

INCREASING THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF CIVILIANS IN BENTIU CATTLE CAMPS



Photo courtesy: Cattle Camp in Bentiu

Given that cattle keepers are dependent on their animal products that they sell for income and survival and cattle raids could potentially increase with the death of cattle, NP decided to advocate on behalf of the cattle keepers to humanitarian partners and other animal services providers agencies for cattle vaccination in Bentiu and Rubkona towns. As a result of advocacy to Veterinary Sans Frontiers (VSF), the VSF team visited the cattle camp for verification that resulted in the vaccination of 5,231 cows.

During the team's activities at the cattle camp, the cattle keepers (owners) expressed their appreciation and thanked NP for advocating on their behalf to save the lives and increased the productivity of their cattle. One of the residents stated that:

"we are very pleased with you because you saved our lives and lives of our children which could have been in jeopardy if we lost our cattle, the main source of livelihood..."

In Nuer culture, cattle serve as a source of wealth, livelihood, dowries for marriage, and compensation if killing occur within the Nuer communities. Sadly, cattle-related conflict is also one of the root causes of violence in Unity State and across the country, resulting in countless deaths and injuries each year.

During the raining season, cattle keepers moved their herds away from flood affected areas and closer to principal towns of Bentiu and Rubkona. Migrated cattle keepers create temporary camps during the seasonal period where they live often with little humanitarian engagement. Considering the lack of humanitarian engagement and the propensity for violence as result of cattle-related conflict, NP established and strengthened relations with the community in these temporary cattle camps

Recognizing the high prevalence of child labor in these cattle camps, the team began engagement with the cattle keeping community through child protection awareness. The team also conducted patrols to identify other areas of concern and promote NP's presence in the area as well as community meetings that enabled community members to share their concerns directly with NP. One of the main concerns raised by cattle keepers during community engagement was the significant death of their cattle as a result of infections and sickness. Despite reporting this to humanitarian partners, no one responded to their calls for help.

Besides advocacy, NP also identified pertinent protection concerns affecting those in the cattle camp, especially children. The protection concerns identified included the wide proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapon (SALW), including use by children, as well as child labor. In response, NP conducted trainings in child protection and SALW to both elders and children. In the engagements with the elders, NP informed them of the detrimental impacts of having children carry and be in the presence of SALWs as well as attempted to shift the responsibility of carrying for cattle to adults.

Since NP's engagement, awareness raising on SALW has influenced the decision for children not to carry weapons as they had before, the children are no longer taking care of the cattle and the elders have prepared a place where they keep their weapons from children for safety and security reasons.

NP hopes to engage with other remote communities to further promote safety and security through NP's Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP) approach.



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