
NP SOUTH SUDAN



Photo: NPSS and Women Protection Team(WPT) during joint patrol in Bentiu raising awareness on COVID-19 and preparation for international Women's Day Celebration / Bentiu/March/2021/NPSS

PROTECTION IN EMERGENCIES

INCREASING THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF CIVILIANS IN BENTIU CATTLE CAMPS

Bentiu, Unity State South Sudan | January 2021



Given that cattle keepers are dependent on their animal products that they sell for income and survival and cattle raids could potentially increase with the death of cattle, NP decided to advocate on behalf of the cattle keepers to humanitarian partners and other animal services providers agencies for cattle vaccination in Bentiu and Rubkona towns. As a result of advocacy to Veterinary Sans Frontiers (VSF), the VSF team visited the cattle camp for verification that resulted in the vaccination of 5,231 cows

During the team's activities at the cattle camp, the cattle keepers (owners) expressed their appreciation and thanked NP for advocating on their behalf to save the lives and increased the productivity of their cattle.

One of the residents stated that

"we are very pleased with you because you saved our lives and lives of our children which could have been in jeopardy if we lost our cattle, the main source of livelihood..."

Besides advocacy, NP also identified pertinent protection concerns affecting those in the cattle camp, especially children. The protection concerns identified included the wide proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapon (SALW), including use by children, as well as child labor. In response, NP conducted trainings in child protection and SALW to both elders and children. In the engagements with the elders, NP informed them of the detrimental impacts of having children carry and be in the presence of SALWs as well as attempted to shift the responsibility of carrying for cattle to adults. Since NP's engagement, awareness raising on SALW has influenced the decision for children not to carry weapons as they had before. The children are no longer taking care of the cattle and the elders have prepared a place where they keep their weapons from children for safety and security reasons

NP hopes to engage with other remote communities to further promote safety and security through NP's Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP) approach

In Nuer culture, cattle serve as a source of wealth, livelihood, dowries for marriage, and compensation if killing occur within the Nuer communities. Sadly, cattle-related conflict is also one of the root causes of violence in Unity State and across the country, resulting in countless deaths and injuries each year.

During the raining season, cattle keepers moved their herds away from flood affected areas and closer to principal towns of Bentiu and Rubkona. Migrated cattle keepers create temporary camps during the seasonal period where they live often with little humanitarian engagement. Considering the lack of humanitarian engagement and the propensity for violence as result of cattle-related conflict, NP established and strengthened relations with the community in these temporary cattle camps.

Recognizing the high prevalence of child labor in these cattle camps, the team began engagement with the cattle keeping community through child protection awareness. The team also conducted patrols to identify other areas of concern and promote NP's presence in the area as well as community meetings that enabled community members to share their concerns directly with NP. One of the main concerns raised by cattle keepers during community engagement was the significant death of their cattle as a result of infections and sickness. Despite reporting this to humanitarian partners, no one responded to their calls for help.

PROTECTION MAINSTREAMING FOR EFFECTIVE HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY RESPONSE: FOOD DISTRIBUTION WITH SAFETY AND DIGNITY

MANGATEEN IDP CAMP, JUBA/SOUTH SUDAN/MARCH 2021



photo: Protection mainstreaming during food distribution in Mangateen-November 2020/NonviolentPeaceforce

Aiming to enhance the emergency humanitarian response and promote the delivery of humanitarian assistance following its principle of ‘Do no harm’, NP conducted protection mainstreaming trainings for the humanitarian agencies operating in Mangateen IDP Camp, in Juba and its community leadership structures to address challenges in the area. Angelina, a Community Leader in Mangateen IDP camp during NP’s protection mainstreaming training session in Mangateen attributed the lack of organization and violence during distribution activities to the lack of coordination between agencies and community leadership on site and explained:

“I get surprise when I see organizations coming here giving out items and going back without talking to us the community leaders but these are our people, we know them, we stay with them and we know how to talk to them that is why you see people scrambling and fighting because they are not sure whether they will get what is being given and they don’t know where to go if you don’t get It” Angelina, Community Leader, Mangateen IDP Camp

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Nonviolent Peaceforce implemented a project to prevent COVID-19 related-violence in densely populated urban areas of Juba, as well as enhance multi-cluster partner’s COVID-19 community response from a Centrality of Protection approach. In order to achieve this goal, NP worked together with partners, authorities and local peace infrastructure to ensure that members of the communities had safe access to services during the pandemic.

