped Resource*, ed. Christine Schweitzer (Belm-Vehrte: Sozio Publishing, 2010), Chapter 1; Cordula Reiman, 'Nonviolent Peaceforce Evaluation of NP's Project in Mindanao, Philippines', (Swisspeace, 2010); C. Gunduz and R. Torralba, 'Evaluation of Nonviolent Peaceforce's Project with the Civilian Protection Component of the International Monitoring Team in Mindanao', (Nonviolent Peaceforce, 2014); Kara Beckman and Kenneth B. Solberg, 'Measuring the Impact of Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping: A Pilot Study', (unpublished paper, 2013).

⁴Paul D. Williams, 'Enhancing Civilian Protection in Peace Operations: Insights from Africa', (The African Center for Strategic Studies, 2010); Hugh Breakey et al., 'Enhancing Protection Capacity: Policy Guide to the Responsibility to Protect and the Protection of Civilians in Armed Con' (Institute for Ethics, Governance and Law, 2012); Alison Giffen, 'Enhancing the Protection of Civilians in Peace Operations: From Policy to Practice', (Asia Pacific Civil-Military Centre of Excellence, 2011).

⁵Daniel H. Levine, 'Some Considerations for Civilian-Peacekeeper Protection Alliances', *Ethics & Global Politics* 6, no. 1 (2013); Andrew Bonwick, 'Who Really Protects Civilians?', *Development in Practice* 16, no. 03–04 (2006): 270–77; Aditi Gorur, 'Community Self-Protection Strategies', (Stimson Center, 2013); Alison Giffen, 'Community Perceptions as a Priority in Protection and Peacekeeping', (Stimson Center, 2013).

⁶Séverine Autesserre, 'Going Micro: Emerging and Future Peacekeeping Research', *International Peacekeeping* 21, no. 4 (2014): 492–500; Bahar Akman Imboden, 'Unpacking the Peacekeeping-Peacebuilding Nexus: A Human Security Proposal', *Conflict Resolution Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (2012): 173–96.

⁷Rolf Carriere, 'Another Peacekeeping is Possible', *Kosmos*, Fall/Winter (2011).

⁸Thania Paffenholz, 'International Peacebuilding Goes Local: Analysing Lederach's Conflict Transformation Theory and Its Ambivalent Encounter with 20 Years of Practice', *Peacebuilding* (2013): 1–17.

The paper begins with a definition and brief explanation of UCP and its foundations. This is followed by a discussion of some of the ways in which peacekeeping links to peacebuilding, highlighting interrelationships and the challenges these pose for both peacekeeping and peacebuilding. While the use of these concepts is designed to highlight the differences between tasks, for different actors in various stages and levels of peace processes,⁹ in this paper we highlight the ways in which each set of tasks sets the context for and overlaps with other tasks. This is followed by a section which details how the strengths of UCP's peacekeeping role contribute to a context which is conducive to peacebuilding, as well as contributing to peacebuilding efforts directly. Finally, the paper describes ongoing work by the Non-violent Peaceforce (NP) in South Sudan, demonstrating the implementation of UCP and the connection between peacekeeping and peacebuilding in this particular context.

What is unarmed civilian peacekeeping?

UCP has been defined as 'the practice of deploying unarmed civilians before, during and after violent conflict, to prevent or reduce violence, to provide direct physical protection to other civilians and to strengthen or build resilient local peace infrastructures. The purpose of UCP is to create a safer environment, or a "safer space", for civilians to address their own needs, solve their own conflicts and protect vulnerable individuals and populations in their midst. This "safer space" is created through a strategic mix of key non-violent engagement methods, principles, values and skills (see Figure 1).'¹⁰ These efforts aim to influence potential perpetrators of violence to desist while supporting local actors to engage in peacebuilding as well as resume regular activities that may have been suspended out of fear.¹¹

Scholars and practitioners have used different terms to describe the concept of UCP, such as proactive presence, protective accompaniment and unarmed civilian protection, and included different components in their definitions of UCP.¹² Though there are differences between the theories that lie behind the various definitions and terms as well as in the scope of methods that are covered by these terms, the respective practices share

⁹Johan Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means. Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization*, (London: Sage Publications, 1996).

¹⁰Huibert Oldenhuis, Rolf Carriere, Ellen Furnari, Mel Duncan, *Strengthening Civilian Capacities to Protect Civilians from Violence: E-Learning Course*, (UNITAR and Nonviolent Peaceforce, forthcoming).

¹¹Recognizing the complexity of defining 'local' (see Bruno Charbonneau, 'War and Peace in Côte D'ivoire: Violence, Agency, and the Local/International Line', *International Peacekeeping* 19, no. 4 (2012): 508–24) we use the term generally in line with Richmond's use of the phrase 'local–local' (Oliver P. Richmond, 'Becoming Liberal, Unbecoming Liberalism: Liberal-Local Hybridity Via the Everyday as a Response to the Paradoxes of Liberal Peacebuilding', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 3, no. 3 (2009): 324–44).

¹²Tim Wallis, 'Civilian Peacekeeping', *Oxford Encyclopedia of Peace*, (Oxford University Press, 2009); Ellen Furnari, 'Understanding Effectiveness in Peacekeeping Operations: Exploring the Perspectives of Frontline Peacekeepers' (PhD thesis, University of Otago, 2014), 38; Mahony, *Protective Presence: Field Strategies*; Schweitzer, *Introduction, Civilian Peacekeeping*, 9; Oldenhuis et al., *Strengthening Civilian Capacities*.

