

NP SOUTH SUDAN



Photo: Members of WPTs attending the Third National Women's Conference in Juba/South Sudan/ March 2020/NP

WOMEN PEACE & SECURITY

UNITING WOMEN PEACEBUILDERS IN SOUTH SUDAN

JUBA, SOUTH SUDAN | March 2020

On March 10, 2020, over 85 women peacebuilders and leaders from all over South Sudan came, many for the first time in their lives, to the capital city of Juba to participate in the annual National Women's Conference. The three-day conference brought together women representing ten Women Protection Teams (WPT) and thirteen activist and human rights organization from Bentiu, Juba Protection of Civilian (POC) site, Ganyiel, Lankien, Mundri, Rumbek, Ulang, Wau, Yambio and Yei. Through this conference, Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP), with support of the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office's Conflict Security and Stability Fund (CSSF), aimed to

create a platform for South Sudanese women to exchange their experiences and challenges, exchange ideas, and devise a strategy to increase women's role in leadership and peacebuilding.

NP asked five women attending the conference about how they became leaders in protection and peacebuilding and the work they do to keep their communities safe. Their reflections are below:

Charity from Mundri

Since Charity has joined the Mundri WPT in 2017 and became an active peacemaker in her community, she has prevented instances of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), helped people resolve their disputes nonviolently and taught community members how to protect themselves in the case of a sudden attack. Even though there is no monetary compensation for participation in a WPT, Charity is proud of her work and says, "I have skills now that nobody can take

away from me. If anything happens in the community, they call me first to solve the problem because people trust me."

Charity says she is not afraid to intervene when she sees someone is in danger because she was trained in Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP) and has gained the skills to approach people in volatile situations. She gives us an example of her preventing armed men from attacking her neighbor's house and protecting the neighbor without using force. Around 8 PM, Charity heard a noise close to her neighbor's house and ran to check what was happening. When she approached the house, she found her neighbor in distress as two armed men were forcing their way inside the house. Charity says the men knew her well and she was able to convince them to leave without harming anyone. Charity hopes to reach out to women in other areas and help them form a WPT to improve the protection of civilians and increasing women's leadership in protection and peacebuilding. As Charity noted, "In the past, women didn't play any role in the community and didn't have a voice in their own home. Now they play an important role, even in the government."

Sarah from Ulang

Sarah, a mother of five, joined the Ulang WPT to identify and advocate for the needs of her community. Sarah admits that, before NP trained her in nonviolence and UCP, she would resort to violence during situations of conflict. She recalls, "I didn't like to forgive people. Now, even if someone provokes me, I respond nonviolently and look for a way to find common ground."

Sarah's family is proud of her transformation and her work as WPT. Whenever somebody comes to ask for Sarah's help, even if it is late at night, her children always encourage her to help a person in need.

When asked what she hopes for women and girls in her community, Sarah said, "Long time ago women and girls were not allowed to go to school. Now they are allowed to go,

but not many do. In the future, I think girls and boys will be equal to study and work together."

Grace from Yei

Grace has always wanted to help people live in peace. First, she conducted this work through the church and now, she does so as a member of the first newly formed WPT in Yei. "We learned how peace could be made. Now, if there are any issues in our community or a community nearby, we know how to respond," said Grace after being trained by NP in peacebuilding, child protection and SGBV prevention and response. Grace added, "Everyone [the community members and the soldiers] respects us when we are in WPT uniform because they know that we were trained to bring peace."

As Yei has seen an influx of returnees from Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, Grace says their WPT will focus on engaging with both host communities and returnees to ensure peaceful coexistence.

Maypal from Lankien

When asked about her motivation to join the Lankien WPT, Maypal said, "I want to change the situation that women are in. I want to be a voice of women and peace." Maypal and her teammates sometimes walk as far as three hours to reach the most remote places where women are frequently assaulted while collecting firewood. Their goal is to prevent violence and protect vulnerable people. To feel safer, WPTs patrol the areas in groups of five women and always wear their WPT uniform, a bright pink t-shirt.

During one patrol during the rainy season, Maypal and her team found a child, under the age of 15, sitting under a tree. When the WPT approached the child to ascertain whether she was lost, they learned that the child was assaulted by a charcoal maker while on her way to a relative's house. With the survivor's permission, the women accompanied her to a hospital, informed the family and reported the case to NP for further

follow-up. While on another patrol, Maypal says her team found two children, both under 3- years-old, whose mothers had passed away. The WPT has since taken them under its care.

During heavy flooding in Lankien, the WPT identified vulnerable individuals and advocated to the governor to relocate them to a safer place. The advocacy was successful and Myapal's notes proudly, "My voice was heard".

Yodita from Yambio

"Every day you could hear about rape cases - old women, young girls", says Yodita, one of the forty female members of the WPT in Yambio. "I joined [the] WPT because I want to help people to understand what peace is", says Yodita.