Mangateen is a highly congested and densely populated Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Camp in Juba. Overcrowding, poor sheltering, scarce resources and limited access to reliable information amidst others were already serious threats for the increasing protection concerns during COVID-19 pandemic. The impact of COVID -19 is not only limited to a health crisis but also a protection crisis for the most vulnerable population in countries like South Sudan.

NP identified protection concerns during the distribution when people engage in fights, poor crowd control, making it a hostile environment for vulnerable groups such as the people with disabilities, elders and lactating mothers and hampering their safe access to distribution of humanitarian aid. Furthermore, there were coordination challenges between agencies operating in the IDP camp, community leaders and community structures during distributions which provoked misunderstandings between community members and increased tensions. In November 2020, NP conducted two (2) protection mainstreaming trainings for 91 individuals, among them agencies’ staff, community leaders and members of the Community Task Force in Mangateen. Emphasizing community engagement and relationship-building in effective humanitarian emergency response, NP discussed the underlying key concepts of protection mainstreaming during aid distribution, highlighting its principle of ‘Do No Harm’, and seeking to ensure meaningful access and accountability to project participants, whilst looking at the role humanitarian actors play during distributions

As a result of these trainings, existing partners started to involve community leaders in the planning and execution of distribution sessions in the project locations. Improvements during general food distribution that took place in Mangateen in November 2020 were identified whereby the distribution partner's staff showed more respect and concern to the recipient of aid, with superior care towards people with special needs and effective and respectful crowd control, preventing violence during distribution sessions. In addressing the concerns of crowd control, NP facilitated meetings between humanitarians and authorities to plan adequately next distributions and to avoid any complications and protection concerns.

As a result of protection mainstreaming trainings, coordination between community members and humanitarian agencies is enhanced, reducing complications during food distributions and increasing accountability and communication with local community enhancing a protection environment for civilians.

In addition, NP trained partners on relevancy of protective presence for crowd control during registrations and distributions and trained agencies on how to identify protection concerns during their activities. One participant stated:

“after the training, we decided to pick the [community] watch group to control the crowd from among the people trained by NP on protection mainstreaming in order to help us control the crowd, this month we got few complaints from the community instead they are appreciating our new method of food distribution, am really grateful for the training”, James, Food Distribution Agency Staff

The inclusion of the community leaders during the distribution and in the post-general food distribution meeting was another improvement noticed by the NP team at the site. According to Angelina, who was previously disappointed with the lack of community's involvement in activities in the camps, she expressed her happiness to NP for taking up the initiative to address the issue, according to her:

“[I] am very happy for the work NP is doing here, for the first time I was called for a meeting to plan food distribution in my camp and even after that I was called to find out if there is something, we can do together to improve the food distribution next time, I feel important, I wish NP could take up the management of the camp to do more work with us”, Angelina, Community Leader in Mangateen 1DP camp.

NON-VIOLENT PEACEFORCE'S ROLE IN THE RELEASE OF TWO MINORS FROM DETENTION

Mundri/Western Equatoria/March/2021

State is a hotspot for forced

recruitment, the NP team was certain that these minors had been forcibly recruited. Despite the challenges in tracking their whereabouts, community members and the uncle kept NP informed of any changes in the situation. By the end of 2020, the uncle informed NP that the two minors had returned to Mbara.

On the 18th of January, 2021, NP received report that the same two minors were suspected of orchestrating a robbery in the Mbara area. The soldiers' suspicions about the robbery were compounded by their recent return from DRC and the assumption of them being members of an organized armed group. They were detained in the barracks in Mbara and later moved to the Mundri Town barracks for further interrogation.

