
NP SOUTH SUDAN



Photo: NPSS Patrolling Ganyliel Fish market/November /2020/NPSS

WOMEN PEACE AND SECURITY

ADDRESSING PROTECTION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH NP'S OUTREACH WORKERS

JUBA, SOUTH SUDAN | October 2020



Photo: Roselyn of NP's COVID-19 outreach worker patrols in Newsite, South Sudan/2020

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated already existing structural inequalities, especially those impacting women and girls across every sphere from health to the economy, security to social protection. In times of crisis, fragility and conflict, when resources are strained and institutional capacity is limited, women and girls face disproportionate impacts with far-reaching consequences. In South Sudan, and more specifically in densely populated areas like Juba, pre-existing gender inequalities, discriminatory social norms, intercommunal violence, cattle raiding, and poverty, among others, are likely to be exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and further limit women and girls' access to health and other essential services. According to the discussions held with the community leaders at the beginning of project implementation, the vulnerabilities of young girls and women increased as they have been more affected by sexual exploitation and abuse as a result of economic strain created due to the pandemic.

To strengthen women's protection and security, Nonviolent Peaceforce selected community outreach workers, all of whom are members of those new communities that NP started to engage. Prior to its engagement, NP assessed that the local community at New Site, a highly populated neighborhoods in Juba with deficient provision of basic services and presence of humanitarian actors, lacks knowledge on protection issues, particularly around Gender Based Violence (GBV). Among them, domestic violence and early and forced child marriage were highly present in the community.

According to Rose, one of NP's community outreach worker in New Site, positive change was observed when relating to the incidences of GBV after months of awareness raising, community engagement and empowerment on related topics. In one of Rose's outreach diary entries, she mentioned

“Women and girls were able to understand about women's rights and how important these are for their day-to-day life. People within the community particularly the women were dominated by the culture and religion to be under their husbands' power - even though women are strong enough to stand by themselves. After the awareness raising sessions conducted by NP, not only women but also the men accepted to respect for the rights of their women and girls. Several women have come with an idea of starting self-employments to avoid asking for money from their husbands which is one of the root causes of GBV cases at the domestic level.”

Rose's engagement in the community has been constant. By conducting several patrols and engagement sessions with community members she was able to notice a behavioral change not only in the increase of self-confidence and empowerment of women, but also in questioning masculinities and the role of men in their community.

“I have observed and also a few women reported to me that their husbands have changed their daily routing and now more attentive to the children and their wives while some of them have abandoned their drinking habits. This has reduced the number of domestic violence incidents in the community.”

Seeking to promote behavioral messaging targeted at key groups and individuals to promote social change and reduce the impact of violence on civilians, specific messaging was developed to discuss early and forced child marriage among parents and girls. Through her interactions with members of her own community in new site, Rose believes that: “NP’s awareness raising sessions on early marriage to the community has also enlightened the attitudes of their parents. Parents were able to understand the importance of sending their girls to the schools rather than giving their daughters to men for the bride price as an income- generating activity. The girls did not know the side effects of child marriage and now their eyes have opened and they understood the importance of child education for them and as well as to the society. Parents have learnt the rights of the children and are now taking care of their children and discouraging child marriage.

Rose feels very happy about her new role in her own community. People now trust and resort to her guidance when something happens. But according to her, her work and determination are long from being gone, she plans next to engage directly with youth groups, often associated with cases of sexual abuse of girls, to change their attitudes towards the protection of their own community. Inspiring many resilient women in South Sudan, Rose concludes by saying that for the future;

“I hope to become a chief in my community and they will listen to me. I know that I can do it”.

ADVOCATING FOR PROTECTION FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY - NZARA WOMEN'S PROTECTION TEAM TAKING ACTION

NZARA, YAMBIO/SOUTH SUDAN/November-2020



Photo; WPT advocacy meeting/Nzara/Western Equatoria State, South Sudan/August 29, 2020/NP

Nzara is a town 25km outside Yambio, Western Equatoria, and has seen the brunt of violent conflict from 2013. This area has been a witness of a number of armed confrontations between different armed groups, thus the communities have faced constant high levels of violence throughout the years. Its proximity to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has also observed cross-border transnational dynamics such as nomadic cattle keepers, influx of displaced persons from neighboring countries, armed groups carrying out raids and the different challenges that come with competition for resources.

