

Women in Mathiang payam come together to stop the dispersion of inter-clan fighting

Case study | October 2019



Photo: Members of WPT/Malengagok payam, Rumbek East County, Lakes State/2019

Over July, Rumbek East country has seen a spike of violence between the youths of sub-clan from Cuieok payam and Thuyic sub-clan from Malengagok. The conflict between the two sub-clans has its long history fueled by ongoing grievances, cyclical revenge, cattle mitigation and negative coping mechanisms due to multigenerational trauma. When cattle raids increased in the area this summer, so did tension between the Gony and Thuyic leading to violence that spread quickly throughout bordering payams. The fierce clash between the two groups in Pacong payam during the last two weeks of July 2019 resulted in the death of fifteen people and injury of nineteen more.

When the youth of Mathiang, a payam one-hour drive from Malengagok, heard about the fighting in Pacong, they decided to intervene to support fellow Thuyic - clan members.

Alarmed by such intention of the youth, the Women's Protection Team (WPT) in Mathiang, established with the support of NP, were motivated to intervene to stop the violence and/or decrease the impact of violence in the community. WPT members promptly mobilized all women in their community to discuss how they can prevent their husbands and sons from joining the fighting. The women came up with a creative solution. They agreed to temporarily leave their homes when the men would be getting ready for the battle. Such collective move from women's side intended to discourage men from fighting, and it worked. Being left alone to run a household, the men felt overwhelmed and lost their enthusiasm to fight. Almost unanimously, the men of Mathiang decided the fighting was altogether unnecessary. One of the men said: "It was unbearable to stay home alone." Another man acknowledged that the women taught them a valuable lesson that if they intend to engage in fighting again, the women will leave them and consequently, they should begin listening more to their wives. One man stated: "It's been a rough couple of days without my wife at home."

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NP has been training and mentoring women in violence prevention, conflict management, and peacebuilding in Mathiang since June 2015. At the time, women of Mathiang payam were a part of WPT in Pacong payam, which was formed by NP to tackle issues such as land disputes, cattle raiding, revenge killings and more. In 2018, however, women of Mathiang felt ready to form their own WPT. NP supported the transition and provided them with more training including in prevention and response of gender-based violence, conflict resolution, and non-violent communication.

NP's mentoring of the WPT in Mathiang has led to a maturity of the group, demonstrated in the women of this payam feeling empowered to proactively solve issues in their community - whether it is a family matter or there is a threat to the community as a whole. Prevention of the Cony-Thuyic's conflict from spreading over other areas is a vivid confirmation of that. As one of the women in Mathiang said to NP: "Our men thought they were powerful. We prove to them that women have more power than guns".