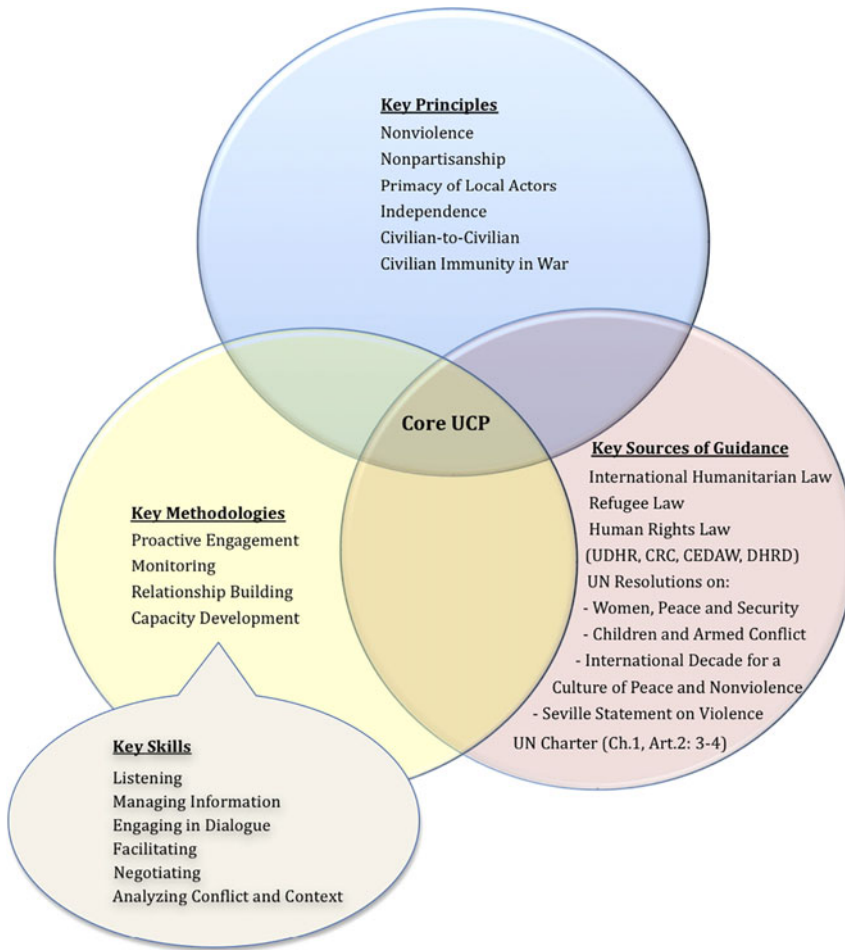


Figure 1. The spectrum of UCP (Source: Oldenhuis et al., forthcoming).

similarities.¹³ Though most attempts of defining and institutionalising UCP are of western origin and recent date, unarmed or non-violent methods to interrupt violence and protect civilians can be found in many cultures throughout history.¹⁴

Since Peace Brigades International (PBI) began fielding unarmed international staff to protect non-violent civilian activists in Central America in the mid 1980s,¹⁵ a number of

¹³One of the major differences relates to the commitment to being nonpartisan. See Patrick Coy, 'Nonpartisanship, Interventionism and Legality in Accompaniment: Comparative Analyses of Peace Brigades International, Christian Peacemaker Teams, and the International Solidarity Movement', *The International Journal of Human Rights* 16, no. 7 (2012): 963–81 for a discussion of different organizations' approach to accompaniment as nonpartisan protection versus providing solidarity and partisanship.

¹⁴Moser-Puangsuwan and Weber, *Nonviolent Intervention across Borders*; Schirch, *Civilian Peacekeeping: Preventing Violence*; Gorur, *Community Self-Protection Strategies*.

¹⁵Mahony and Eguren, *Unarmed Bodyguards*.

international non-governmental organisations, such as the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Witness for Peace¹⁶ and Nonviolent Peaceforce have provided UCP in conflict areas around the world. The United Nations has increasingly recognised the value of UCP and some of its offices, such as the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Nepal, have effectively engaged in UCP type efforts and prevented violence through the physical presence and engagement of unarmed civilian field staff.¹⁷ Recent research and evaluation have suggested that UCP has had positive impacts in a number of projects.¹⁸ These impacts have included, among many: influencing armed actors to desist from harming civilians in particular contexts; supporting local civilian efforts to prevent violence, strengthen community self-protection strategies and build peace infrastructure; contributing to peace negotiations at the community and regional levels; and expanding the safety and confidence for local activists to engage in human rights and peace promoting activities.

Unarmed Civilian Peacekeepers (UCPs) engage with affected communities at the grassroots level for extended periods of time. They provide, for example, protective accompaniment or presence to threatened human rights defenders or Internally Displaced People (IDPs). Their physical presence is provided for weeks, months and even years. Depending on the need, it may be only at certain times and places, or all day and night in extreme threat contexts. UCPs can also employ a range of other methods, such as ceasefire monitoring, rumour control, and conflict mitigation. UCP is applicable at various stages of a conflict; during early stages to prevent violence and protect those working for non-violent conflict, during crisis situations to stop violence, de-escalate tensions and protect civilians, and at later stages to help sustain peace agreements and secure safer space for peacebuilding. UCP has also contributed to peace negotiation efforts.

