

NP
Core Competencies
Summary

Protecting Children

2021



The alarming number of conflicts and associated civilian casualties worldwide emphasizes the need to find resolution 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, conflict prevention, conflict management capacity development. Currently, NP has approximately 300 protection officers deployed in our programs in Iraq, Myanmar, 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 through five avenues, one of which is protecting children.

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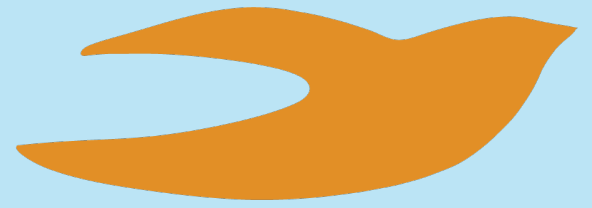
This summary is based on the full version of the NP core competency program document “Protecting Children” that contains additional examples of interventions, methods, and guidance as the basis of work in this field by NP, partners, and other collaborating bodies.

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Protecting Children

The year 2018 was marked by the highest levels of children killed or maimed in armed conflict since the United Nations started monitoring and reporting this grave violation. Sexual violence against girls and boys and the recruitment and use of children has also continued unabated with more than 7,000 children drawn into frontline fighting and support roles for fighters globally. Children living in the midst of armed conflict face unprecedented threats. These include the six types of grave child-right violations mentioned in UN Security Council Resolution 1612:

- Killing and maiming of children
- Recruitment and use of children in armed forces or groups
- Attacks on schools and hospitals
- Rape and grave sexual violence
- Abduction
- Denial of humanitarian access

Child protection issues also encompass:

- Female genital mutilation or cutting
- Child trafficking and sexual exploitation
- Child labour
- Child marriage
- Child migration and separation
- Landmines and other explosives

How the protection of children is provided in general

Many organisations that work for the protection of children have aligned their work with the four main topics outlined in the Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC): survival, education, protection and participation and mainly apply these three approaches:

1. Using the law through legal advocacy, enforcement, juvenile justice, litigation, and accountability efforts;
2. Large-scale service delivery programmes for child health, basic education, child welfare, social protection, and family support, etc.; and
3. Prevention of exploitation, abuse, and violence against children through social and behaviour change promotion, public health, and social work prevention and protection programmes.



*Anger Management Training
for Youth in South Sudan, NPSS 2020*

NP's niche in protecting children

The niche of Nonviolent Peaceforce in protecting children lies with its application of Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP) and its unique feature of direct physical protection. NP combines this with more commonly known child protection efforts such as family tracing and reunification, monitoring, facilitating access to legal aid.

Direct physical protection: We use our physical presence strategically by positioning themselves in insecure locations for extended periods of time to protect children and their families as well as local child protection actors. Most external child protection organisations primarily focus on the

needs of children, rarely on the security of local groups that act as first responders to child rights violations. Direct protection work is particularly relevant in places where traditional child protection systems are inexistent or dysfunctional or where authorities are part of the problem.

“In West Mosul NP was able to support reunifications for seven children who had become separated from their parents. The relationships that NP developed with the local security forces were leveraged to support in the immediate tracing of relatives. In two instances, soldiers at checkpoints were able to alert relatives to where their children had been found. On another occasion NP was able to elicit information from the military regarding two children who were being held in abusive conditions by security actors and subsequently worked alongside UN Civil-Military Coordination and the Child Protection Sub Cluster to negotiate their release. This information, reported by junior officers concerned with the conduct of their superiors, was obtained through sustained relationship building and placed those soldiers at risk of reprimand or retaliation. It was testament to the discretion and sensitivity of all involved that the children were rescued without repercussions for the sources of the information.”

(Internal report, NP in Iraq)

Preventive and multi-dimensional approach: As a humanitarian and peacebuilding actor operating in crisis and post-conflict situations, we integrate our child protection efforts into a broader strategy to protect communities. Our focus on violence prevention complements the efforts of humanitarian or development driven child protection actors that focus on health or education.

Increasing children’s ownership: We support children and their communities to reflect on their own protection roles. Recognising that youth mobilisation has witnessed an important growth over the past decade, we take an interest in the protection of Children Human Rights Defenders (CHRDs).

Engaging armed actors: The involvement of non-state armed actors has been a particular challenge to the field of child protection. We address this challenge through proactive and sustained engagement with armed actors.



NP Staff engaging with children during a patrol in an IDP camp in Iraq, NPIQ 2018

NP's work in the field

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

- **Responding to imminent threats against children** through physical intervention for civilians in harm's way ('direct protection') is one of the first responsive actions in a conflict.
- **Protective presence** at schools that had been attacked in the Philippines, at child friendly spaces of displacement sites in South Sudan, and for children who were threatened for their alleged role in extremist groups or crimes in Iraq.
- **Protective accompaniment to mothers** in Sri Lanka to women as they negotiated the release of their children recruited by armed actors and to human rights' defenders investigating violations of child rights.
- **Accompaniment of former child soldiers to their villages**, assisting with community and family reintegration in Sri Lanka and South Sudan, identifying educational and vocational opportunities and possible obstacles in the reintegration process.
- **Monitoring of schools as 'zones of peace' in militarised environments** in the Philippines. By maintaining a visible presence in communities at-risk, we have responded to concerns of occupation by military actors of school buildings, the proximity of Unidentified Explosive Ordinances to schools, armed clashes that disrupt the academic cycle, or any restrictions to the freedom of movement of students and teachers.
- **Monitoring and reporting on the 6 grave child rights violations** through the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) of UN Resolution 1612 in the Philippines and South Sudan

“When a 16-year-old boy in South Sudan was accused of murder he was arrested by the police. Despite his arrest, relatives of the deceased person came and shot the boy to avenge his death. The boy survived and was brought to a hospital in Juba. NP provided 24-hours protective presence in the hospital, as the boy’s family was afraid that people would come and kill him during the night. We sat in the hospital for weeks on end and also cared for the boy, because he was not cared for properly by the medical staff. When the boy was cured, we accompanied him to a police station to await his trial.”

(NP team member in South Sudan)

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

- **Training** of non-state armed groups on child protection measures in the Philippines (in support of the ‘Children Not Soldiers’ campaign).
- Supporting women’s groups to address child protection issues or **advocate for increased child protection measures** in their communities in South Sudan, the Philippines, and Myanmar
- **Supporting child prisoners to reintegrate into their communities** in South Sudan
- **Family Tracing and Reunification (FTR) of separated and abducted children** in South Sudan
- **Establishing, training and mentoring of local Child Protection Committees (CPCs)** or working groups and promoted their transformation into Community Based Organisations in South Sudan.