

Nonviolent response at Standing Rock

International peacekeepers offer support and training in NP's first U.S. mission.

by Marna Anderson, Director of Development and Communications

ON ONE OF THE COLDEST WEEKENDS in January, I had the opportunity to participate in NP's first peacekeeper training for community protectors in the U.S. The site, Bismarck, North Dakota, is approximately 50 miles away from the Oceti Sakowin camp, where tribal members and water protectors lived over the last year in an effort to stop the Dakota Access Pipeline. Approximately twenty community members attended the training looking for the opportunity to connect with one another, discuss the conflicts they faced and together find a new way forward. The group represented a wide array of members from the community including retired teachers, religious leaders, social service workers and members of the legal collective.

Those present were very engaged. What brought them together was the longing to discuss the conflict and the challenges it has created with their neighbors and friends. They wanted to learn new tools and skills to provide protection for community members who feel unsafe and to open up channels of communication between people with opposing views about the pipeline.

Peacekeepers Martha Hernandez, Colombia, and Thiago Wolfer, Brazil

The power of training

Throughout the group's time together, they participated in a few of NP's experiential training activities that prepare civilian protectors to work in places such as South Sudan, Myanmar and the Middle East. They learned to step into others' shoes to build empathy with people they may not agree with, to better understand the dynamics of the conflict and each party's role in it, and to provide protection when people are under threat of violence.

Plan of action

Towards the end of the training, the group broke into smaller groups and determined three actions to take:



- Organize community members to accompany people feeling unsafe when they are in the larger towns of Mandan and Bismarck. Because of the intensified anger and racism, many report not feeling safe when going to town.
- Assist NP and other civil society organizations to conduct other trainings, so knowledge and protection skills are shared and have broader reach.
- Provide safe space for dialogue and use their own connections to break down barriers, as well as create opportunities to understand one another's perspective.

"... working for peace stretches you and motivates you to do more."

—training participant

Deepened relationships; new threads of connection; confirmation that peaceful change is possible; appreciation of how much working for peace stretches you; and motivation to do more.

Learning to step into another's shoes and to discover our shared humanity is the first step to ending violence. President Obama said this so eloquently at the memorial service for the Dallas police officers who lost their lives at a protest in July, 2016:

"Can we find the character, as Americans, to open our hearts to each other? Can we see in each other a common humanity and a shared dignity, and recognize how our different experiences have shaped us? ...the Lord tells Ezekiel: I will give you a new heart, the Lord says, and put a new spirit in you. I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. That's what we must pray for, each of us: a new heart. Not a heart of stone, but a heart open to the fears and hopes and challenges of our fellow citizens. Because with an open heart, we can learn to stand in each other's shoes and look at the world through each other's eyes..." ➡

The takeaway

To conclude Saturday's training session, we stood in a circle and asked people to share what they were taking forward or how the training impacted them. One person said that being at the training was a "huge gift." Another said she felt less alone and more connected to her community. Others responded with these words:

Update

Ten community protectors from January's training, along with NP peacekeepers, provided protective accompaniment to water protectors evacuating the camp on February 22.

"It was inspiring to see that the working groups were proactive, organized to use strategies of unarmed civilian protection to respond to the needs of civilians. People believe in UCP and they are using it."

Martha Hernandez, NP Peacekeeper, Bismarck, ND



UN Security Council recognizes unarmed civilian protection

by Mel Duncan, Cofounder and Director of Advocacy and Outreach



Cofounder Mel Duncan and Executive Director Tiffany Easthom (center) addressing the UN as part of NP's advocacy program.

IN DECEMBER FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HISTORY, the UN Security Council recognized unarmed civilian protection (UCP). The language was contained in a Security Council Resolution that renewed the mandate for the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). The language states:

Recognizing that unarmed civilian protection can often complement efforts to build a protective environment, particularly in the deterrence of sexual and gender-based violence against civilians, and encouraging UNMISS, as appropriate, and when possible, to explore how it can use civilian protection

techniques to enhance its ability to protect civilians, in line with the UN Secretary-General's recommendation.

This section recognizes NP's strong contributions on the ground and calls upon the UN Mission to explore how they can use UCP to enhance their ability to protect civilians. The missions to the UN from Venezuela and Angola led the effort for the recognition of UCP.

Bigger than it sounds

To the average person, this brief recognition may not seem like much, but in the context of the UN

UN Security Council, continued on page 6

Sleepless in Mundri, South Sudan—October 2016

by Hope Tichaenzana Chichaya, Program Manager in South Sudan

MY TEAMMATES KERRIN, PETER AND I sat down on the balcony of the guesthouse. Our view was a pile of cars that had been destroyed during the recent violence in Mundri, South Sudan. In the background, I could hear the news from the TV room and occasionally the loud clanking of the power generator would drown out the anchor. I checked my watch; it was still too early to call home. On this night, I especially missed my family. The recent escalation of violence had displaced hundreds of people, destroyed homes and torn families apart. I was tired and unmotivated when I thought about the scourge of violence upon innocent civilians. It made being away from home harder than usual.