The WPT that Yodita is a part of has played a crucial role in preventing SGBV and assisting survivors in Yambio. Yodita's WPT has raised community awareness on SGBV that resulted in a reduction of SGBV cases and an increase in reporting. Survivors are now aware of and feel comfortable to access post-incident services and seek justice, without being stigmatized by their communities.

Although progress in ending SGBV has been made, Yodita noted that more work needs to be done, particularly in hard-to-reach places and around cantonment site, which the WPT is unable to access due to transportation constraints. NP has supported WPT by joining their patrols and facilitating transportation, covering transportation expenses when WPT provides accompaniment to vulnerable people and advocating humanitarian partners to support WPT with bicycles.

These stories demonstrate the varied experiences and skills that WPTs members were able to share with one another at the conference in Juba. Bringing together a diverse range of women peacekeepers, leaders and advocates has proven to be an invaluable exercise, creating a space for

action-oriented discussion on collaboration, coordination and advocacy initiatives. When asked what she hopes for women and girls in her community, Sarah said, "Long time ago women and girls were not allowed to go to school. Now they are allowed to go, but not many do. In the future, I think girls and boys will be equal to study and work together."

STRENGTHENING LOCAL PEACE AND PROTECTION MECHANISMS IN GREATER ULANG

ULANG, UPPER NILE STATE | February 2020



Photo: Women Protection Team/Rirnyang Payam, Ulang County/January 2020/NP

Rirnyang, a payam of Ulang County, is home to the Cie-Puoch sub-clan. The community is prone to attacks from the Lou Nuer and Murle during the dry season, which occurs from January to April of every year and periodically results in violent conflict, abduction of women and children, displacement of the civilian population, and the potential for serious protection concerns to arise. The bomas at the edge of the forest, such as Pachuey boma, are the most vulnerable to these attacks.

Based on these concerns, NP identified a need to strengthen community-based protection mechanisms to ensure an ongoing protection presence in Rirnyang, particularly when the rainy season hinders access to the payam, as well as to increase the participation of women in the peacebuilding and leadership mechanisms of the community. As a result, in December 2018, NP established a Women's Protection Team (WPT) in Rirnyang with the membership of forty women who were strategically selected in close coordination with local leaders based on each women's demonstrated leadership in the community and commitment to participation in protection activities. Once formed, the WPT was then trained on Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP), including prevention and response to gender-based violence (GBV) and child protection in order to provide them with the necessary skills to take action in their communities and respond to incidents of violence and protection concerns. Recently, the WPT has been particularly active in preventing and resolving inter-clan conflict that has disturbed the peace and security of the community.

In May 2019, an attack in Pachuey, a community in Rirnyang, by the Lou Nuer resulted in the displacement of the civilian population to Yieng. Following the displacement from the Pachuey to Yieng, incidents of criminality that occurred in Yieng led to tensions between the two communities. During a court process for the theft of a cow and donkey in 2019, the two communities fought one another leading to the death of two people and the return of the Pachuey community from Yieng to Rirnyang, along with the perpetrators of the killings. As there was no compensation or mediation process, tensions between the two communities escalated and youth in Rirnyang increasingly moved with weapons in fear that the two sides would clash again.

In September 2019, while visiting relatives in Rirnyang, a male youth recognized the man who killed his relative in Yieng. Tensions rose and the two sides began firing at one

another. The WPTs quickly put on their visibility and inter-positioned themselves between the conflicting sides. The fighting stopped because the members of the WPT were mothers, aunts, and sisters of the fighters who feared that the bullets would kill them.

The WPTs role in de-escalating tensions between the two communities along with their work in resolving household-level domestic violence cases, providing protective accompaniment to those in need, and advocating for the protection needs of their community has been recognized by local and governmental authorities.

The county commissioner of Ulang recognized the important role played by WPTs in mitigating conflict and promoting peace in the community. The work of the individual WPTs has been further magnified by the integration of members of the WPTs into NPs peace committees that are also comprised of local leadership and youth. NP plans to continue encouraging the inclusion of women into local peace processes as well as providing further trainings to increase the protective capacity of the WPTs along with skills in leadership and advocacy.

NP is also continually working to build the capacity of the peace committees to monitor and respond to inter-clan conflict throughout greater Ulang such as through a recent training on participatory conflict analysis, an upcoming training on mediation and dialogue, and supporting local peace initiatives by providing and facilitating safe spaces for dialogue within and between communities.

PROTECTION IN HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES

ENGAGING CTSAMM, JMEC AND UNMISS IN UNARMED CIVILIAN PROTECTION (UCP) TRAINING

BENTIU, UNITY STATE | January 2020



Photo: UCP training for CTSAMM, JMEC and UNMISS/Rubkona County, South Sudan/2019/ Nonviolent Peaceforce

Aiming to build partner capacity in unarmed approaches and strategies for conflict prevention and response, NP regularly conducts workshops for partners and community structures in nonviolent/unarmed conflict prevention, protection and response.