Though applicable in various stages of a conflict, not all contexts are equally suitable for UCP.¹⁹ The effectiveness of UCP depends on its ability to create acceptance among local actors and engage with these actors as a visible, non-partisan presence. In places where such a presence is rejected (by the host government, non-state armed actors or affected communities) or specifically targeted by armed groups, it is difficult, not appropriate, or simply not possible for UCP to operate or be effective. For instance, members of a Christian Peacemaker Team in Baghdad were abducted and one killed, and the team withdrew. Similarly, due to the levels of threat of abduction of internationals, the Nonviolent Peaceforce in Mindanao had only a small team of national staff in some regions of Mindanao, though visited regularly by international staff. That said, UCP interventions have been effective in many different contexts ranging from the civil wars in

¹⁶Thomas Weber, 'A History of Nonviolent Interposition and Accompaniment', in *Nonviolent Intervention across Borders: A Recurrent Vision*, eds. Yeshua Moser-Puangsuwan and Thomas Weber (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 15–41.

¹⁷Liam Mahony and Roger Nash, *Influence on the Ground: Understanding and strengthening the protection impact of United Nations human rights field*, (Brewster: Fieldview Solutions, 2012), 20.

¹⁸Christine Schweitzer, 'Nine Years of Nonviolent Peaceforce in Sri Lanka', (Hamburg: Institute for Peace Work and Nonviolent Conflict Transformatio, 2012); Peace Brigades International, 'Indonesia Project Evaluation', (unpublished paper, 2004); Reiman, Nonviolent Peaceforce Mindanao; Gunduz and Torralba, Evaluation Nonviolent Peaceforce's Project; Beckman and Solberg, 'Measuring Impact Civilian Peacekeeping'; Tiffany Eastholm, 'The South Sudan Weapons Free Zone', *Peace Review* 27, no.1 (2015), 31–36; Georgi Engelbrecht and V. Kaushik, 'Community Protection Mechanisms', *Peace Review* 27, no. 1 (2015), 43–51.

¹⁹Bernardo Venturi, 'External Preconditions for Civilian Peacekeeping', *Peace Studies Journal* 7, no. 2 (2014), 1–11.

Guatemala, Mindanao Philippines and Aceh Indonesia, to the current context of South Sudan, which is both post civil war and currently as of this writing, experiencing a new civil war. Moreover, the initial rejection or targeting of peacekeepers does not mean that UCP presence is never possible. It can take a long process of building relationships and trust as well as creative application of UCP methods before their presence is accepted.

The role of UCP in securing space for local peacebuilding

In this section, we first discuss several ways in which peacekeeping is linked to both peacemaking and peacebuilding, and the implications of these interrelationships. After describing a number of concerns, which arise from recognising this interrelationship, we describe how the particular strengths of UCP can address these concerns and contribute positively not only to peacekeeping, but also peacemaking and peacebuilding tasks.

As defined above, UCP works to prevent violence, protect people AND contribute to the strengthening or emergence of local work that will contribute to non-violent political contestation.²⁰ These goals are shared with military peacekeeping or multidimensional peacekeeping. We argue here, however, that UCP, in many contexts, can play a particularly useful role in bridging peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. While sometimes referred to as three different stages or three different sets of tasks,²¹ it is apparent that there are actually strong links between them and that their implementation overlaps. For instance, Francis notes that including only, or giving primacy to armed groups in peace negotiations, often excludes non-violent actors and the general public.²² This may have a perverse effect, encouraging actors to engage in political violence in order to be included, making peacekeeping and peacebuilding more challenging, and the exclusion of many parts of society has long-term ramifications for developing a lasting peace. Johnstone suggests that while consent may be initially given in a peace agreement (and at times under significant pressure), it must be maintained throughout the long peacekeeping and peacebuilding periods, and that it must ultimately have the consent of the wider public and not just the initial signatories.²³ Thus, it is clear that the process of peacemaking sets the context for peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

Similarly, we argue that the ability of a peacekeeping intervention to successfully prevent further violence will impact both further peace negotiations and the potential to build a more sustainable peace through various peacebuilding efforts. Localised outbreaks of violence following a peace agreement can instigate widespread violence and undermine further peacemaking.²⁴ As peace agreements are often negotiated without all relevant

²⁰The authors assume that the goal of peacebuilding is nonviolent political contestation, with sufficient safety for civilians to participate as fully as they choose, rather than envisioning an end to political conflict.

²¹Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means*; Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 'An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-Keeping', (United Nations, 1992).

²²Diana Francis, *From Pacification to Peacebuilding a Call to Global Transformation*, (London: Pluto Press, 2010).

²³Ian Johnstone, 'Managing Consent in Contemporary Peacekeeping Operations', *International Peacekeeping* 18, no. 2 (2011), 168–82.

²⁴S. N. Kalyvas, 'The Ontology of Political Violence: Action and Identity in Civil Wars', *Perspectives on Politics* 1(2003), 475; David K. Leonard, 'Social Contracts, Networks and Security in Tropical African Conflict States: An Overview', *IDS Bulletin* 44, no. 1 (2013), 1–14; Autesserre, 'Going Micro: Emerging and Future Peacekeeping Research'.

actors included, they may not address critical conflicts which are obstacles to peacebuilding and which fuel continuing cycles of violence. Ongoing violence undermines efforts to (re)build peace infrastructures, connections across divides and address underlying drivers of conflict, all of which are essential aspects of peacebuilding or as 'peace writ large'.²⁵ There needs to be sufficient safety for civilians to engage in peacebuilding efforts without risking death or disappearance. Closing the circle, we argue that successful peacebuilding efforts which build connections and which effectively address some or all of the underlying contributors to conflict support implementation of agreements made through peacemaking and a context in which local people cooperate with peacekeeping. Peacebuilding efforts implemented at the national level or in one particular region may positively influence peacemaking efforts at the local level (and vice versa) or in a different region. In other words, while it may be useful to conceptualise these as three different stages or sets of tasks, they are interrelated, may happen simultaneously at different levels and are factors in success overall.

