NP
Core Competencies
Summary

Protection in Humanitarian Emergencies

2021



Nonviolent Peaceforce

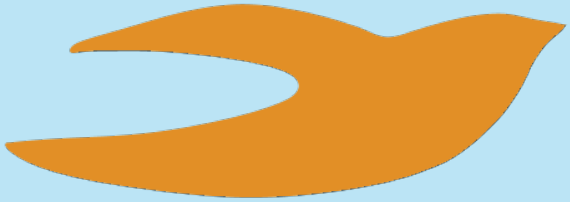
The alarming number of conflicts and associated civilian casualties worldwide emphasizes the need to find a solution through peaceful means. The many methods of Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP) often prove successful in solving or calming conflicts with the long-term benefit of strengthening communities, infrastructure and ongoing dialogue that are needed to sustain hard-earned peace. Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) is a global civilian protection agency, working in some of the world's most troubled zones to promote peace through civilian protection, reduction of community violence, and self-protection, as well as conflict prevention & management and capacity development. Currently, NP has approximately 300 protection officers deployed in our programs in Iraq, Myanmar, the Philippines, and South Sudan and we are collaborating with more than 50 implementing community organizations in 24 countries. To interrupt cycles of violence and facilitate sustainable peace, we work in 5 specific areas, one of which is protection in humanitarian emergencies.

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This summary is based on the full version of the NP core competency program document "Protection in Humanitarian Emergencies" that contains additional examples of interventions, methods, and guidance as the basis of work in this field by NP, partners, and other collaborating bodies.

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Protection in Humanitarian Emergencies

In working to provide ***protection in humanitarian emergencies***, a specific focus for Nonviolent Peaceforce is given to the issue of displacement, with growing concern given to natural disasters and climate-related events. By the end of 2019, **at least 79.5 million people** around the world had been forced to flee their homes.
A humanitarian emergency threatens the health, safety, security, and/or wellbeing of a community or another large group of people. A holistic approach to humanitarian actions aims to not only save lives and ease suffering but to safeguard human dignity in the process and to build resilience of those affected to withstand future shock. Core humanitarian principles include humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence.

Within the global discourse on displacement, issues of attention include the following:

- **Protracted displacement:** Affected populations are often deprived of basic rights while host communities and states struggle with increased competition over access to basic services, labour markets and accommodation.
- **Human-made insecurity drives ongoing displacement:** Patterns of violence and conflict are repeated, challenging efforts to procure lasting political solutions and peaceful outcomes.
- **Trafficking and smuggling:** Persons trafficked or smuggled risk often remain stateless and are inadequately reflected in existing legal or assistance frameworks.
- **Critical investment in resilience** is insufficient yet vital to lasting, sustainable change.
- **Protection needs beyond displacement:** Protection needs related to displacement often continue beyond physical movements. For many, displacement does not end at a point in time.

How protection in humanitarian emergencies is provided in general

There are different ways to provide protection in humanitarian emergencies and there are different ways that organisations define their actions.

- Local groups often view **humanitarian aid as protection**, whereby lifesaving intervention helps an afflicted person survive injury or starvation.
- All humanitarian organisations are expected to incorporate protection principles and promote meaningful access, safety and dignity in humanitarian aid (i.e. **protection mainstreaming**).
- Many humanitarian organisations have specialised **humanitarian protection** programmes that may provide psychosocial support to survivors of gender-based violence or reunify separated children.
- Humanitarian and human rights organisations both focus on the **protection of human rights,** including the monitoring and documenting of human rights violations among refugees or facilitating access to justice for returnees.



Response to 2018 Marawi Crisis in the Philippines, NPP 2018

NP's niche in the humanitarian sphere

The niche of Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) in the humanitarian sphere lies with its application of Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP) with its unique feature of direct physical protection. We combine this with more commonly known humanitarian protection efforts such as reducing the vulnerability of rape survivors to further harm or providing safer access to humanitarian assistance for ethnic minority groups. We also support local and international humanitarian actors to strengthen meaningful access, safety and dignity in their aid efforts.