In November 2019, Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMM), along with the Joint

Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC), requested NP Beyond Bentiu Response (BBR) Team in Rubkona to conduct training in Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP) for its ten staff members. NP accepted a request for training from CTSAMM, and extended its invitation to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)¹ using this as an opportunity to connect actors engaging in UCP in Rubkona County. The invitation was well-received, and UNMISS selected its eleven staff members from Civil Affairs Division, United Nations Police (UNPOL), Gender Division, Human Rights Division, and two Correction Officers to attend.

Bearing in mind that each participant plays a significant role in supporting peace in South Sudan, NP developed the UCP curriculum tailored to the group. From 19 to 20 November 2019, during a two-day workshop, NP introduced key concepts of protection and peacebuilding without the use of force to these partners; explored the different methods and tools that are used to practice UCP; and built the capacity of these partners to better engage with communities. The introductory training was conducted using activities such as group discussions, role plays and presentations.

On day one, NP team defined UCP and presented the underlying concepts of UCP. By looking at the cycle of violence as shown in the UCP tree, the participants were able to conceptualize how violence, as a method of conflict resolution, leads to more violence and a failure to resolve conflict in a sustainable way. By separating conflict from violence and showing that conflict is a natural part of human co-existence, NP was able to help the participants understand that there is an infinite number of routes to

¹ NP advocacy in New York resulted in a change in UNMISS mandate in 2019, requiring UNMISS to utilize UCP as appropriate, and when possible, to enhance its ability to protect civilians.

resolving conflict non-violently, utilizing unarmed methodologies. This was further emphasized by looking at the stages of conflict and analyzing how at each stage of the conflict, the choices and actions we take can exacerbate or reduce violence.

One of the group members asked if UCP was safe. NP explained that absence of weapons allows to foster community relationship and acceptance. Unarmed non-partisan peacekeepers are not seen as a threat to warring parties and less likely would be targeted by armed groups.

On day two, NP presented a set of protection tools that support UCP and UCP implementation approaches. The session focused on the need for maintaining relationships and networks, the importance of collective action and collaboration, and the ability to gather information while also implementing for rumor control, as part of an early warning early response strategy.

NP concluded the workshop reminding the participants that practicing UCP methodology requires continuous engagement with the community, daily maintaining contacts and building relationships.

When reflecting on training, a representative of the Civil Affairs Division of UNMISS said that “All UCP methods are crucial to the response and early warning of conflict, and it relates to the work of Civil Affairs Division.” Another UNMISS representative highlighted the need for NP to train more UNMISS staff and share the UCP manual so that UNMISS can use it while doing its daily work. He concluded by saying: “If we can gain the trust of communities, they can embrace us and our work easily.”

CREATING SAFE ACCESS TO RESPONSE SERVICES FOR GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE SURVIVORS IN LEER HQ

LEER COUNTY, UNITY STATE | February 2020

Since the outbreak of conflict in 2013, Leer County has been one of the most severely affected counties in South Sudan. The majority of Leer residents have been displaced from their original homes, leaving them vulnerable to protection threats. Despite the signing of the Revitalized Agreement for the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) in September 2018, Leer HQ (the town of Leer), remains heavily militarised with soldiers occupying former homes and imposing an intimidating environment for civilians. While some residents are gradually returning to areas surrounding Leer HQ, many remain stranded in informal IDP settlements.

As is typical across many areas of South Sudan, the conflict has had a disproportionate effect on the women and girls of Leer. Aside from the increased threat of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), the unstable context has exacerbated traditional harmful practices related to gender. Girls are vulnerable to forced marriages (often as children), their future determined by the ability of the prospective husband to pay a “bride price” in the form of cattle. This “bride price” provides one of the incentives for cattle-raiding, a long-standing practice in South Sudan exacerbated by the relatively recent proliferation of small arms amongst the population. Deaths resulting from these cattle-raids lead to revenge-killings, perpetuating a cycle of violence. Once married, girls are also highly vulnerable to domestic violence at the hands of their

new husband. The 2020 South Sudan Humanitarian Needs Overview highlights that physical assault perpetrated by an intimate partner accounted for 37 per cent of GBV incidences reported in 2019. The belief that violence is an effective and normal response to conflict within the family is prevalent amongst the community. Gender-based violence is considered a private matter, and public discussion of the phenomenon remains taboo. As a result, survivors of domestic and sexual violence are less likely to seek protection, justice or post-incident health care.

Within this context, the Southern Unity Mobile Team of NP (better known simply as the SU team) travels at least once a month to Unity State to conduct missions lasting between 7 and 14 days at a time. The primary focus of the team is on prevention of violence, with a particular focus on women and girls. Through workshops and awareness-raising, the team challenges the harmful practices which perpetuate violence against women. Aside from prevention of violence, the SU team is also concerned with response.