It follows that if peacekeeping is not effective at preventing violence and protecting people, a return to more overt, active political violence including a return to war is more likely. According to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, in the period between 1975 and 2011, only 125 peace agreements out of 216 were followed by the termination of violence for at least five years.²⁶ This shows that there is room for improvement in making a successful transition from peacemaking to peacebuilding and raises questions about the role of peacekeeping in accompanying and aiding this transition.

Summarising the implications of the above discussion suggests the following propositions: peacekeeping is an essential link between peacemaking and peacebuilding; the absence or inadequacy of peacekeeping may hamper or stall peacebuilding; protection has been under-emphasised within the practice of peacebuilding,²⁷ while unarmed or non-violent methods have been under-emphasised within the practice of peacekeeping. In addition though peacebuilding and peacekeeping are theoretically, and in many instances separate practices for foreign experts, reality on the ground is more complex or fluid. The practice of providing protection, security and conflict resolution often occurs simultaneously or overlaps (e.g. in order to negotiate about security, relations need to be built). The local actors involved in these practices are often the same people, who don't differentiate their actions as peacemaking, peacekeeping or peacebuilding. UCP recognises this reality and plays a role in protecting and nurturing these local 'peacebuilding' efforts and local 'peacebuilders'. It doesn't simply create security and when the situation is deemed stable hands over the keys to others. Its approach to security and protection helps peacebuilding interventions be tailored to the context and needs of the people. This makes it an extremely valuable form of peacekeeping and civilian protection, from a peacebuilding perspective.

UCP accomplishes these interventions through specific methodologies, which express the key principles of non-partisanship (though as previously noted, not all organisations

²⁵Mary Anderson and Lara Olson, *Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners* (Cambridge, MA: The Collaborative for Development Action, Inc., 2003); Allison Giffen, 'Community perceptions as a priority in protection and peacekeeping', (Stimson Center, 2013)

²⁶Stina Hogbladh, 'Peace Agreements 1975–2011 Updating the UCDP Peace Agreement Dataset' (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2012).

²⁷Thania Paffenholz, 'Civil Society and Peacebuilding. Summary of Results for a Comparative Research Project', Centre on Conflict Development and Peacebuilding (2009).

espouse non-partisanship to the same extent if at all), independence, civilian-to-civilian partnerships and non-violence. Developing good relationships is one of the keys to effective peacekeeping generally and UCP in particular.²⁸ UCP relies on building good working relationships with all sectors of society in the areas where they work. The opportunity to build good relationships is enhanced by local perceptions of UCP interventions being non-partisan, unarmed and therefore not a direct threat, and generally independent of any specific national or international agendas.²⁹ These relationships are used not only for direct protection work but also help to connect different sectors of society and promote understanding/communication between track three and track two or track one³⁰ as well as with other international interveners. Thus, although the work is focused on preventing violence and protecting civilians, which are seen as peacekeeping tasks, the strong grounding in local communities and with local actors across sectors means that the work of UCP contributes at times to both peacemaking and peacebuilding. For instance, in Mindanao, Philippines, unarmed civilian peacekeepers (UCPs) of Nonviolent Peaceforce were part of an international monitoring team and a member of the civilian protection component. In this capacity, UCPs helped to link local community concerns and experiences to the peace negotiations. At the same time, by supporting the creation of local security meetings inclusive of civilian leaders as well as police and military, the project contributed to changes in the provision of community security.

As UCPs develop strong relationships across sectors, people begin to turn to them with concerns. When news spreads of a violent attack or abduction, UCPs may be well positioned to investigate and either provide rumour control or early warning/early response planning in the case of looming violence. Doing this effectively requires a broad network of connections, built up over time, and reflect that UCPs live in the communities where they work and are easily accessible. Though not all UCP interventions include local staff, they all rely on local knowledge to help understand the situation. In addition, UCPs are sometimes able to travel in places where other interveners or locals do not, or cannot, go. When local people are included in the staff as UCPs (not just drivers or in administrative positions), attempts are made to ensure that local staff come from various ethnicities, regions or from different 'sides' of the conflict. Thus creating a perception of inclusivity, which not only promotes trust, but also models cooperation across divides which in and of itself contributes to peacebuilding.

In contrast, peacekeeping currently undertaken by the UN, EU, AU or others is generally only one dimension of multidimensional peacekeeping operations.³¹ While peacekeeping (as opposed to peace enforcement) is generally oriented towards supporting a negotiated peace agreement, most missions today are also tasked with protecting

²⁸Ellen Furnari, 'The Role of Relationships in the Emergence of Peace', in *Behaviorial Processes and Systems of Peace*, eds. Peter Verbeek and Benjamin A. Peters (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., forthcoming, 2015); Schweitzer, 'Introduction: Civilian Peacekeeping'.

²⁹Ellen Furnari, 'Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping: A Potential Response to Peacekeepers' and Critical Scholars' Parallel Critiques of Multidimensional Peace Operations?' (presented at the International Humanitarian Studies Association, Istanbul, 2013); Oldenhuis et al., *Strengthening Civilian Capacities*; Furnari, *The Role of Relationships*.

³⁰John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1997).