Right before the end of the news, I dashed down to the TV room to hear the news anchor wrap up with the daily updates. The headlines were the usual—U.S. elections, the Syrian war and the migrant camps in the UK. There was no mention of South Sudan. Not even a brief update. Frustrated, I headed towards bed.

Reflecting on success

To ease my mind, I began thinking of the small successes that my team and I had earlier in the day. Someone in the morning told me, “*There are more students going to school today. This is good!*” In the afternoon, a businessman told me, “*Your presence has been felt and it is important you came. There are now three more shops.*” While doing our patrols we were told that the shops were staying open later and more civilians were moving in and out of town.

I smiled to myself. These are small but encouraging achievements. It felt good to know people felt safe enough to go about their daily activities partly because of our efforts. I have faith that NP’s presence makes a difference. I believe it has built confidence and safety for civilians. Their comments

and hopes are my inspiration for a better tomorrow.

I got into bed and tried to fall asleep, I rolled around to change sides. I rolled again and again. Several thoughts raced around in my head about the previous days and what we have to accomplish. I wondered how much longer it would be before I fell asleep. I thought about the recent violence and how we could best help to mitigate the conflict and protect civilians.

I checked the time—almost midnight.

Getting a head start

Unable to sleep, I got up and prepared some work for the next day. By the time I felt tired enough to sleep, I had written my speech for the inter-religious women peace rally. I checked my to-do list. Tomorrow, my team would be going into a controversial area with strictly limited access to participate in a humanitarian assessment. I also had to write an appointment letter to see the Army General so that we could introduce our work, our projects and negotiate access. I needed to clarify what NP stands for. But I decided to save that for the morning and went back to bed.

As I lay there, I could hear the night’s silence broken by insects outside. The generators had turned off a long time ago. From the room next door, I could hear my neighbors snoring and enjoying their sleep. Even my favorite neighbor’s dog howled late into the night. Although, it would be easy to be jealous of my sleeping neighbor, and the chaos outside was disturbing, my reflections from the day comforted me. It felt good to contribute to creating a safe space where people could continue living their lives with hope and dignity.

Ah, it’s already 5am. Damn. Let me try to sleep again. ➡



A LITTLE MORE ABOUT peacekeeper Hope Tichaenzana Chichaya

Hope has been with NP working in South Sudan since 2013 and is now serving as Program Manager. He holds masters degrees in both Business Administration and Peace Studies & International Affairs. Currently, he is in Bangkok, Thailand where he is further developing his skills as a Rotary Peace Fellow.

My hero is my late dad, Abisha Tafreshango Dhliwayo. He taught me gender equality, nonviolence, and introduced to me the concept and practice of 'servanthood leadership'.

What inspires me in protecting civilians is that I believe in 'serving' towards something bigger than me.

What I encourage in others is to believe in and support the effectiveness and efficiency of unarmed civilian

protection in situations of violent conflict. More than ever, investment in this concept and practice is needed.

A book I would recommend reading *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* by John Paul Lederach.

In my spare time I enjoy cooking, socializing, dancing and spending time with my family.

Something else about me I want to contribute towards peaceful co-existence in the world. I believe 'in all things to love and to serve.' There is a better alternative to violence and that is nonviolence.

where words are the local currency, it has caught people's attention. It builds on a progression of work starting in December of 2014 following General Assembly Resolution (69/139). This resolution included the explicit roles of civilians in enhancing the safety of vulnerable populations and

***"To change something,
build a new model
that makes the
existing model obsolete"***

—Buckminster Fuller

the promotion of peaceful settlements in disputes. Since then unarmed approaches for the protection of civilians has been recognized in a series of major UN studies and reports. Last October the missions of Australia, Belgium, Costa Rica, the Netherlands and the Philippines hosted a briefing at the UN on UCP that featured NP's work in South Sudan and the Philippines.

How change happens

Changes in global norms often arise from this type of progression.

- First the change must demonstrably address a need. NP and twelve other organizations are demonstrating that UCP protects civilians in some of the most violent places on the planet.
- The changes have to be attractive and easy to replicate. Then the practices need to be captured in reports and academic studies, as we have seen in the development of the UCP course with the UN Institute for Training and Research. UCP is increasingly a focus of academic study as we have seen at Selkirk College (Canada), Leeds Beckett (UK) and

Queensland (Australia), as well as in the independent research carried out by Drs. Bellamy, Bliesemann, Furnari, Janzen, Julian, McCarthy and Schweitzer among others.