The team works closely with humanitarian partners based in Leer HQ to ensure that survivors of SGBV can safely access post-incident health care (including psycho-social support) and, if desired, access to justice. To achieve this, the SU team are required to engage with local national NGOs (NNGOs) over a significant length of time; one-off workshops are insufficient. The SU team began the process by mapping all the services available to SGBV survivors in Leer. The team identified a lack of awareness among the community regarding the services available; women simply did not know where to go. The team also identified a lack of coordination between the various organisations providing services. For example, the NNGO running the primary health care centre, and providing PEP post-exposure preventive (PEP) kits, were not aware of another NNGO providing psychosocial support. Some health care

centre staff did not know what psychosocial support was, as a concept.

In June 2019, the SU team held an introductory training for NGO staff working in Leer on SGBV response. The training was attended by medical staff, counsellors, and caseworkers from various organisations. This activity served as an opportunity for the SU team to establish relationships with (and among) the organisations who would be receiving SGBV survivors upon successful establishment of referral pathways. During the two-day training, participants sat together to discuss and identify the main threats to women and girls in Leer County. NP trained the participants in how to responsibly share information among organisations while guaranteeing the confidentiality, safety and dignity of the survivor. Once NP was confident that the attending organisations understood how to coordinate effectively and responsibly, it was agreed that a referral pathway for SGBV survivors in Leer would be established.

In November 2019, the referral pathway was formally established in Leer HQ. As a result, coordination amongst partners improved and the full range of services available to SGBV survivors was shared with the community. For example, partners engaging in SGBV prevention now inform community members (in coordination with staff at the primary health care centre) of the importance of seeking medical support within 72 hours of a sexual assault. This messaging is mirrored in the awareness-raising workshops conducted independently by the SU team.

Despite the successful establishment of the referral pathway, the SU team identified a remaining gap in the provision of care for survivors, specifically regarding access to justice. A lack of SGBV awareness and sensitivity among local authorities, particularly police and judges, impedes access to justice for SGBV survivors in Leer County.

This deficit exacerbates poor standards of law enforcement in the area in general. As a result, the vast majority of domestic violence and sexual assault cases in Leer County are not reported, creating a culture of impunity for perpetrators and perpetuating further incidences. In response, the SU team conducted a two-day workshop for police officials in January 2020. The participants, representing both administrative and investigative branches of the local police, were invited to discuss their duties and responsibilities as responders to SGBV cases. This workshop was designed to enhance the newly established referral pathway, improving coordination between NGOs and police officials.

The workshop was opened by the State Governor, whose participation was a valuable statement of support and ownership from position of influence. The Governor emphasised in his speech the need for a change in South Sudan regarding the culture of violence against women and girls. The SU team began the workshop by challenging the underlying practices concerning gender which ultimately contribute to SGBV. The team differentiated the concept of sex from gender; sex being defined as the biological difference between male and female, gender being defined by prevailing cultural and social norms. This particular session was an opportunity for the participants to reflect on their perceptions of masculinity and femininity, and how these perceptions may change over time. At the end of the session, participants were invited to reflect on how their perception of gender may lead to discrimination.

During the following session, the SU team defined the various types of SGBV (physical, sexual, economic, verbal and emotional), with a particular emphasis on traditional practices harmful to women and girls such forced and child marriages. After these two opening sessions, the participants expressed an understanding of what SGBV constitutes. It is noteworthy that most participants, at the beginning of the day, stated that SGBV was an unknown concept to them. This reflects

the broader societal understanding of domestic violence and forced marriage as acceptable or normal. The SU team then facilitated a plenary discussion regarding SGBV cases within Leer County. The participants cited the low reporting rates for SGBV in the area as evidence that the incidence rate was correspondingly low. This view directly contradicts the understanding of community members and humanitarian partners operating within Leer County, who describe a high level of unreported SGBV cases. The SU team invited the participants to discuss the obstacles faced by SGBV survivors when reporting their case to the police. After discussing these obstacles (poor law enforcement, lack of SGBV awareness and sensitivity, victim blaming, and a lack of empowerment amongst women and girls), the participants acknowledged the need for greater awareness, sensitivity, and capacity for SGBV response amongst police officers in Leer County. The following day, the SU team trained the police officers on SGBV concepts (for example; survivor as opposed to victim), confidentiality protocols, and, at great length, the key concept of informed consent. To ensure ownership of the issue, and to place a universal issue within a national context, the team outlined the relevant South Sudan legal framework under which police must prosecute SGBV (the Transitional Constitution of 2011, the Penal Act of 2008, the Police Act of 2009, and the Child Act 2008).