³¹United Nations Department of Peacekeeping, 'United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines', (United Nations, 2008).

civilians. Other dimensions may address democratic elections, constitutional and security sector reforms and other efforts to strengthen governance, various humanitarian and development components, as well as economic reforms oriented towards supporting free markets. This combination of dimensions is frequently referred to as the liberal peace agenda,³² and is related to the assumption that liberal democracies do not fight each other.³³ This leads towards programming to establish a world of liberal democracies with free markets as the path to world peace and an argument that non-liberal governance is a security issue for existing liberal democracies.³⁴ These various components and the liberal peace agenda itself make up much of what is oriented towards peacebuilding within multidimensional operations. Others argue that the liberal peace analysis obscures any indications of neo-colonialism, capitalist exploitation and manifestation of self-serving great powers, which may influence the construction of these interventions.³⁵ Francis believes that this combination of pre-packaged agendas, implemented by outside experts, often through the domination of military force in peacekeeping (or peace enforcement) roles, has undermined the legitimacy of the concept of peacebuilding itself.³⁶

Unlike UCP interventions, the military and police components that engage directly in work to maintain a peace agreement often are charged with supporting the government, which in many contexts represents one side of the conflict. They tend to live in military compounds, disconnected from nearby communities, with restricted rules of travel and interaction with the community. They are generally male soldiers not trained in dealing with the specific protection concerns of women and children. All these factors may compromise the positive impact of peacekeeping on peacebuilding.

In contrast to multi-dimensional peacekeeping operations, UCP interventions are directly grounded in relationships with local people, independent, non-partisan, and not connected to wider international agendas. As staff are unarmed, they are not involved in military domination. Staff may provide protection and input to humanitarian agencies which are part of or related to other agendas, but attempt to do so in a way centred on the needs of local people. UCP interventions in other words are rarely implicated in the liberal

³²William Durch, 'Restoring and Maintaining Peace: What We Know So Far', in *Twenty-First-Century Peace Operations*, ed. William J. Durch (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2006); Oliver P. Richmond, 'The Problem of Peace: Understanding the "Liberal Peace"', *Conflict, Security & Development* 6, no. 3 (2006): 291–314; Oliver P. Richmond and Jason Franks, *Liberal Peace Transitions Between Statebuilding and Peacebuilding*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

³³Robert Luckham, 'Democracy and Security: A Shotgun Marriage', in *Rethinking the Liberal Peace: External Models and Local Alternatives*, ed. Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh (London: Routledge, 2011).

³⁴Kofi Annan and Nader Mousavizadeh, *Interventions: A Life in War and Peace*, (New York: Penguin Press, 2012).

³⁵Kristoffer Lidén, Roger Mac Ginty, and Oliver P. Richmond, 'Introduction: Beyond Northern Epistemologies of Peace: Peacebuilding Reconstructed?', *International Peacekeeping* 16, no. 5 (2009): 587–98; Philip Cunliffe, 'Still the Spectre at the Feast: Comparisons between Peacekeeping and Imperialism in Peacekeeping Studies Today', *International Peacekeeping* 19, no. 4 (2012), 426–42; Oliver P. Richmond, 'A Genealogy of Peace and Conflict Theory', in *Palgrave Advances in Peacebuilding: Critical Developments and Approaches*, ed. Oliver P. Richmond (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Vivienne Jabri, 'War, Government, Politics: A Critical Response to the Hegemony of the Liberal Peace', in *Palgrave Advances in Peacebuilding: Critical Developments and Approaches*, ed. Oliver P. Richmond (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

³⁶Francis, *From Pacification to Peacebuilding*

peace agenda and thus tend not to be effected by the resistance which may be catalysed in response.³⁷

This has direct implications for peacebuilding and peace builders. UCP contributes to keeping local peacemakers and human rights defenders alive and building their confidence and capacity, so that these actors can play a role later on in solidifying peace and promoting reconciliation. UCP is oriented towards increasing local expertise, rather than bringing in outside experts, though it shares knowledge freely. UCP builds or strengthens local self-sustaining structures for the sake of security and protection, which may well be used for reconciliation and conflict transformation as well. UCP has a non-violent approach to security and protection, using acceptance and relationship building instead of walls and guns. Not only does this prepare the ground for peacebuilding efforts and structures, which are founded on the same values and principles, but it also shows local actors that guns and force can be pushed back even further than often thought. It questions the notion of peace enforcement, interrupts the cycle of violence, and links means and ends.

In situations of increasing stability, UCP is well positioned to facilitate a transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding. This has a lot to do with its approach to security. Relying on the use of force, military peacekeeping actors often create security spaces with sharp boundaries, for example by cutting off any contacts between civilians in a 'safe zone' and armed factions in a 'red zone' soldiers may act as a physical buffer between conflicting groups or coerce perpetrators to halt their attack. In doing so, they create *safety from* armed actors.³⁸ This may be chosen in certain situations, but it also risks disconnecting people from each other and interfering with self-protection and survival strategies of communities. UCPs cultivate trust and acceptance with all conflict parties, so as to create spaces or situations, in which civilians can experience *safety with* members of other groups, including armed actors. By cultivating such spaces, they may become foci or 'mediative spaces'³⁹ where conflicting parties can restore relations and begin to address the root causes of conflict.

Finally, UCP encourages local participation in peacekeeping, and by doing so strengthens the foundations of peacebuilding. Local actors, especially civilians, are often excluded from peacekeeping or security matters. As peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding are highly interrelated processes at the field level, the relative exclusion of civilians, especially women, in peacekeeping and security processes, may undermine potential peacebuilding opportunities. Women may have different perspectives and priorities about security than men, which are often ignored and may result in insecurity that can be prevented. UCP often facilitates ongoing dialogues between security actors and women to identify and include their perspectives and priorities. Moreover, UCP may employ local women as peacekeepers or support them in establishing local peacekeeping units. These local peacekeepers often continue to keep and build peace after international peacekeepers have left the area and when security concerns are gradually replaced by the need for conflict transformation and reconciliation.

