

Creating safe spaces for children

Communities come together to protect their children.

WHEN CHILDREN ARE IN CHARGE of caring for cattle or younger siblings, school and playtime becomes secondary. When violent conflict disrupts childhood, school and playtime is forgotten. “There is no school, no football matches, and no safe place for them to play to forget what they have seen,” said a community volunteer at a Child Safe Space in Unity State, South Sudan.

Over half of the children in South Sudan are out of school. The country has the highest proportion of out-of-school children in the world. Children are at risk of child soldier recruitment and are also vulnerable to violence, sexual abuse and exploitation.

With your support, Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) trains staff to engage with South Sudanese children in ways that educate, entertain and protect. Our NP team consulted an entire community in the planning and development of the Child Safe Space in Jonglei State. With community leadership, input from parents and children, a weapons-free zone was established.

Now, there is a space for the children to play and not worry about gunfire or abduction. At the Child Safe Space, NP staff lead traditional and educational games, as well as lessons on conflict resolution and health. Staff also introduce children to art projects and traditional songs and dance. Parents and former teachers have become involved in leading activities too.

A space to be a child

Since January 2018, 3177 children have benefitted from the Child Safe Space. Nonviolent Peaceforce is receiving positive feedback. There have been fewer incidents of abducted or hurt children since the space opened. The relief is evident. “We believe that the child safety space contributes to the safety and security of our children,” community leaders and parents said.

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Children playing pick up sticks at a Child Safe Space.



Children playing a matching game at a Child Safe Space.

Community of safety

IN LATE MARCH, Abuk, a 35 year-old South Sudanese woman, was in serious danger. In her own house. Her husband came home drunk and threatened to beat her if she didn't have sex with him. Already a mother of eight, Abuk's doctor had recently told her that another pregnancy would put her life at risk. She was scared and needed help.

Living in a remote area in South Sudan with few social services and a legal system that seldom protects women, Abuk called upon women in her community. She knew they would come to her aid.

Abuk is a member of a newly formed Women's Protection Team. Earlier in the month, she had attended Nonviolent Peaceforce's trainings to talk about the violence women experience, including intimate partner violence.

"As soon as I realized my husband's intentions, I sent my daughter in search of fellow Women's Protection Team members. Two women came and offered me shelter for the night at their place," said Abuk.

But Abuk needed a long-term safety plan. She couldn't rely on police who are far away and often refuse to help women, citing domestic violence as a "family issue." Abuk needed to rely on her community. It was her best hope.

The next day, members of the Women's Protection Team, Abuk and community elders went to confront Abuk's husband. Her husband apologized for his behavior, agreed to be cautious with alcohol consumption and to discuss family planning with his wife.

"At Nonviolent Peaceforce's trainings, I was told I had the right to discuss family planning and found that my community could support me," Abuk recalled.

Since then Abuk has noted that her husband has not resorted to any form of violence. In case he does, Abuk has developed a safety plan with others in the Women's Protection Team. "We discuss these things now, thanks to the training. Together we can do more for each other."



Women's Protection Team members like the ones Abuk called upon.

Relying on each other

Intimate partner violence is grossly underreported in South Sudan and often condoned.

Women like Abuk rely heavily on community support to intervene in cases of violence. In situations where women face immediate violence, the community is the first and at times the only form of protection.

It is a significant change that women are talking with one another about domestic violence. Through their conversations and demand for safety, they will create new systems of justice and protection. They are breaking the silence for their daughters and granddaughters, paving the way to greater safety and equality for women in future generations.

"It is amazing to see the change. Just a few weeks ago during the first training the women were cautious to discuss these issues. Now they are not only doing something about the violence but they are openly discussing strategies," remarked a Nonviolent Peaceforce staff member. "They are a great example of the potential Nonviolent Peaceforce has in these communities." 🌊

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These spaces create a nurturing environment for children to explore and play safely. Their impact goes far beyond the individual participants—entire communities feel an increased sense of protection. Impact multiplies when supporters like you believe in the importance of children having a space to be children.

Our children's parents are grateful to you.

"Since we have lived in this village, our children never have had access to education services, sports equipment or a child-led space. The Child Safe Space pulled our children out of darkness and into the light." 🌊

Buy a Peace Bond in Time for the Holidays



THE 2018 PEACE BOND depicts a Women's Protection Team joining together to increase safety in their communities. Your purchase of a \$50 Peace Bond will support Nonviolent Peaceforce's work of strengthening local community members to protect one another in conflict zones.

About the Peace Bond artist



From as early as he can remember, Marcellus Hall was the kid at school who could draw. He illustrated for his high school's newspaper and was inclined toward art school.

Marcellus' collaboration with Nonviolent Peaceforce to create artwork for Peace Bonds runs parallel to his early interest in anti-war activism. As a teenager in Minneapolis, he started to think about the ability and consequence of governments freely conscripting young men. As an aspiring illustrator at Rhode Island School of Design, he considered the ethics of murder during wartime and was concerned

about the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the world.

After some time, Marcellus got into freelance illustration in New York. Over the years, he has illustrated for magazines, newspapers, children's books and album covers. His work has appeared in publications such as *The New Yorker*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Atlantic*, and *Time*. Then, one day his parents, fellow supporters, connected him to Nonviolent Peaceforce.

When asked about the inspirations behind his designs, Marcellus responded that abstract forms motivate him initially. While looking at photos of Women's Protection Team members, Marcellus was drawn to the rhythmic interplay of the South Sudanese women in their colorful attire, holding hands.

"I love interpreting and communicating ideas through drawings and paintings," said Marcellus. On the photo that inspired his Peace Bond design: "I focused on this image because it seemed to reflect the concept of cooperation, which is necessary in achieving the goal of nonviolence." 🐟

To buy a Peace Bond, you can go online at www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/peacebond or use the enclosed envelope.

Purchase by October 31 to receive in time for the holidays.

For more information on ways to give, go to www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org or contact our office at 612-871-0005.