Despite the natural constraints of operating as a mobile team (operating without a fixed base in Leer), the SU team successfully, over a series of visits, established and strengthened a referral pathway for SGBV survivors in Leer County. It should be noted that being a mobile team offered an advantage also: The SU team were considered a neutral party amongst the Leer-based actors and organisations who constituted the referral pathway. Having no permanent presence in the area, the SU team were strictly facilitators of the process, and could not be accused of working towards any self-serving objective. Despite the successful establishment and strengthening of the referral pathway, the

process of supporting access to post-incident services for SGBV survivors in Leer is still in its infancy. The SU team will continue to return to Leer County, building on this initial success. In particular, the SU team will facilitate improved coordination between partners and local authorities.

INCREASING THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF CIVILIANS IN BENTIU TOWN THROUGH NIGHT PATROLS

BENTIU, UNITY STATE | February 2020



Photo: NP team on a night patrol in Bentiu town/January 2020/Nonviolent Peaceforce

Proactive and deterrent patrolling is a signature activity of Nonviolent Peaceforce's (NP) UCP methodology that utilizes unarmed international and national protection officers to deter violence, enhance understanding of the context dynamics, and foster a positive relationship with members of the community. These patrols are regularly conducted by all NP South Sudan field teams throughout the country, including the Beyond Bentiu Response team in Rubkona County. Prior to the signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS), patrols were typically conducted during the day as movement after dusk was restricted due to hostilities between parties to the conflict. Since the signing of the agreement, while violence between signatory armed groups has decreased and the overall security situation in and around Bentiu town has improved, criminality remains high with civilians reporting a lack of safety and security.

The need for night patrols became particularly evident in April 2019 when, during NP's monthly protection meeting with the community, women reported facing gender-based violence and other forms of violence when returning home from the market at night. Female traders feared robbery and shoppers reported being assaulted and harassed. As a result, the NP team decided that evening patrols around the market would be a positive step towards protecting the community, especially women, in Bentiu town by both preventing violence from occurring and providing immediate response to violent incidents.

The objectives of the activity were to provide a protective presence in and around the market at the hours when high incidences of security and safety concerns were reported and to accompany vulnerable people when needed.

In May 2019, the NP team began conducting weekly night patrols, lasting approximately two hours per patrol. Comprised of two to three national and international members,

the team would leave the NP compound at 7 PM to go towards the market in Kalibalek or proceed through Hai-Ingas, Khordapdap, Hai-Ingame, Suk Saba neighborhoods. When patrolling the market, the team would engage with women selling milk and firewood to identify locations or situations of concern. Then the team would walk through surrounding neighborhoods such as Koithey, Dera A and Dera B.

In July 2019, while returning from a night patrol on the Hai-Ingas - Khordapdap border, NP came across a group of four unaccompanied minors returning home after fetching water at a borehole. The youngest child in the group was about 2-years-old. NP helped the children carry water and safely accompanied them home.

In November 2019, while on an evening patrol in Bentiu town, the team heard a woman screaming. After a short time, the team located a group of women carrying a woman in distress to the hospital. It became apparent that NP needed to provide assistance to the group as carrying the patient on foot would take another hour to reach the hospital. NP staff radioed staff in the compound and called for the driver to come urgently to where the women were. NP then accompanied the woman and two relatives to the hospital where the medical team on duty said that they would need to admit the patient overnight as she had severe malaria. After NP established that the family members and patient were safe and receiving appropriate treatment, NP team left to continue the patrol from the hospital along the Rubkona road where the team was stopped by an officer in civilian clothes.

The officer questioned the national team member about why he was walking through the area at night with foreigners, to whom he was concerned something would happen. The team politely listened to the officer and proceeded with the activity. The next day, the team set up a meeting with the chief of police and with the governor's security advisor to address what the officer in civilian clothes told the national staff members the

previous night. At these meetings, NP explained the purpose of the night patrols while highlighting the benefits to the community. The security advisor welcomed the team and thanked them for their efforts. He also said that he would instruct all the security organs in the town to allow NP to continue unimpeded. Later that day, the team met with the chief of police who responded in the same manner — thanking NP for their work.

NP presence in populated areas of Bentiu town after sunset has been greatly appreciated with community members recognizing NP staff during night patrols and warmly greeting them when they are passing. During one of the patrols, NP heard people saying: "That's Nonviolent. They move around at night to protect us".

Seeing NGO staff at night has given community members a sense of security, protection and hope that peace is progressing. Female traders also confirmed to NP that security situation improved as more people have been seen outside late at night. A young female trader selling milk remarked that she and other women now feel safer walking back home at 10 PM.

Further, night patrols have strengthened NP's trust and acceptance, thereby contributing to a greater understanding of the context and of the needs of the community. Moving forward, NP will continue conducting night patrols paired with advocacy for increased action by the government and the police to ensure the safety and security of the community.