³⁷Roger Mac Ginty, *International Peace building and Local Resistance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011)

³⁸Daniel H. Levine, 'Some Moral Considerations for Civilian-Peacekeeper Protection Alliances', (Center for International and Security Studies Maryland University, 2012), 17–18.

³⁹John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

UCP in action: nonviolent peaceforce South Sudan

In this section, we illustrate how UCP can secure space for local peacebuilding by examining two examples of the efforts of Nonviolent Peaceforce in South Sudan (NPSS).

NPSS began in 2010 in the lead up to the vote for independence, which took place in 2011. Beginning with a small team in one area (Mundri, Western Equatoria), by late 2014 NP had approximately 55 international and 45 national staff working directly as peacekeepers in the field, spread out over eleven teams. Field locations included the following states: Central Equatoria State, Unity State, Jonglei State, Lakes State, Upper Nile and Northern Bahr el Ghazal.⁴⁰ The project works with and through local structures, traditional authorities and where present, local organisations. The main programme areas in 2014 included direct physical protection of vulnerable groups, women's participation in peace and security, strengthening local peace infrastructures and protection mainstreaming.

Facilitating a peace agreement in Western Equatoria State⁴¹

Improving relations between conflict parties is an important dimension of peacebuilding as it reduces the long lasting effects of war-related hostilities and disrupted communication between the conflict parties. Improved relationships across divides can change attitudes and in particular behaviours of different groups towards each other, while at the same time helping to create or renew security-related structures or processes which help to minimise local, inter/intra communal contradictions. Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) has done this in many different ways in South Sudan.

NP's initial focus in South Sudan was on supporting efforts aimed at rebuilding connections between communities and ethnic groups locked in cycles of revenge during the long civil war with Sudan, which would lead to decreased violence against civilians. These efforts addressed both the need for creating sufficient safety for civilians to engage with each other, and providing various kinds of supports as needed to these efforts. For example in 2011, NP was asked to intervene in a conflict between pastoralists and agriculturalists. Fighting erupted after a youth was killed in a particular county of Western Equatoria State and soon spread into a neighbouring county of Lakes State. Groups of youth were violently attacking communities from the other side. Large-scale destruction of property and attacks on civilians ensued: between 9 February and 3 April 2011, over 6000 homes were burned down, over 76,000 people were displaced, dozens of civilians including children were killed or injured, and hundreds of cattle and goats were raided. A team of NP staff, consisting of four expatriates and six nationals, was able to reach the remote area and bring the paramount chiefs and other key community leaders together for discussions. With facilitation and patience over many months, the chiefs negotiated an agreement that would prevent further violence.

While this can be seen as a relatively small impact, local people perceived it as deeply significant. In the past, different ethnic groups had been able to negotiate these differences with little or small scale violence. But the civil war (between northern and southern Sudan) had eroded traditional structures and the proliferation of guns meant that any violence

⁴⁰Personal communication with staff August, 2014.

⁴¹The following draws on Tiffany Eastholm, 'Unarmed Civilian Protection and Peacekeeping in South Sudan: A Case Study in Stabilization', (Nonviolent Peaceforce, 2013).

tended to be lethal. In addition, the intervention both modelled the possibility of settling differences non-violently and reminded people of their traditions to do so. The Deputy Governor of Western Equatoria State in South Sudan, SapanaAbuyi, stated in 2012: “There have been no conflicts since September. Usually the conflicts are in the dry season between September and April. This has been a 100% success. I give the credit to Nonviolent Peaceforce.”⁴²

What remains hidden from view reading this brief account are the efforts that led to this outcome as well as the efforts to maintain it. If NP had not already been based in the area and built a network of relations with various actors, it would not have been asked to intervene nor able to intervene quickly and effectively, if at all. If NP had not made additional efforts to build equal relationships on both sides, they could easily have been perceived as partisan and ignored by one side or, worse, attacked. Because NP had an office in Western Equatoria State, but not in Lakes State, home of the other conflicting parties, the team undertook several trips to Lakes State (slogging through mud on poor roads) to build relationships with communities and government officials. After a long process of preparing the ground for intervention, NP endeavoured for months to create a conducive environment for local parties to reach an agreement. They also provided a constant protective presence within the affected communities, coordinated and participated in peace conferences/discussions, provided transportation when needed for others to attend, engaged with members of the national legislative assembly in the capital city to gain support from high-level government officials and accompanied community leaders to peace talks. When a peace agreement was finally reached, NP continued its efforts to inform communities about the agreement, monitor the implementation of the agreement and facilitated the resolution of conflicts over (alleged) breaches of the agreement. Ultimately, it required NP to engage in 115 separate interventions between February and September 2011 before the situation was deemed sufficiently stable.

The case shows the fluidity between peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace building at the local level as well as the central role of relationship building in the process towards peace and stability. As local peacemakers were members of one side or the other, some of them were afraid to travel to territory controlled by the other side. The peacekeepers of NP provided protection through accompanying the local peacemakers, which increased their confidence and security, and allowed them to engage with the other side. They also provided protective presence during peace negotiations and to affected communities in the area, preventing further displacement. Thus, instead of creating separate security zones, where civilians from one side enjoy security from the other side, NP created a mediative space where both sides could enjoy security with each other and start the process of (re) building trust and relationships. As these relationships improved, attitudes and behaviours changed. The discussions and dialogues with people from many different social sectors not only built relationships, but also helped to create new processes, which at least began to address some of the underlying contradictions of land use, ethnicity and political power.