By this point, the NP team had informed Juba of the severity of the situation. As a result, on the 22nd of January, NP managed to arrange an in-person meeting with the CTSAMVM office in Juba to report the case. Before NPs referral, CTSAMVM had not heard of this situation, they put the NP team in contact with the CTSAMVM Yambio office and both the NP Juba team and Mundri team communicated with the Yambio team and kept them informed of any developments. The minors were still detained at the barracks when CTSAMVM officials came to Mundri at the beginning of February

Based on NPs referral, CTSAMVM came to Mundri to assess the situation and had a meeting with the NP team on 4th February to understand the context and get clarity on the sequence of events and plan further. Because the NP team had been in contact with community members and had monitored the case since July 2020, they provided CTSAMVM with a thorough briefing, resulting in immediate action. The following week, on the 11th of February, in the presence of the local Chiefs, the minors were released into the custody of their families as result of joint efforts by NP and partners

It was predominantly through the communities' trust in NP that they continued to inform NP of the situation, it was through meetings and community networks that the commander, despite his actions, reported the abducted and movements of the minors to NP.

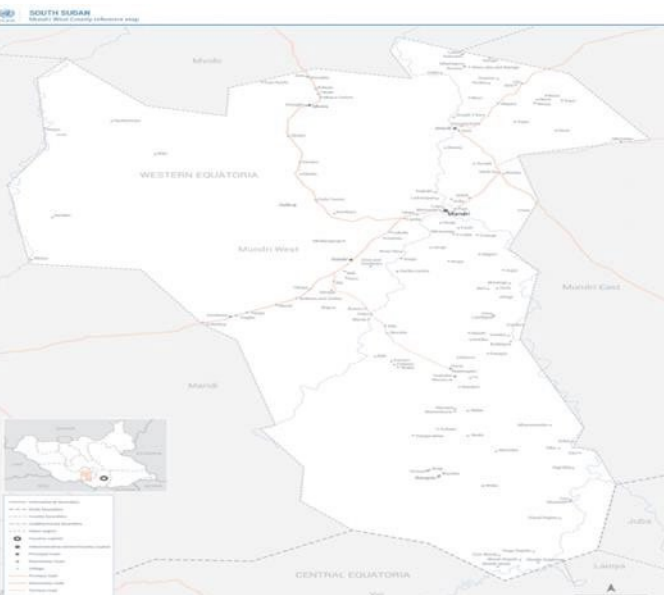


Photo courtesy; Reference map of Mundri, Western Equatoria

On 11th February 2021, two minors – aged 13 and 14 – were released from their prolonged detention in Mundri Town's government barracks. The release of these minors is a testament to NP and its Mundri team's dedication to Unarmed Civilian Protection, the trust the community vested in the organisation, and NP's successful collaboration with Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMVM) in ensuring the implementation of the Cessation of Hostilities Act (CoH).

It was in July 2020 when two minors from the Mbara community were abducted. NP was immediately informed of the situation after the uncle of these minors reached out to NP to report the case. A commander from Mundri area –whom NP maintained a good relation with also confirmed the case when he told NP that the minors were going to Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Although the said commander mentioned that he would try and return them to their families, after their movement to DRC the NP team lost contact with him. As the Western Equatorial

Due to NP's continuous engagement with the case and solid understanding of the situation, it was possible to share relevant information to CTSAMVM. This was possible through years of relationship building and community engagement.

Due to the efforts of numerous actors, two children are now back with their families and receiving the support they need. NPs commitment to the communities, strong relationships, community engagement and collaboration with CTSAMVM played a significant part in achieving this

SOCIAL COHESION

A PATHWAY TOWARDS PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE IN ULANG

Ulang,/ Upper Nile/SOUTH SUDAN/February -2021

Revenge killing is one of the biggest protection risks in South Sudan and especially in Ulang County. Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) team in Ulang has been working with youth, women and men, training and developing their capacities for peaceful coexistence, violence prevention and self-protection. Members of NP's Women's Protection Team (WPT) have been trained in conflict transformation, mediation, gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response, early warning and early response (EWER) and small arms and light weapons (SALW). These trainings have enabled members of the WPT to have a positive influence on and improve the protection of their communities