INCREASING COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND IMPROVING RESPONSE TO SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (SGBV) IN YERI

MUNDRI, WESTERN EQUATORIA STATE | January 2020

Yeri is a payam of Mvolo county approximately three hours' drive from Mundri Town. Despite the existence of several protection concerns especially related to SGBV, as noted in NPs assessment of Mvolo in April 2019, there are a lack of protection actors operating in the area. During the assessment, the team found that early marriage and early pregnancy as well as domestic violence were the primary forms of violence occurring regularly at the household level. Compounding upon this issue are barriers to SGBV response including lack of knowledge of the referral pathway as well as fees that result in difficulties for survivors to access justice services. In response to protection concerns identified during the assessment, on October 24, 2019, the NP Mundri Team travelled to Yeri payam to conduct focus group discussions with women, men, and schoolteachers to gain further insight into the prevalence and impact of SGBV in the community.

Based on information gathered in the focus group discussions, NP returned to Yeri from November 26 to November 28 to conduct a series of awareness raising activities and workshops on SGBV prevention and response as well as to strengthen the SGBV referral pathway and improve access to justice for survivors. These activities included a SGBV

workshop for the Mother's Union in Yeri on November 26, a SGBV workshop for law enforcement, judiciary and soldiers' representatives on November 26, as well as an awareness raising activity on November 27 for 61 children (34 boys and 27 girls) that used songs, games, and discussion to teach good and bad touch and the detrimental impacts of early marriage and pregnancy.

During the SGBV workshop with the Mother's Union, one of the women said that this was the community's first time openly discussing SGBV and that the community lacked an organized group of women that could raise women's issues and campaign for equal respect and recognition of women's roles in the community.

NP also met with the acting commissioner on November 27 to discuss the issue of fees for survivors to access justice services. In Yeri, the chiefs have been handling issues related to SGBV cases however, SGBV cases, particularly rape cases, are sometimes escalated to the local court or forwarded to Mundri. Survivors pay a case filing fee of 500 SSP to the boma chief, 1000 SSP to the payam chief, and 1500 SSP to the paramount chief. During the discussion with the commissioner, the team emphasized that the fees serve as a barrier for survivors to access justice. While the commissioner responded that the chiefs still accept cases from survivors who cannot pay fees, he recognized that the police collect a fee from survivors to file form 8, a police form filled by SGBV survivors and those with injuries to allow the person to access healthcare treatment. The team supplied the commissioner with the memorandum regarding form 8 indicating that no fees should be collected from survivors to file this form and that SGBV survivors are under no obligation to file form 8 prior to accessing health treatment. Though the commissioner agreed to discuss the memorandum with the police, as of January 20, 2020, the fee is still being collected. As such, NP will continue to advocate for the discontinuation of the fee for

SGBV survivors both in Yeri and at the state level.

After the meeting with the commissioner, the team proceeded to meet with the clinical officer of a health partner to clarify services available for SGBV survivors in Yeri. The clinical officer reported that a few weeks prior, he and a colleague received training by the health partner in case management for SGBV survivors however, the health team was still waiting for post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) kits and other necessary materials to provide response services. The clinical officer also indicated that NP should continue conducting SGBV awareness throughout Yeri to increase the community's knowledge of the importance of accessing health services within 72 hours of a SGBV incident.

Prior to NPs departure from Yeri, a participant of the SGBV prevention and response training with the Mothers' Union said, "We appreciate the organization of Nonviolence for training us on SGBV prevention because indeed these things happen among our community in Yeri but we request them that next time it should be more than two days because as we can all see today the training was very good and enjoyable but the time was not enough."

Going forward, NP plans to return to Yeri for another multiday trip to provide SGBV awareness and prevention and response workshops throughout the community as well as follow up on the SGBV referral pathway and access to justice services for survivors, including to continually advocate for the removal of police fees for survivors. NP has also raised the issue of lack of psycho-social support for SGBV survivors in Yeri to the Minister of Gender and in SGBV working group meetings and will continue to advocate for improved SGBV response for survivors throughout the state.

IMPROVING ACCESS TO SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN LOKOLOKO

WESTERN BAHR EL GAZAL STATE | February 2020



Photo: NP trains IDPs in peacebuilding and nonviolence/ December 2019/Lokoloko/ Nonviolent Peaceforce

Between 2016 and 2019 tens of thousands of people, fleeing violence across Western Bahr el Gazal state have moved to Wau town and surrounding locations for safety. Of over 67 000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Wau town, more than 20 000 people have settled in Lokoloko². In November 2019, NP team in Wau was requested by the Protection Cluster to visit Lokoloko to assess the protection needs of persons with disabilities in the area.

From 7 to 20 November 2019, NP's Wau Response Team funded by the South Sudan Humanitarian Fund (SSH), interviewed over

² The South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) in Wau State

160 male and female persons with disabilities individually and in groups and learned that persons with disabilities and their caretakers face a multitude of barriers to access food, water, shelter, education and health services, and income-generating activities. Further, persons with disabilities are not well accepted by communities in Lokoloko and are frequently discriminated, harassed, and abused.