There is often not enough interaction between military peacekeeping security actors on the one hand and civilian peacebuilding experts on the other, which easily creates disconnection in the peace process and ignores its fluidity.⁴³ UCP can play a role in

⁴²Oldenhuis et al., *Strengthening Civilian Capacities*.

⁴³Jim Rolfe, ‘Partnering to Protect: Conceptualizing Civil–Military Partnerships for the Protection of Civilians’, *International peacekeeping* 18, no. 5 (2011), 561–76.

building relationships between these two groups, as military peacekeepers have been urged to seek connections with civilian organisations involved with self-protection and actively seek opportunities to bring stakeholders into contact with each other.⁴⁴ In the case of Western Equatoria, NP built relationships with the police and the military, in particular with a unit of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), called the Joint Integrated Unit (JIU). The JIU, deployed to the area to bring the situation under control, had a difficult time engaging with the various parties as they were sent out to cover two states with one vehicle and no communication equipment. NP made an effort to include them in the process and as NP's Country Director stated 'they were one of the most genuine group of soldiers we had ever worked with and they were eager to be agents of peace...'.⁴⁵ The inclusion of soldiers and other actors that are 'hard to reach' is often too easily ignored in peace projects, but it has proven to be an important factor of effectiveness.⁴⁶

Building relationships and trust between conflicting parties is a difficult process that takes time and ongoing nurturing, in this case demonstrated by the 115 interventions it took to create and implement the peace agreement. Needless to say that these interventions could not have been made if NP had been operating from the capital city, had protocols that limited their presence in, or transportation to, local communities, or if NP had ended its presence and engagement at the field level after the conclusion of the peace agreement. As UCP is grounded in the notion that local actors should be the main drivers of change, these sustained peacekeeping efforts can at times take the form of very basic actions, such as driving a local chief across muddy roads to a distant village so that he can address issues relevant to the peace process.

Addressing local conflicts is critical, both for affected communities and for the wider context. While the violence that broke out in December 2013 in South Sudan was instigated by national figures with national political agendas, it is fed at the local level by local conflicts, resentments and retaliations for past violence. Thus, re-establishing connections and communication may have a longer term impact by preventing further deterioration of relationships and violent behaviours. While there are many factors affecting which regions of South Sudan are currently (at the time of this writing) experiencing high levels of political violence, it is telling to note that areas such as this, where NP helped to address underlying conflicts, have not flared up. Providing a follow-up summary in July 2014, the NP country director in South Sudan wrote:

We have continued to monitor the progress of the communities each migration season and have paid visits on both sides of the border since then to check in and see how things are going and offer support where needed. There have been a couple of very minor incidents but no major conflict and as far as we know, no deaths since this agreement was made. This year the situation in that area is much more tense as the displacement from Jonglei has pushed into Lakes and across the border into Western Equatoria where the communities reported a higher than usual amount of cattle keepers and their cattle and that they were all heavily armed. We dispatched the Nzara based team to the area a number of times over the past 6 months and they have conducted a couple of community dialogues to help the affected populations think through their options... So in summary, the situation that we dealt with at the time has not repeated itself, the communities have been quite proactive about de-escalation and nonviolent

⁴⁴Levine, *Some Moral Considerations*, 18.

⁴⁵Oldenhuis et al., *Strengthening Civilian Capacities*.

⁴⁶Anderson and Olson, *Confronting War*.

problem solving. The impact of the bigger conflict has been felt but it has not deteriorated and there is generally a strong commitment to preventing outbreaks of violence.⁴⁷

Facilitating community security meetings in Pibor

NP works to (re)build peace infrastructures that contribute to safer environments for civilians. One of the most basic structures NP has worked to establish in South Sudan is community security meetings.⁴⁸ In isolated areas communities often lack information about security issues and rumours of an imminent attack on the community, or direct violence in the area easily cause panic and displacement. At the same time, there are numerous civilian protection needs. However, official and informal contact between civilians and protection actors (government, police, military, UN peacekeepers, INGO security officers) is often limited. Under these circumstances and in communities where they work, NP organises regular community security meetings to bring protection actors and the community together in a safe space to exchange information and address concerns. Though NP may initiate these meetings, ownership of the meetings is gradually moved towards local actors.

For civilians, community security meetings can be an opportunity to obtain information about the situation from various security actors, express security concerns, and develop solutions to issues related to safety and security. For protection actors, it is an opportunity to engage in rumour control, increase community awareness of specific issues and assess the perceptions of the community about security. Building these relationships also has the potential to increase protection actors' inclination and ability to fulfil their responsibilities as the people they are mandated to protect become known no longer strangers. As UCPs will eventually leave, these relationships are in some ways more important than the relationships UCPs have with local actors. For NP, it has been an opportunity to strengthen the relationships between civilians and protection actors and change certain attitudes and behaviour, i.e. giving civilians the confidence, courage and knowledge necessary to approach the military, police, government officials and UN peacekeepers when future threats arise. It is also a reminder that international actors are present and attending to security-related events.

In certain areas, NP has organised separate security meetings for women. Women are often excluded when it comes to security matters. And even if included, they often will not voice specific security concerns (or raise their voice at all). In Pibor, for example, NP was told that in a previous attack on the community many women and children ran into a river and drowned. NP staff noticed that women were expected to stay at home to watch their children while men attended the community security meeting. NP responded by organising separate security meetings at different times to give the women an opportunity to engage directly and more freely with security actors. For that particular group of women, it was the first time anyone had ever engaged them in such a way. Not only did this build the confidence of the women, it also helped to change the attitudes of some of the men as they witnessed that the views and concerns of women were taken seriously by the women *and* men of NP and the UN.