Photo: Ulang WPT members, October 2020

“Revenge killing must stop and Reconciliation brings peace” Sarah Nydoli Deng WPT member in Ulang

One day, a young man was killed during an intra-communal fighting by an unknown person. Immediately after his death, Sarah and Nyamach visited the deceased's family. Trained in conflict-sensitive and diplomatic communication, both women involved the head of the family in a discussion about the risk of revenge killing. They explained that revenge killings create a cycle that contribute to further violence among and within communities and suggested instead a nonviolent alternative to find reconciliation and to make peace with the perpetrator/s. After the conversations, the Chief agreed to start working together with NP and to lead discussions on peacebuilding with youth in order to find a way to end the cycle of revenge killing

After some time, brothers of the killed men heard rumours that the perpetrator had come to town and were consequently preparing an attack. Fortunately, their father (the chief) was able to intervene on time and advised them to stop. The Chief explained to them that revenge killing will not be tolerated anymore as it is a vicious cycle and will never bring long-lasting peace in their communities. The Chief explained about the conversation he had with the WPT members and that he had promised them that his son's death would not be avenged but rather compensated by cows.

Thanks to Sarah's and Nyamach's peaceful dialogue with the Chief, he was able to save the lives of young innocent people and perhaps of his sons too. The Chief has become a leading role- model as peacemaker in Ulang, and has been participating in peace meetings facilitated by NP. He is now perpetuating the message that revenge killing is wrong, and encouraging elders to prohibit their sons from engaging in this practice. Sarah, Nyamach and other WPT members continue to spreading messages of peace to work towards a peaceful coexistence in their communities, as one member emphasized:

“We do not want to see any violence and loss of lives anymore” By Nyamach Buotbuot also WPT member in Ulang

Sarah Nyadoli Deng and Nyamach Buotbuot are two members of the Ulang WPT who, through their strong commitment for peacekeeping, made a positive impact on the culture of revenge killing.

SUSTAINABLE PEACE, SOCIAL COHESION AND WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION: SUCCESS OF THE EAST MUNDRI PEACE FORUM.

Mundri/Western Equatoria/South Sudan/January 2021

On 26th November 2020, as a result of engaging and coordination efforts by Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP), the "Community Leaders Forum to Promote Peace and Social Harmony in Greater Mundri" finally happened. The conference, referred to as the Peace Forum, was a gathering of leaders from Mundri East to discuss the ongoing security concerns and how to address these issues as a broader community. The initiative was the brainchild of the Leaders from the Episcopal Church of Sudan, NP, and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). It is a breakthrough forum for reconciliation and forgiveness in the Greater Mundri region.

NP had been negotiating with the Church about the importance of this forum and the need for its implementation since the end of 2019. After each failed attempt, NP urged the Church to re-start the process and continued working with the church to ensure that the Peace Forum ensued. NP played many roles in supporting the organization of this forum, from communicating and negotiating between the Church and UNMISS, planning the program, and providing assistance and consultation on the logistics, to mobilizing the relevant people whose attendance was crucial. NP's dedication to serving communities in the Greater Mundri Region and perseverance paid off – the Peace Forum was a great success in East Mundri that has been ongoing since 2015. The conflict that started in 2015, has been largely resolved in the rest of the county – except for East Mundri. Clashes and violence have fostered a deep sense of hatred and inter-communal violence. This is why the forum was aimed at encouraging forgiveness and reconciliation to foster social cohesion between the civilians in the region.

NP was the first INGO to re-enter the East Mundri region in 2017 and re-established relationships with the local communities. The result of this has been the reinvigoration of NP's Women's Protection Teams (WPTs) and a commitment to the Peace Forum. Since October 2020, the region has been in a state of precarious peace, although still volatile and considered an Opposition held region by the government. East Mundri continues to face violence, looting, robberies, criminal activity, and other security concerns.