One of the WPTs that NP has trained and coached has taken the lead in working towards the increased safety and security of their villages. In the past they have been key in challenging chiefs to resuscitate the traditional structure where the chief's homestead is a place of refuge for survivors; they also greatly contributed to map hotspot areas and assist survivors through referral processes in place. As part of the process to participate to positive influence local decisions, the WPTs have advocated to improve security in the region, as well as to increase livelihood opportunities for women.

While there had been some hesitancy to appeal to political leaders in the past, NP trained members of this WPT on advocacy and communication skills to engage with leadership, since most changes occur where there is political will. Consequently, sharing their concerns directly to the leadership could be more effective and promising for the outcome. On 29 August 2020, the women requested for a meeting with the governor, to voice out their grievances and requests.

During the meeting, the women indicated that the continued fighting between the soldiers and the Ambororo was compromising their safety. The Ambororo is a nomadic community that travels around among the Western Equatoria, South Sudan, DRC, Niger and Central African Republic; they are often involved in resource disputes with the community in Nzara regarding access to water and grazing land. It had become high risk for the local women to attend to their fields, to go to the river fishing or collect firewood in the bushes as they feared revenge attacks or being caught in the crossfire when violence breaks out. They were appealing to the governor that the fighting should stop.

An appeal was also made to the governor for the improvement of the safety and security of women in Nzara. They have been living in constant fear for themselves and their daughters as there is a systematic targeting of single women and female headed households, being harassed in the community.

The women further advocated for more access to land and ownership of livelihood opportunities such as retail spaces in the markets. They indicated that a significant portion of them were young widows who have lost their husbands due to the conflict and had young children to take care of. Their vision is to be independent and able to care for themselves and their families without having to get married and dependent on another man for livelihood. While opportunities existed, there were still some complications around land ownership, traditionally only given to men.

The governor was receptive of their concerns and promised to act on it. Regarding to the harassment of women he said that he will seek further information to propose possible responses. Regarding the land ownership issue, he mentioned that he will engage with the chiefs once the final state government has been formed to ensure that women will be eligible to own land.

The engagement from the WPTs have shown fruitful results, as there have not been violent clashes around Nzara since the meeting and the Ambororo have relocated about 80km away from Nzara. The women are taking ownership of the situation in their community and taking leadership in confronting the issue, redefining local norms.

MAHAD'S UMBRELLA WOMEN GROUP TAKING INITIATIVE AGAINST GBV

MAHAD IDP CAMP, JUBA/SOUTH SUDAN/December-2020

Mahad IDP Camp is a highly congested and densely populated area hosting over 12,000 IDPs, according to the camp's chairperson. Located near Konyo- Konyo, Juba's biggest street market, the movement and population density in the camp is an alarming factor that can negatively contribute to the COVID- 19 prevention efforts. According to the discussions held with the community leaders, women and girls have become more vulnerable to gender-based violence (GBV) since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, exacerbating already existing structural inequalities in the community. According to community members, there has been an increase in child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) and child pregnancy in the area.

When NP first came to Mahad, it was observed that women met within their own ethnic groups, mainly Anyuak, Dinka and Murle, the majority ethnic groups in the camps' composition. Those women would meet when social matters would come into place, among them, funerals, marriages or for settling disagreements involving those part of their own ethnic group. Previous attempts were made to form a General Women's Union with women representing the different ethnic groups from the camp, however, after misunderstanding due to tribal differences and a lack of structure and leadership coordination among the women, the group stopped to gathered together.

Due to regular community engagements in Mahad, women from the camp took the initiative and approached NP seeking support to create a platform among women where protection issues could be discussed, and to help foster peace among the various tribes. Working with the already existing different women's groups from Anyuak, Dinka and Murle communities, NP suggested that women would choose representatives from each of those communities, to be represented in an umbrella women's group,

where they would sit together to discuss protection issues and efforts to strengthen the community relationship among different ethnic lines. Those women would also be critical community representatives to share information and conduct outreach activities to the rest of the camp's population.

From the first engagement with the newly formed umbrella women group, NP had emphasized the timeframe of the project and the importance of the independent continuity of the group's operation in addressing protection concerns independently. Hence, NP focused its efforts and engagement with the group in a series of capacity building activities and awareness raising on existing protection concerns related to women's and child protection, and conducted trainings on Protection Mainstreaming and on Social Cohesion, to strengthen the community's relationship across the women's group.

