

PROTECTION IN HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES

PROTECTING COMMUNITIES AGAINST COVID-19

JUBA, CENTRAL EQUATORIA / JULY 2020



A photo of Haneen/Juba PoC, South Sudan/May 2020/NP

Since March 2014, Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) has been working with Women's Protection Teams (WPTs) in Juba PoC with the purpose of increasing women's participation in peacebuilding and building community-based protection mechanisms that can prevent and respond to violence. Since this time, NP has facilitated the establishment of nine WPTs in the Protection of Civilian (PoC) sites, comprised of

120 women, trained in topics under the umbrella of unarmed civilian protection (UCP) including prevention and response to gender-based violence (GBV), child protection, conflict management, leadership and communications skills, and advocacy and coordination. The WPTs now conduct joint activities with NP and independent activities such as patrols, GBV referrals, conflict mediation, protective accompaniment, and child protection advocacy. Given the adaptability of UCP, WPTs are also able to re-orient their activities to meet the dynamic needs and contexts in their communities as well as serve as leaders, utilizing the skills they gained as WPT members.

One of the beneficiaries of NP's trainings, workshops, and mentoring is Haneen, a WPT member serving the Internally Displaced Person (IDP) community since 2015.

While serving as WPT focal point, Haneen also holds various positions within the PoC 3 community leadership structures. Currently, she is representing the camp management committee as a human rights coordinator for the IDP community in PoC 3 and has recently become a member of the community task force for the prevention of COVID-19. The following is a transcribed interview with Haneen discussing the impacts of COVID-19 on her community as well as her efforts to help her community:

NP: How do you see the reactions from the IDPs in the POCs due to the COVID 19?

Haneen: We are conducting awareness raising to the community everyday by visiting door to door houses, and places where IDPs are gathering such as water points, restaurants, hospitals and distribution sites. Our community haven't taken the preventive measures very seriously and they strongly believe that the COVID will not reach POCs due to the heat in South Sudan.

There are several cultural myths and rumors spreading within the POCs that the COVID 19 will not target the general IDPs. Therefore, we are increasing our awareness raising sessions and putting more effort to control the rumors which are spreading in the POCs related to the COVID 19. It is VERY important for our community to accept the WHO standards of preventive measures and we as community leaders are trying to convince the IDPs to apply the recommended preventive measures. In addition, we are closely working with the blocks and zonal leaders in order to promote the proper hygiene practices among the IDPs [Internally Displaced Persons].

NP: What are the challenges IDPs are facing due to the COVID-19?

Haneen: IDPs in the PoC, including the Church leaders, are not following the rules and regulations recommended by the community task force. The church leaders are violating the rules and regulations suggested to avoid the spread of COVID-19 while gathering in large numbers of people in the church. The water points are overcrowded as well and IDPs are still practicing to greet each other with handshakes due to cultural beliefs since greeting without handshake is culturally assumed to be disrespectful.

"We as the community task force members are putting our full efforts to sensitize the community about the importance of applying the recommended measures."

CASE STUDIES & SUCCESS STORIES | July-September 2020

Due to the closure of schools to avoid the spread of COVID-19, children started moving around while unaccompanied minors looking for food and charcoal. It is not easy to manage children especially when they are trying to get something to eat or when they go out of the PoCs for income generating activities. another contributing aspect is that the shelters of the poc are made of plastic sheets and it is very hot in the shelter during the daytime, therefore it is challenging for the adults and children to remain in their shelters and practice social distancing. as a result of this, you will find the youths moving towards the WFZ [weapons free zone] while children are playing by the roadsides and in the natural water pools located in the WFZ.

the government may take some extra actions and lockdown, and this will affect not only the idps in the POC but also the host community. the number of movements from and to the POC will increase, the IDPS will go out collecting firewood and getting charcoal outside of the camp while the host community will try to get assistance in the POCS. eventually, there would be tensions between the IDP and the host community.

Due to lack of force protection presence within the perimeter fence, it has been a dilemma and challenging for us as the community task force members to control the illegal entries to the POCS through the damaged opening fence. we have been encouraging the block leaders and the zonal leaders to reinforce the messages to their respective IDPS particularly to access the POCS through the pedestrian main gate.

we have seen a trend of IDPS who went to the cantonment for training and now returning back to the POCS as a result of lack of continued activities and support. their return has added a strain on the limited resources like food and water for the officially registered IDPs and also increase in our population in the POCS.