- And finally, there has to be constant advocacy.

Buckminster Fuller describes this process, "You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete."

Powerful forces against change

This progress is not met with universal acclaim. Remember that major corporate interests fuel militaries. UCP does not yield much in the way of private profits. The UN Department of Peacekeeping fields over 100,000 armed peacekeepers with a budget that approaches U.S. \$9 billion. Not everyone is convinced of the efficacy of unarmed approaches and remain skeptical. Some larger non-governmental organizations either advocate for military interventions and/or feel their turf is threatened. Yet, these critiques will only sharpen our intellects and improve our work.

Evaluate, document, repeat

Simultaneously, we have begun to work with various units in the Department of Peacekeeping to develop pilot projects that can be evaluated and replicated.

At the end of the day, our work goes beyond the promotion of NP. It is about developing a methodology to protect civilians that can be used by many. Today, violent conflict displaces more civilians and for greater lengths of time than any period since WW II. More people are also becoming vulnerable to violence in the United States. Therefore, we must develop and promote methods for protecting civilians that are not only effective but also economical and easily replicated. In December, the Security Council brought us a step closer to that realization. ➡

Time to stand up and speak out

by Tiffany Easthom, Executive Director

I USUALLY LOVE JANUARY. I love the fresh start the beginning of the calendar year brings, along with the resolve that so many of us feel to make positive life changes. With 2017 however, we are off to a rather rough start. The actions of the new administration in the U.S., the process that has brought about BREXIT, escalating protectionism and deepening identity politics in parts of Europe bring a great deal of uncertainty and fear. These events threaten the very foundations of justice, rights and equality.

All of this happens in a world where wars grind on and 65 million people have been forced to flee their homes to escape violence and persecution.

It is heavy. While it can feel overwhelming, it is ultimately a call to action.



Cofounder Mel Duncan and Executive Director Tiffany Easthom in Myanmar, where NP helped evacuate 300 civilians last December.

Reason for hope

I was heartened in recent weeks to see millions of people take to the streets across the world to show support for women's rights and refugees fleeing violent conflict and persecution. I take solace knowing that people are speaking out and standing up against bigotry and fear.

Standing up and speaking out against violence is at the core of NP's mission. In all the places we work, our peacekeepers inspire local communities to action, using nonviolent strategies and personal resolve. Together, with our partners, we provide people with the tools they need to deter violence and protect their families, friends and neighbors. Here are a few examples from 2016:

- Negotiated a three-hour ceasefire and evacuated 300 people caught in the crossfire when violence broke out between two armed groups in Myanmar.
- Supported Women Peacekeeping Teams in South Sudan. These Women Peacekeeping Teams courageously spoke out against domestic violence and sexual assault in their villages and in the camps for displaced people.
- Brought together community members in Bismarck to learn how to use unarmed civilian protection strategies at Standing Rock.

NP is working harder than ever to protect civilian lives, to support and strengthen local organizations and to adopt nonviolent approaches to safeguard lives and human dignity.

Making a move

After 10 years of having our global headquarters in Brussels, we moved to Geneva to strengthen our policy and advocacy work. Geneva houses the global humanitarian architecture, the global

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Leave a Legacy of Hope and Dignity

Your gift to Nonviolent Peaceforce, creates a safer and more dignified life for people living in war.

Ensure your impact continues long after your lifetime by making a planned gift. Whether you're 30, 50 or 80 you can make plans now to protect people in conflict zones well into the future.

To learn more about the impact and benefits of planned giving please contact Marna Anderson, Director of Development and Communications at 612-871-0005, x222, or manderson@nonviolentpeaceforce.org

UN Photo/JC McIlwaine

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discourse on civilian protection and is home to innovative work on dialogue and mediation.

We currently have 200 staff working in countries at war. To better support our field-work, we are concentrating on strengthening NP from the inside out. We are focusing on building our own organizational capacity, improving all of the functions that support programming — administration, financial management, safety and security, and staff welfare.

In the face of the immense challenges in the world today, we know that we have to work together. Reducing violence and engendering

conditions for peace is not an isolated process.

We need to strengthen our collective capacities to prevent violence, to protect ourselves and each other with unarmed strategies.

I draw strength from the millions of people who gathered together in love and compassion in recent weeks. They demonstrate that we will not allow hate to win. We will continue to be inspired by the thousands of people we have the honor to serve each day. The people who commit and recommit to surviving, thriving and rising against odds.

On behalf of the NP team, I extend our deep gratitude for your support and invite you to join us in this journey. Onwards! ➡