Some of the women experienced sexual violence by ill-disciplined South Sudanese soldiers (about 18 to 20 cases of rape per month), mostly when they were collecting water. However, they would not raise this issue in community security meetings with men as it

⁴⁷Personal communication, August 2014.

⁴⁸The following material is drawn from Oldenhuis et al. (2014).

was a taboo subject. It took time to build trust before women would speak to NP staff about such issues. When NP talked with UN peacekeepers, explaining the situation to them, the peacekeepers eventually decided to collect their own water at the borehole where women were harassed most frequently. They went there as another way to boost their presence.

Though the concerns over sexual violence were not initially voiced directly in the security meetings, the meetings became a space where these and other community concerns could be addressed with a diverse group of security actors. In Pibor, NP worked together with UN peacekeepers on the ground, UNPOL, and the national police service to set up a system where they would jointly patrol areas that were 'insecure', as had been indicated by the community. UNPOL, the UN peacekeepers and the NP team took turns throughout the day and evening to conduct patrols in these areas. An emergency phone tree was also established and distributed among the key actors in the area. Furthermore, NP worked together with women to strengthen self-protection strategies, such as accompanying each other or collecting water in large groups at specific times. Over a six to eight week period of doing these patrols and implementing these strategies, the number of reported rapes per week dropped from four or five to zero, as did other forms of violence that had been committed by soldiers in the area. These processes began to change the attitudes of women and others, about their proper role, build new relationships and address some of the conditions which put women and men at risk. According to the team leader of NP project in Pibor:

Patrolling in Kandako was one of the most effective things we did. It not only made civilians feel safer, I believe it actually made them safer as well. We started patrolling in March 2012 one week after a civilian was killed in the area. In the eight months that we were patrolling no civilians were shot. Two days after NP's forced evacuation from Pibor County in October 2012 three people got shot. One of them died.⁴⁹

The case shows that the establishment of very basic structures such as regular community security meetings can achieve multiple outcomes, such as increasing the security in the area, building relations between community members and security actors, changing attitudes of community members towards security actors and vice versa, increasing collaboration between different security actors and the creating additional structures such as the joint-patrol system. The security meetings also became a stepping stone for capacity building on self-protection strategies and dialogue on other issues that residents considered urgent.

In many communities, there is already peace work going on, and UCPs support this work by increasing the circumstances in which these activists can work. For example in another community, a number of women had been active in involved in political violence, making it difficult for community members from different ethnic groups to do their everyday tasks. NP staff accompanied the women in their initial visits to talk with these young men, increasing their security and simultaneously providing transportation. This engagement with specific perpetrators of violence against civilians was beginning to bear fruit, and violence in the community was decreasing. However, for many reasons it has been hard to sustain their communities, working to prevent violence and promote peace were frustrated by the levels of direct violence. They approached the local NP team and in discussions they came up with a plan to engage local youth directly. These youth had been this work. Still it shows promise for impact in a future time, when there is greater safety to

⁴⁹Unpublished Nonviolent Peaceforce document shared with authors.

engage in peacebuilding, as the women are rooted in their communities and committed to making changes.

Even without a return to war or high levels of political violence, UCP interventions face many challenges to creating relationships and infrastructures that can productively protect civilians, prevent violence and support local peace efforts. In South Sudan, the government and paramount chiefs change regularly, as do international UN peacekeepers (who often serve in six month rotations) and international aid workers. As a result, relationships must frequently be built and new and positive changes may be undone as people with new attitudes and behaviours arrive. Without sufficient local grounding in conditions and knowledge of actual local actors, funding may be provided by international funders with unrealistic timeframes and for activities that are at best ineffective and at worst actually undermine the work. An organised local civil society might be able to provide the necessary continuity to maintain relationships and processes with institutions even though representatives have changed, and elaborate on strategies that have been tried before, but in South Sudan it is often weak or absent.

Conclusion

While conceptually useful for analysing different actors and phases to building sustainable peace, there is clearly an interrelationship and overlap between peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. While efforts to make peace generally precede peacekeeping interventions, these peacemaking moments may actually be followed by new cycles of violence. Thus peacekeepers fielded after an agreement has been signed may contend with violence between armed actors and directed towards civilians. How peacekeepers respond to these periods of violence will impact further peacemaking and peacebuilding. And the effectiveness of early peacebuilding interventions will influence ongoing peacekeeping and peacemaking. One way to visualise this is to see peacekeeping as a bridge between peacemaking and peacebuilding, with the traffic going both ways. UCP is well suited to effectively build this bridge as it combines the aims of peacekeeping with the tools and values of peacebuilding. UCP can help to protect civilians, while building relationships between local, national and international actors, increasing opportunities to influence the attitudes and behaviour of these actors, and securing space for local actors to address underlying contradictions.

The work of NP in South Sudan provides a vivid demonstration of UCP in action and of the interplay between peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. The examples of Western Equatoria and Pibor illustrate that the process from violence to peace is not linear, but jumps back and forth. It also shows that even though there may be an overarching conflict that affects all of South Sudan, states, counties and communities in South Sudan are differently affected by this conflict *and* have their own local conflicts. UCP focuses on the primacy of local actors and their needs, and it is sufficiently flexible to move between the different stages of the peace process and address the particular needs of communities. Given these strengths, the use of UCP could be expanded in appropriate contexts and at larger scale to improve the protection of civilians while simultaneously supporting local peacebuilding work. Peacebuilding needs sufficient safety to take hold and peacekeeping needs grounding in local contexts in order to provide that safety and support local peacebuilding.

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