"Up to now I felt a lot of changes in my life, the way I interact with people is now different compared to those days before I attended all the trainings. I can feel the love and peace of mind now from the women and the community, I have now forgotten those pains.", said a member of the umbrella women's group.

Following capacity building efforts with the umbrella women's group, NP supported the women to start conducting independent activities, among them, patrols, awareness raising and protection mainstreaming activities related to multi-sectoral humanitarian service deliveries. Mentoring meetings were organized prior to any of those activities, in efforts to increase coordination and attend to any questions the groups could anticipate. For example, when conducting patrols, the group was advised to always meet with the leadership and explain their purposes, being transparent and increasing its accountability towards its own population.

Such efforts strengthen relationships in the community and helped the women group to be recognized by community leadership and open dialogue on some of their concerns, such as the lack of inclusion of minority ethnic groups in registration sessions for humanitarian service delivery. NP was also present during those initial activities in order to continue to coach the women's group and address any protection gaps and support in responding to technical questions raised in those first activities. After those sessions, the women would gather together and debrief on outcomes of the activities, helping to raise challenges and successes among them.

“Now I even advice some women who are facing domestic violence in their houses. I really thanked NP and other organizations who also trained us, because trainings can change lives of the communities”

NP plans to continue to engage with the umbrella women's group, who is now developing an action plan to continue to advance their independent activities and initiative against GBV and other protection concerns affecting women in Mahad, and link them to local community leadership and humanitarian agencies.

PROTECTION IN HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES

YOUTH PROTECTION TEAMS (YPTS) PREVENTING GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN RAJA TOWN

RAJA TOWN, WAU/SOUTH SUDAN/December-2020

In 2020 Nonviolent Peace force returned to Raja, Western Bahr el Ghazal, in a multi-sectoral response for the most vulnerable population in a consortium with ALIMA, who's been present in Raja town since 2017, to attend to health and nutrition needs. NP's previous violence prevention programming in Raja included the formation and operationalization of a Youth Protection Team (YPT) in 2018 as a strategy to engage with local youth, to address their concerns and create opportunities for them to be agents of positive change. A series of protection concerns in the region have been associated to idle youth abusing the use of substances, involved into fighting and in gender-based violence (GBV).

The formation and operationalization of YPTs included training sessions on different topics such as, Unarmed Civilian Protection, which includes GBV prevention and response, Conflict Management, Early Warning Early Response. With NP's return to Raja, and resuming the work with YPT brought new energy to Raja and the youth.

The NP team, in collaboration with ALIMA, has conducted comprehensive GBV trainings with the local YPT, where NP discuss the protection components on prevention and response, complemented by ALIMA's expertise in conducting Psychological First Aid (PFA) sessions in addition to highlighting the GBV services they offer. Such collaboration is of vital importance, as the PFA sessions are meant to assist the community members and local peace and protection infrastructure such as the YPT, on how to offer psychological assistance to the survivors in the case where the psycho-social support services are beyond the reach of the community. Additionally, with this training, they will be better equipped to be multipliers of knowledge by further awareness raising in their community

By conducting those joint activities in the spectrum of the existing consortium, NP and ALIMA, both get to benefit from the expertise and experiences of both organizations. This helps in ensuring safe and effective service delivery to the community. Having the expertise in protection from NP's side combined with the health perspective when addressing GBV cases, enables both organizations to meet the needs of affected people in a more holistic manner and to ensure safe and dignified access to adequate subsequent services needed during referrals

After constant engagement, various trainings such on GBV and PFA and coaching, 24 youth members of the YPT in Hai Langba community are confident and aware on how to assist GBV survivors and are motivated to take charge and contribute to enhance protection in their own communities. The YPT members believe that they have the responsibility to care about each other and to guide survivors to appropriate professional care services, including ALIMA, Healthnet, the local leadership and the Ministry of Health. Working with youth through the establishment of YPT is of high relevance since members act as role models in their communities, influencing positive change among fellow youth in the community and enhancing a conducive environment to prevent and respond to violence within the community.