Kasima, a 35-year-old woman NP spoke to, has been paralyzed from a very young age. When violence occurred in Raja in July 2018, an international NGO evacuated Kasima to Lokoloko, where she was reunited with her aunt. A wheelchair was the only aid Kasima has ever received. When Kasima moves in her wheelchair outside, young men throw stones at her. To make a living, Kasima's aunt sells groundnuts and cooking paste, but the money she makes is not enough for her and her niece to survive. Falling to pay rent, Kasima and her aunt now have to vacate the house they are living in. Kasima has never seen a doctor and wonders if her paralysis may be reversible.

People with limited mobility like Kasima, face restricted or no access to food registration and distribution points, boreholes, health facilities, and community gathering places. Both male and female persons with disability, who participated in a focus group discussion, told NP that they have to rely on relatives for the provision of food and water, pay for fetching of water or resort to begging in the market.

Clecia, another young woman with a disability, told NP how socially excluded she feels, as no one in her community talks to her. People call her names and make fun of her. Similarly, men interviewed by NP also reported feeling marginalized due to their disability, saying feeling "ignored" or treated "like people of no value."

18 year old Hikman, who lives with hemiplegia – paralysis in one vertical part of the body, has never visited a doctor either. Although Hikman's grandmother works in a

hospital, she said she has no time to take Hikman to a doctor. Hikman says she experiences harassment when she walks on the streets.

Caretakers reported to NP facing pressure due to a lack of support system and specialized services for persons with disabilities in their care.

30-year-old Natalina is also a sole caretaker of twelve children, including her 18-year-old daughter who has a mental disability. Natalina farms a small piece of land and sells her produce, okra and groundnuts, on the market. The money Natalina makes only enough to meet their food needs, but not to afford a rent. Natalina's daughter, who has a disability, used to go to school but drop out due to discrimination and inability to keep up with the curriculum. She is regularly harassed and has survived physical and sexual violence. She has never received any treatment or psychosocial support.

For nearly every person with disabilities and caretaker NP spoke to in Lokoloko, it was the first time in their lives someone has asked them about their living conditions and needs. All vulnerable cases that NP identified during its assessment in Lokoloko were referred to relevant service providers in the area. Further, NP has shared the finding of the assessment with Protection, WASH, Food Security, Education, and Health Clusters and advocated for improved access to services for persons with disabilities in Lokoloko. Going forward, NP is following up on referred cases and monitoring identified protection concerns in the area, with particular focus on the needs of persons with disabilities. NP has also engaged with relevant partners to promote an understanding of disability issues and continue raising awareness on rights and well-being of persons with disabilities to ensure they can enjoy their rights and live in dignity.

ADDRESSING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV) THROUGH EFFECTIVE HUMANITARIAN COORDINATION

BENTIU, UNITY STATE | January 2020

On 6 December 2019, Nonviolent Peaceforce's (NP) Beyond Bentiu Response Team in Rubkona County was requested by the Protection Cluster to respond to a case of gender-based violence and provide support to a female survivor whose life was at risk. A 28-year-old mother of three who has lived with her husband's family in the UN Protection of Civilians Site in Bentiu (POC) had been physically assaulted and continuously threatened by her husband. While the husband had been absent for three years, his wife and children were living in the POC, primarily supported by his cousin. Upon return to the POC after years of absence, the husband accused his wife of infidelity and threatened to take her life.

The death threats from the husband forced the wife to move out of her husband's family house to ensure the safety of herself and her children. The husband searched for her in the POC but was not able to locate neither his wife nor the children until he learned about her visiting a hospital with their youngest child. The husband arrived at the hospital, gained access to inside the medical facility, and physically assaulted his wife and an international medical staff present at the scene. With the help of guards at the hospital, the medical team was able to remove the man from the facility and called UNPOL. Although UNPOL arrived at the scene and arrested the man, he was released the following day due to his disability. As soon as released from detention, the man returned to the hospital and continued

threatening the medical staff and his wife. The response to this incident proven to be ineffective and demonstrated a need to examine further how offenders with disabilities should be dealt with in the POC. NP raised this concern with the Protection Cluster and will continue to follow up on it further providing support as appropriate.

After the incident, the survivor said that she wanted to leave the POC due to the risk to her and her children, and return to her brother's house in Southern Unity, a three-and-a-half-hour drive from the POC. NP's role was to ensure protection and safety of the survivor and her children. Therefore, from 6 to 11 December 2019, NP team coordinated with partners in the Protection Cluster and health providers to develop a plan to transfer the woman and her children to safety. Moving of the family from the POC undetected by the husband, who was by then spending every day outside the hospital waiting for her to be discharged, proved to be challenging and required effective coordination and cooperation among all partners involved.