“we are anticipating a gap in services in the future should other people from juba town decided to come to POCS if the lockdown is enforced for longer period of time”

“we do not have any kind of health facilities that are focusing on prevention and treatment of covid-19, and the new arrivals are not tested or isolated for fourteen days upon their arrival as a preventive measure to protect others from getting infected, therefore the risk of the spread and getting infected by covid-19 is high”.

Due to the closure of most social gathering activities in both POCS, men and boys are more attracted to the local alcohol brewing places inside the POCS. consequently, in recent time, concerns are raised about the high incidents of GBV and domestic violence related cases. currently we are closely monitoring the local brewing places inside the POCS for possible demolition of the structures upon our request on CWG [community watch group] and UNPOL for safety and security measures. however, as community leaders, we are facing challengers on our efforts to close these illegal alcohol brewing places inside the POCS due to the influence from the community watch group members. some of the CWG members have been bribed by these alcohol sellers while some other members also used to consume local alcohol from these places.

Hannen’s contributions to her community demonstrate the importance of empowering women to take leadership roles in their communities as well as the significant impact that individuals can make at the grassroots level. when women are given the opportunities to serve and protect their communities, they can make positive and substantive changes, including in protecting their communities against the spread of covid-19. Hannen’s testimony also underscores the significant impacts that covid-19 is already having on the IDP and host community in juba. however, thanks to recent funding provided by USAID’s office of foreign disaster assistance (OFDA), np is currently working hand-in-hand with community members like Hannen to prevent and respond to protection concerns exacerbated by covid-19 across South Sudan

PROTECTING COMMUNITIES IN FLOOD- AFFECTED AREAS

DUK, JOGNLEI STATE/JULY 2020



Photo; NPSS conducting a focus group discussion with IDPs/Pultruk Payam, Jonglei/February 2020/ Jonglei State/NP

When heavy floods struck South Sudan in October 2019, Duk Payuel County, Jonglei State sustained critical damage and its residents were among the most affected in the country. In December 2019, Nonviolent Peaceforce dispatched its Mobile Protection Response Team (MPRT) to Duk Payuel town to assess the scale and scope of the damage and identify vulnerable persons to inform rapid emergency response to affected communities. During the eight-day mission, MPRT conducted observation patrols and met with women and men individually and in groups as well as local authorities, traditional leaders and humanitarian organizations to listen to their concerns and needs.

Duk Payuel County, home to nearly 2000 households, is largely populated by Dinka and Nuer who are heavily reliant on farming, hunting and cattle-keeping to survive. The flooding, however, killed a significant number of cattle while cattle that did survive were seriously ill. While on patrol, the MPRT observed that flood waters were still high, particularly endangering children and persons with disabilities, dead animals were lying in the open, and crops, shelters and infrastructure were heavily damaged or completely destroyed by the water. “In the wet season, we are in the darkness,” commented one of the Chiefs on the flooding.

When speaking to the community members, NP also learned that the dire situation caused by the flooding was further compounded by high levels of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), inter-communal violence and frequent violent cattle-raids carried out by the neighboring Murle tribe. Fearing being attacked and abducted while collecting firewood or picking wild berries, women and girls stopped going far into the bush and as a result, were struggling to secure enough food for their families. Although the threat from the Murle had subsided as the water made the area largely inaccessible by road, the potential for an attack would return as soon as the floods receded. Upon returning to Juba, MPRT immediately shared its findings with the Protection Cluster and relevant stakeholders through a flash report followed by a rapid assessment report, highlighting protection and non-protection concerns of communities in Duk Payuel.

In February 2020, MPRT returned to Duk Payuel for another eight-day mission to conduct a series of trainings and awareness session on SGBV, child protection, conflict mediation, and early warning and early response (EWER). At the time of the response mission, the flood waters had almost entirely receded across Duk Payuel County and the risk of Murle attacks had returned with several incidents occurring while MPRT was in the area. With this in mind, NP’s response was manifold

Firstly, NP established referral pathways for SGBV survivors in the area. This was followed by a series of workshops with community members on SGBV prevention and response that aimed to enhance community capacity to prevent SGBV, eliminate stigmatization, and encourage reporting and access to post-incident services. The response to the workshops was positive. One man stated that in previous cases of a woman being raped, the survivor would be alienated from the community:

“We used to dislike her. We used to not talk to her. Even she might kill herself. But now we know to help her.”