NP will continue this combination of training sessions, integrating ALIMA's health perspective into protection work to ensure that the YPTs and other local peace infrastructure in the community are able to strengthen their knowledge and to raise awareness in their own communities and continue to be role models for their peers, thereby influencing positive behaviors change especially amongst the youth.

SOCIAL COHESION

PROMOTING PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE BETWEEN IDPS AND HOST COMMUNITIES IN JUBA

JUBA/SOUTH SUDAN/December-2020

“I have never come to this place since 2016 war, I was always afraid. When I received the message yesterday, I had mixed emotions and I was wondering what awaits me. Now that I finally reached here, I am very happy.”

Those were the first impressions from a female participant during the dialogue between the Moryok host community and IDPs on September 4, 2020, but might as well represent the thoughts of many people who were present that day. In the outskirts of the Protection of Civilians (PoC) sites in Juba, IDPs, members of the host community in Juba, and local authorities met in an initiative to promote peaceful coexistence and rebuilt relationships between IDPs and local community members in Juba.

Fear and uncertainty are mutual feelings between IDPs from PoC sites and host communities in Juba as a result of violent conflicts they have had experienced since 2013. In addition, criminal activities such as killing, thefts, and abuse of women have made the already- broken-trust and shattered relationship more difficult to stitch.

On one hand, incidents of killings in the weapon free zone (WFZ) by what the IDPs called “unknown gunmen” are being blamed towards host communities without clear evidence and thorough investigation. In June 2020 for example, two IDP youths were found dead in the WFZ for unknown reason, by unidentified criminal. On the other hand, host communities are condemning IDP youths for harassing women living in the host communities.

These issues have been on the surface for long without being resolved. In order to address these tensions, and respecting our principle of primacy of local actors, NP team facilitated a meeting with community leaders from PoC sites, host communities and local authorities to discuss current issues they are facing and promote peaceful coexistence.

NP engaged in shuttle diplomacy by conducting a series of previous consultations and meetings with separate actors in efforts of trust and relationship building efforts. Another meeting conducted in August 2020 resulted in the establishment of a peace committee in each location – PoC1, PoC3, and host communities. Members of this body were selected by community leaders to serve as representatives from their communities, including block leaders, WPTs and YPTs’ members, previously trained on Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP), ensuring as well a gender balance and inclusive representation. Besides the facilitation of peaceful dialogues with their neighboring communities, each committee member acknowledged their responsibility for disseminating information, especially related to peace agreements, between IDPs and host communities.

On 4th September 2020, an inter-communal dialogue was conducted between and among host communities, IDPs, and local authorities. Each community was represented by selected members of

their peace committee that was recently established. This is the first time that all established peace committee members were brought together to have dialogue for peace and reconciliation. As the deputy chairman of PoC3 expressed

“the purpose of this dialogue is for all of us to reconcile as one community and one South Sudanese.”

One representative from the host communities complemented and said “we will not get peace if we continue to live in tribalism, nepotism, and with hatred. We will not get peace if we continue to look other tribe as different from ours.”

Each community was given a chance to express themselves and all of them supported and committed to the idea of reconciliation and peaceful coexistence. The commanding officer from the military, also present at the dialogue, expressed his support to the initiative and the peace process in general, he said that *“we don’t want to fight.”*

The head police officer from the checkpoint between the different communities also commended the initiative and was very happy to see host communities and IDPs in one place and discussing about peace and reconciliation. The dialogue served as start of building trust among themselves. To sustain this initiative, participants agreed to establish an

executive council that will meet regularly to discuss, address different issue and activities to strengthen their relations. Supporting the implementation of the dialogue held

on the 4th September, NP visited the Moryok host community the following week to understand if one of the resolutions of the meeting, about further spreading community awareness about the peace agreement, were being implemented. The team was received with appreciative reactions from the community about the dialogue taking place, and found out that the community have further selected representatives for a joint executive peace council with members from the different communities. On 12 September, and again on the 29th, the joint executive peace council had its first meetings after the dialogue, showing a great commitment and improvement in the communal relationships and started developing a work plan on joint activities to be conducted.

NP will continue to support the peace agreement by engaging all the involved parties with capacity building on Unarmed Civilian Protection, including topics such as social cohesion, peacebuilding, mediation, dialogue, and other related topics, and supporting confidence building activities between IDPs and host communities.