The health partner agreed to keep the woman in the hospital for safety while the plan on how to transfer the family to safety was developed. NP met with the woman several times to update her and seek her approval for the plan in development while meeting with the Relief, Reintegration, and Protection Section of United Nations Mission in South Sudan (RRP), the United Nations Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS) and the United Nations Police (UNPOL), who are managing the POC, to ensure that they are aware of the case and would support NP in executing it.

On 12 December 2019, the transfer began according to plan. NP staff waited until dark and met the woman at the gate of the hospital where she and her child were receiving treatment. The survivor and two female NP team members who accompanied the survivor on foot covered their heads and faces to avoid being identified. They walked into the POC to a place where survivor's two children were

hiding. In the meantime, the rest of NP team followed the group in the vehicle at a distance, observing any potential threat. Once the women were close to the block where the children were hiding, the NP car proceeded to one of the gates near the perimeter and waited. Further, UNPOL's vehicle went to the sector to monitor the situation as well. When the women collected children safely, the group met with NP at the agreed point and proceeded to leave the humanitarian access gate at about 8:30 PM. The guards at the POC, who had been informed in advance, allowed the NP's vehicle safely exited from the POC. The following day, NP carried the family to a town in a convoy of another humanitarian partner, where national partner met the team and took the woman and children on the final leg of the journey. As all partners played their part well, the protective accompaniment was completed successfully, and the family safely reached their final destination. Moving forward, NP will continue following up on the case to ensure the family remains safe and able to access humanitarian assistance if needed. Strengthening the GBV prevention, NP will continue to raise awareness in Rubkona county, with particular focus on behavioral change of men towards women.

SOCIAL COHESION

YOUTH PROTECTION TEAM OUTREACH IN NEW SITE TO RAISE AWARENESS ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND HIV

WAU, WESTERN BAHR EL GAZAL |
January 2020



Photo: Youth raising awareness on GBV and HIV/New Site, Wau/ December 2019/NP

Between 2016 and 2019 tens of thousands of people, fleeing violence across Western Bahr el Gazal state have moved to Wau town and surrounding locations for safety. Of over 67 000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Wau town, more than 20 000 people have settled in³. In November 2019, NP team in Wau was requested by the Protection Cluster to visit Lokoloko to assess the protection needs of persons with disabilities in the area.

From 7 to 20 November 2019, NP's Wau Response Team funded by the South Sudan Humanitarian Fund (SSHF), interviewed over 160 male and female persons with disabilities individually and in groups and learned that persons with disabilities and their caretakers face a multitude of barriers to access food, water, shelter, education and health services, and income-generating activities. Further, persons with disabilities are not well accepted by communities in Lokoloko and are frequently discriminated, harassed, and abused.

Kasima, a 35-year-old woman NP spoke to, has been paralyzed from a very young age. When violence occurred in Raja in July 2018, an international NGO evacuated Kasima to Lokoloko, where she was reunited with her aunt. A wheelchair was the only aid Kasima has ever received. When Kasima moves in her wheelchair outside, young men throw stones at her. To make a living, Kasima's aunt sells groundnuts and cooking paste, but the money she makes is not enough for her and her niece to survive. Falling to pay rent, Kasima and her aunt now have to vacate the house they are living in. Kasima has never seen a doctor and wonders if her paralysis may be reversible.

People with limited mobility like Kasima, face restricted or no access to food registration and distribution points, boreholes, health facilities, and community gathering places. Both male and female persons with disability, who participated in a focus group discussion, told NP that they have to rely on relatives for the provision of food and water, pay for fetching of water or resort to begging in the market.

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³ The South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) in Wau State

her. Similarly, men interviewed by NP also reported feeling marginalized due to their disability, saying feeling "ignored" or treated "like people of no value." 18 year old Hikman, who lives with hemiplegia – paralysis in one vertical part of the body, has never visited a doctor either. Although Hikman's grandmother works in a hospital, she said she has no time to take Hikman to a doctor. Hikman says she experiences harassment when she walks on the streets. Caretakers reported to NP facing pressure due to a lack of support system and specialized services for persons with disabilities in their care.

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For nearly every person with disabilities and caretaker NP spoke to in Lokoloko, it was the first time in their lives someone has asked them about their living conditions and needs. All vulnerable cases that NP identified during its assessment in Lokoloko were referred to relevant service providers in the area. Further, NP has shared the finding of the assessment with Protection, WASH, Food Security, Education, and Health Clusters and advocated for improved access to services for persons with disabilities in Lokoloko. Going forward, NP is following up on referred cases and monitoring identified protection concerns in the area, with particular focus on the needs of persons with disabilities. NP has also engaged with relevant partners to promote an understanding of disability issues and continue raising awareness on rights and well-being of persons with disabilities to ensure they can enjoy their rights and live in dignity.