Additionally, NP advocated John Doe Foundation for the provision of PEP kits to the Duk Payuel hospital and further training in response to SGBV cases to improve quality of post-incident service.

Secondly, NP trained humanitarian actors, chiefs and religious leaders in protection mainstreaming. As a result of this training, the participants understood the concept and importance of protection mainstreaming in the provision of humanitarian services, and recognized shortcomings in the General Food

Distribution implementation such as unfair treatment of community members by distribution staff and impeded access to humanitarian aid. While NP advocated for the humanitarian partner to look into community complaints, it also encouraged the chiefs to voice their complaints to a humanitarian agency when Protection Mainstreaming principles were not being applied.

"We never knew that we as religious leaders who are part of the larger community leaders can play a role in protection mainstreaming with service delivering," said one of the participants.

Thirdly, NP raised awareness on the vulnerability and protection of children. Particularly, NP discussed the needs of unaccompanied, impaired or disabled children who are often left behind in times of emergency, giving an example of children with visual impairment who were relocated to Potcap due to safety concerns as they would not have been able to flee in case of an emergency. NP also raised awareness on harmful traditional practices such as child, early and forced marriages and importance of education. Such outreach was well-received by the community members, with one of the fathers remarking:

"Education is better than 50-100 cows. The education lasts a long time, the cows die - just like now."

Fourthly, NP facilitated a conflict mediation workshop for Chiefs framing the discussion within the community request for NP mediation with the Murle. The workshop aimed to enhance the capacity of local leaders in resolving and settling disputes within and between the communities, utilizing key principles such as impartiality, confidentiality and neutrality.

Lastly, while in Duk Payuel, NP observed that large numbers of cattle had been affected by an unidentified disease and were dying in mass. NP promptly contacted Veterinaries Sans Frontiers Germany who sent their team from Poktap and addressed the issue.

NP's deployment of MPRT to Duk Payuel County enabled humanitarian partners to provide timely life-saving assistance for a community in dire need of assistance and address the most pressing protection concerns. Further, NP's follow up visit, and subsequent community training, strengthened the capacity of community member to better protect themselves, withstand shocks and resist harmful cultural norms.

Protecting Civilians from Unexploded Ordinance through Community Engagement and Humanitarian Coordination in Rubkona County

Rubkona, Unity State | July 2020

When South Sudan descended into civil war in late 2013, Unity State became a hotspot for hostilities with heavy weapons used by all parties to the conflict. By the time the signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) halted the heavy fighting in late 2018, large territories of Unity State were littered with unexploded ordinances (UXOs). During the rainy season, UXOs are buried deep in muddy soil, posing hidden dangers to local communities. When the rainy season is over, blistering sun dries and cracks the soil, exposing shells, bombs, mines and other munitions, reminding civilians that their safety is still in peril.

In early April 2020, anticipating the approach of the rainy season, farmers of Thoan went to plant their fields with corn and other vegetables only to discover UXOs laying uncovered on the surface of their plots. Thoan, a settlement comprised of approximately 30 households, is located in close proximity to the bridge between Rubkona and Bentiu towns, and served as a strategic military area where government soldiers were stationed during the war. Currently, the barracks are abandoned and returnees from Sudan and Uganda have been moving back into the area, taking advantage of the abandoned infrastructure and the proximity of the river to enable agricultural activities

In April 2020, NP learned that inter-communal violence and instances of cattle raiding had been disturbing the lives of civilians in the county. Observing that only a few

After NP shared the GPS coordinates, UNMAS contacted the BBR team to request accompaniment to the identified location to clear the ordinance. At the site, UNMAS studied the UXOs and determined that some of the RPG shells could not be moved and should be cleared on the spot. This, however, required prior approval and could not occur on the same day. In the meantime, while waiting for clearance, UNMAS cordoned the area off with tape and installed danger signs to ensure the safety of the local community.