Direct physical protection: Our teams use their physical presence strategically by positioning themselves in insecure locations for extended periods of time. Through nonviolent crowd control at food distribution points, we prevent violence and increase the responsiveness of humanitarian organisations to protection concerns. Our night time patrolling in displacement sites in Iraq, for example, helped to reduce harassment of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) by local community members and police.

Frontline protection: In places such as Iraq, we have provided protection services close to the frontlines of violent conflict, in areas largely avoided by other humanitarian actors. This has encouraged other humanitarian actors to move their operations closer to the frontlines.

Before, during and after displacement: We provide a holistic approach to protection in emergencies. Our teams not only work inside displacement sites, but they also provide protective presence in insecure areas to prevent displacement or facilitate safer displacement and accompany returnees back to their villages.

Self-protection among displaced people: Our teams build capacity among displaced communities and those at high-risk to strengthen their self-protection capacities or early response mechanisms. In addition to increasing security, it restores a sense of ownership among people that may have lost everything.

Combining peacebuilding and humanitarian efforts: As a humanitarian *and* peacebuilding actor we mitigate conflicts between displaced people and host communities or humanitarian organisations. We also negotiate with armed groups to increase security around displacement sites or communities at risk.

"One of the WASH partners had discovered an old ISIS tunnel at HAA1 [displacement site in Iraq]. Security forces were called in to ensure people's safety in the event of any ISIS members or explosive remnants of war remained in the tunnel. NP maintained a protective presence throughout the investigation of the military forces in order to monitor any attempts by the security forces to use this situation as a cover to arbitrarily detain IDPs or use excessive force. NP was the only NGO to provide international presence, and the only protection actor to monitor military movements inside the camp."

(Nonviolent Peaceforce in Iraq, February 2018)

NP's work in the field

Activities of our teams in the field may include the following:

Responding to imminent threats through physical intervention for civilians in harm's way ('direct protection') is one of the first responsive actions in a conflict.

- **Shuttle diplomacy** between armed actors and communities to prevent retaliatory attacks based on rumors and coordinate troop movements, training exercises and drills with communities.
- **Protective accompaniment** to recently displaced people on their way to an IDP camp, to and from aid distribution points, or to returnees fearful of re-settling in hostile communities.
- **Patrols and protective presence** at water points where women face sexual harassment while collecting water and facilitating dialogue between women leaders and security actors.
- **Negotiating humanitarian corridors** for displaced people caught in crossfires or travelling through areas of armed conflict.
- **Negotiating permission for the provision of life-saving aid** to displaced people who reside in areas that are off-limits for humanitarian organisations and have severe and urgent needs

"Women that went out of the displacement site to collect firewood, fruits, and water faced ongoing sexual harassment and abuse by drunken soldiers, among others. Some of them stopped going out, which impacted their families' livelihood. When NP started accompanying these women or patrolling water sites, the numbers of rape dropped significantly and it allowed the women to have more ownership over their livelihood."

(Team member from Nonviolent Peaceforce in South Sudan)

Reducing risk aims to provide timely and safe assistance to survivors and help vulnerable individuals stay safe or recover from harm.

- **Risk assessment** of vulnerable areas or developing recommendations for reducing gender-based violence (GBV) or violence against children;
- **Capacity enhancement** among displaced or host communities (women, youth) to monitor and report instances of GBV or organise themselves to create a safer environment;
- **Family tracing and reunification** of separated, unaccompanied, and abducted children with their families or primary caretakers;
- **Protection infrastructures:** Supporting the establishment of committees for child protection, food distribution or dispute resolution in displacement sites;
- **Access to legal services and court monitoring** for detained IDPs or refugees. In Iraq, we were able to gain access to key courts and prisons to conduct family tracing and court monitoring.

Supporting 'protection mainstreaming' among local and international humanitarian agencies.

- **Sharing community concerns** to humanitarian organisations when their activities are launched or encouraging them to communicate irregularities that may emerge;
- **Training and joint security assessments** with humanitarian organisations to identify safe locations for aid distributions;
- **Trouble-shooting and resolving issues** if humanitarian organisations fail to communicate with communities, ignore protection mainstreaming, and/or are unaware of the complexities of a situation.



Nonviolent Peaceforce protection officers visit Hamam al Alil Camp 1 during an evening patrol, NPIQ 2018