NGOs had interacted with the communities in Thoan, NP's Beyond Bentiu Response (BBR) team conducted a patrol in Thoan to establish a relationship with the returnees and assess protection concerns as the newly formed settlement was also in close proximity to a cattle camp. While speaking to a female community member who was occupying an abandoned metal corrugated container, during a patrol, the BBR team noticed a pile of bullet casings beside her shelter. The team asked where the bullets came from and the woman said that children from the nearby cattle camp found them. The team asked where these children could be found and were promptly introduced.

The children received permission from their parents to accompany NP to the location where they found the bullets. After a twenty-minute walk, the team came to an area where rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) shells and bullets could be seen on the ground. The team thanked the children and explained to them that they must never touch UXOs, never approach any objects they could not readily identify, and always inform an adult if they observe anything suspicious.

Once NP ensured that children were in a safe distance, from the UXOs, BBR team carefully marked the area, recorded GPS coordinates of the location, and promptly passed the information to the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS). Before departing the area, NP also shared UNMAS' contact information with the community members enabling them to report UXOs directly to UNMAS should there be a need in the future.

Four days later, UNMAS was granted permission to diffuse the UXOs and the area was safely cleared. The BBR returned the team returned to Thoan to sensitize the community on the dangers of and required actions when identifying UXO, thereby responding to the immediate needs of the community. NP met with community leaders to propose a session on a danger of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and ask for support in mobilizing the community for the training. On 5 May 2020, 20 women and men attended a SALW session and shared their new knowledge and learnings with fellow community members.

Later that same month, the BBR team discovered more UXOs in another location. While patrolling the Bentiu - Nhialdiu Road NP staff were approached by a charcoal maker who notified them

SOCIAL COHESION

ENGAGING WITH ARMED GROUPS TO PROMOTE SOCIAL COHESION AND REDUCE VIOLENCE IN COMMUNITIES

MUNDRI, WESTERN EQUATORIA | September 2020

Since 2016, Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) has been working with communities in greater Mundri to strengthen the protection capacities of communities and reduce violence. In this process, it has been pertinent to engage with armed actors to enable access to communities, build relationships, trust and influence their behavior to prevent further violence. Although the relationships with armed actors were positive, it was difficult to provide training on Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP) directly to them. Alternatively, NP trained the wives of soldiers in Gender Based Violence (GBV) prevention and response as well as hosted activities with the soldiers' wives and wives of community members that facilitated improved social cohesion after years of hostility. Then, in 2020, NP finally built the requisite relationships to train armed actors in UCP in Western Equatoria.

NP started engaging local law enforcement through a two-day GBV prevention and response training. The training focused on an overview of what is GBV, the causes and consequences of GBV, and a discussion on current challenges faced by survivors when accessing the referral pathway to report GBV. Solutions were also devised to mitigate the challenges faced by survivors. After the training, the director for gender at the police station said that the training participants will act as gender focal points in the locations they are stationed. The deputy director of the police then said, *"I appreciate [NP] so much for the GBV prevention training you have given my people and I urge the participants today to take what has been taught. I also appreciate my colleagues for attending this and I*

request them practice what they have learnt. My sisters from NP, you are really working hard here in our community and may God bless you."

Repeatedly there are incidents between armed groups and civilians, including looting and unlawful detentions. Regularly, NP engages together with women leaders, including members of Women Protection Teams (WPTs), and other community leaders to negotiate release. In order to promote respect to civilians and improve social cohesion that could reduce future violence, the team arranged an introductory training on UCP for soldiers. During NP's interactions with the soldiers during the regular patrols, the commanding officer said he was very happy about NP's plan to provide them with UCP training. He also said that NP's courtesy visits were a sign of peace. Finally, NP conducted a UCP training for 15 soldiers. The recent context demonstrated the need for such a training to prevent and reduce the impacts of violence on the civilian population.

The first part of the training focused on human values. The participants were asked to sketch their faces on a piece of paper and post the sketches on a board. The participants said that while the sketches looked different from one another, they also looked the same because they are all human. They all value: life, respect, good relationships, common understanding, love, communication, water and food. However, conflict and death can disrupt everyone from realizing their values. The participants agreed that it is possible to find ways that these values could be preserved and enjoyed by everyone because, after all, human values are interconnected, interrelated, interdependent and non-discriminatory. One way is to promote social cohesion. The team explained the value of the individual, communities, and institutions as components of social cohesion. The ingredients of social cohesion that bind the individual, community and institutions together are: connectedness, social relationships, orientation towards common good and equality. The team then explained that one way of promoting social cohesion is to support the ceasefire agreement between the signatory parties. At the end of the training, the commanding officer said, *"I appreciate NP for the training today, we have not received any training since the war stopped in 2005. We see NP as a doctor. Usually, a sick person comes to the doctor for consultation, but it is the other way around, the doctor reached out to the sick person. If everyone here picks up the message of this training, they will move towards one direction and will help themselves in the future."* Commanders can be an agent of change in the community by reaching out to various leaderships and encouraging them to find

nonviolent solutions to issues in the community. By building relationships, finding common ground, and promoting the protection of civilians, NP has been able to reach a demographic often disregarded by

humanitarian actors: soldiers. This, in turn, amplifies NP's impact to reduce violence, protect civilians and improve the cohesion of communities

ENGAGING WITH YOUTH AND REDUCING GANG VIOLENCE IN BENTIU POC

BENTIU, UNITY STATE/JULY 2020



Since the establishment of Bentiu POC, a lack of livelihood opportunities and economic security as well as multi-generational trauma has contributed to high levels of insecurity. The insecurity and criminality have been characterized by thefts, robberies, killings, extortion, assaults, and smuggling of small arms and light weapons (SALW) into the POC. The community largely attributed the high levels of violence to the different gang groups that dominate the various blocks and sectors of the PoC. Community members report that they feel unsafe to walk along the PoC roads for fear of violence perpetrated by gang members.

Recognizing that a long-term and sustainable response was necessary to counter increased violence, NP sought, throughout its implementation of the programming in the PoC, to transform gang members into youth protection team (YPT) members and increase engagement with the youth population. NP conducted a number of UCP trainings, which included a focus on community protection, GBV prevention and response, and psychological first aid, to the youth which included

gang members. In 2019, NP helped facilitate the formation of six youth protection teams each comprised of 30 or more members pulled from youth, including former gang members, who had participated in the trainings and engagements since 2016.

Along with other youths, approximately 21 gang group members (11 girls and 10 boys) participated in YPTs and, as of today, four of the former gang members. Since the establishment of Bentiu PoC, a lack of livelihood opportunities and economic security as well as multi-generational trauma has contributed to high levels of insecurity. The insecurity and criminality have been characterized by thefts, robberies, killings, extortion, assaults, and smuggling of small arms and light weapons (SALW) into the PoC. The community largely attributed the high levels of violence to the different gang groups that dominate the various blocks and sectors of the POC. Community members report that they feel unsafe to walk along the PoC roads for fear of violence perpetrated by gang members.

Recognizing that a long-term and sustainable response was necessary to counter increased violence, NP sought, throughout its implementation of the programming in the POC, to transform gang members into youth protection team (YPT) members and increase engagement with the youth gang members are active in facilitating awareness raising activities on issues confronting youth.

In 2020, the spread of COVID-19 alarmed the PoC community however, many have not received proper information about the virus, how it spreads, and prevention protocols. In order to spread awareness on

COVID-19, from April 2020 to July 2020, NP engaged with and provided skills building activities to the YPTs with the expectation that the YPTs could then conduct COVID-19 awareness to youth members of their communities. Gaining knowledge and skills from several capability building activities, YPTs are now capable of running their own independent activities. Seeing the youth, including former gang members, facilitating awareness raising activities and becoming active in other community activities has sparked the interest of some gang members to become involved in

CASE STUDIES & SUCCESS STORIES | July-September 2020

YPT activities, thereby creating a pull factor from gang groups to more positive community-based mechanisms. NP utilized this interest to mobilize the YPTs who were former gang group members to facilitate awareness raising sessions to active gang members. When the current gang members see former gang members facilitating YPT sessions, they become more motivated to get involved in positive groups like the YPTs.

On July 8, YPTs organized a COVID-19 awareness raising activity to 10 members of a gang group (8 males and 2 females). The awareness raising session opened the minds of the gang group members to reduce social interaction and encouraged them to join future awareness raising activities for other youth. They recognized the need to follow prevention protocols in order to protect their communities, especially given that there are many vulnerable groups in the community such as the elderly and those with pre-existing medical conditions.

The gang members who participated in the awareness raising session initiated by the YPTs are planning to join future YPT activities and get involved in making positive changes with other youth in the community. As one gang

member said,

"It's not because we are not listening, but no any organization that take action in capacitating and mobilizing us to volunteer ourselves to work for others in the community. We will be working together with our colleagues who become today as facilitators. We hope NP will not give-up to continue with these beautiful works".

In order to continue their work, the YPTs plans to reach out to other gang group members to conduct more awareness raising sessions. The YPTs also conducted a joint protection meeting with the Women's Protection Team (WPT) to discuss protection issues in the POC and devise means of dressing identified issues. The YPTs and WPTs developed a plan to assemble conduct joint patrols in hotspot areas during which they will engage with parents and guardians to identify and address child protection issues and disseminate information about COVID-19 and prevention strategies issues. The YPTs and WPTs developed a plan to assemble conduct joint patrols in hotspot areas during which they will engage with parents and guardians to identify and address child protection issues and disseminate information about COVID-19 and prevention strategies

BUILDING COMMUNITY-LED SOLUTION IN MERWA KAJO KEJI COUNTY

CENTRAL EQUATORIA STATE/JULY 2020

Following an outbreak of violence between armed groups in Kajo Keji in 2017 and 2018, thousands of civilians fled the area for their safety. Many moved to Uganda while others sought refuge in neighboring areas or in the bush. Merwa, near the border of South Sudan and Uganda, is one of the bush areas where displaced civilians of Kajo Keji settled. There is no road access to reach Merwa and it takes two hours on foot to reach the nearest town of Kochi in Uganda.

In December 2018, IPMT visited Merwa and learnt that no humanitarian services had reached the hundreds of displaced civilians. They could only access shops, health facilities, and other essential services in Uganda if they could afford the costs of these goods and services and were able to endure the two hours walk each way. The team also noticed that hundreds of children from the displaced community lacked access to education. While some families could afford to send their children to

Ugandan schools, the large majority waited for humanitarian partners to bring education services to Merwa. Once the team returned to Juba, NP produced a full humanitarian needs assessment report for the mission and shared the report with the Protection Cluster and humanitarian partners. In the report, NP highlighted an urgent need for establishing a school in Merwa among other needs, including in the sectors of protection, WASH, health, and nutrition. Protection issues raised by NP included the occupation of civilian structures by armed forces, close presence of armed forces to civilian areas, and high levels of domestic violence and early pregnancy. NP emphasized for the need for urgent response in Merwa during a mission debrief with the Protection Cluster.

In February 2019, IPMT returned to Merwa and met with community representatives in a nearby church in Kochi (Uganda). The area was given to the displaced civilians by

CASE STUDIES & SUCCESS STORIES | July-September 2020

the Uganda host community to build a church and for use as a community center. The leaders reported that little improvement had taken place in Merwa since IPMT's last visit in December 2018.

In response to the identified vulnerability of the population, particularly children, IPMT organized a one-day community protection training, which included an emphasis on child protection, with 31 community leaders and members (18 men and 13 women). During the training, NP and the community discussed protection-related issues and devised contextually tailored community response strategies

In October 2019, IPMT conducted a monitoring mission to greater Kajo Keji. The team travelled to Kochi town and met with leaders of Merwa in the same community church. The team observed that the community established a primary school in the church where civilians bring their children from Merwa every day. The school was staffed by volunteer teachers who taught basic reading, writing, and counting.

According to a local community leader, after IPMT's child protection training, the community held a meeting and discussed how to address access to education for their children. They realized through the training and follow up discussion that they can also explore local solutions while waiting for humanitarian response. As a result of the meeting, the community agreed to contribute and establish a basic school.

As of November 2019, 76 children (40 boys and 36 girls) were learning in the school and the school was run through community donations. IPMT organized a child safe space (CSS) activity with the children in the church during which life skills were discussed and the team led recreational activities and traditional songs focused on topics such as the importance of friendship and personal hygiene.

The establishment of a school for the Merwa community demonstrates the positive impacts that communities can have when an enabling environment is created to come together to identify community concerns and they are empowered to devise solutions and lead on community response.

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