The forum drew participants from Mundri, Jambo, 'Buagyi, Lanyi, Lozoh and Lui – all communities in the East Mundri region. Over the past few years, East Mundri has been challenged by the presence of the organized armed groups, ongoing conflict, looting and other forms of violence. The community of Wiroh, an organized armed group stronghold and one of the areas most affected by violence, was invited to participate in the forum, however, due to limited freedom of movement, participants from Wiroh were unable to attend. Despite this, their concerns were still aired in the forum as the inability of the Wiroh community to attend the forum was evidence of the greater security concerns of the region.

In addition to NP's role in establishing the forum, many of the participants interacted and engaged with NP in the past through awareness-raising, training and workshops. As such, many participants vocalized the concerns of their communities using the skills and community-based mechanisms NP interventions had formed. Six members of NP's WPTs were present, representing Mundri, Lozoh and Lui and many of the youth present are part of NP's Youth Protection Team (YPT). Of the 40 participants who attended (due to COVID-restrictions the number of participants was limited), 15 women and five youth leaders attended and participated. The participants comprised of local chiefs, church leaders, three IO officers, YPT and WPT members. The community decided that SSPDF leaders would not attend as this was a community forum and they are (currently) not considered as part of the community. NP acknowledged the challenging nature of including all armed actors in community-based reconciliation and forgiveness efforts as it remains a complex situation.

Consequently, NP agreed to conduct further discussions with community members as well as armed actors to explore an inclusive approach, supported by the whole community to encourage sustainable peace. The NP team provided technical support, as well as helping UNMISS and the church with co-ordination and ensuring the forum ran smoothly. The team also worked with the Church on the program and provided advice and facilitation skills.

"This forum is very much needed as these communities require peace and harmony because they are socially, mentally and economically traumatized." The Executive Director of Mundri West County and guest of honour.

Not only did the forum create a space for local leaders to discuss the ongoing security concerns in East Mundri, the participants were there to discuss how their communities can move forward through forgiveness and reconciliation. One of the most significant aspects of the forum was its focus on healing the relations between the communities in the East Mundri region through forgiveness and reconciliation to encourage social cohesion. It brought together different sectors of the community to discuss their painful experiences to start the reconciliation process and overcome the hatred and inter-communal violence that has been rife since 2015. Participants were relieved at the chance to vocalise their pain and come together to discuss how they could work collectively to rebuild their communities and reconcile with the past.

"Greater Mundri would have developed if there was no violent conflict in the region. The perpetrators of this violent conflict persistently oppress us and mistreat." A 50-year-old chief of Jambo

11 resolutions were put forward as a starting point to ending violent conflict in East Mundri, and the participants encouraged NP and UNMISS to pursue these forums in other communities and at multiple levels – including the national level. These resolutions included urging armed actors to stop sexual gender-based violence against women, the demand for free movement of civilians in the region, working with armed actors to encourage the use of nonviolent approaches for resolving violent conflict,

The formation and training of peace committees in East Mundri to monitor and report violence happening at a grassroots level, and lastly, to organize a Peace Forum for the signatory parties to promote peace and harmony in the region

"I was born in conflict, grew up in conflict, lost my dear ones for conflict, continue to stay in conflict. I hope after this forum, my family and I will live the best life that we want. Let us together find the best way to end this conflict." Unice, WPT chair lady Mundri

Since their establishment, the WPTs have grown in confidence and numbers and, with the assistance of NP, have had a widespread and positive impact in their communities. Many of the concerns voiced at the forum were based on NP interventions and the WPTs attributed this to NP efforts in mobilizing and facilitating ways the team can improve the quality of life for women and girls. Many women of the WPTs expressed their gratitude to NP as by attending the workshops and training women felt empowered and enabled to participate in those kinds of decision-making processes. Consequently, women and girls participated during the forum where the WPT members refused to be silent on the violence women suffered during the conflict and the ongoing violence against women. In addition to their personal stories, they advocated for more women's presence and participation in higher-level decision-making processes

"I am asking the local authorities and humanitarian partners to consider women for high-level forums both within and outside the country so that women can be able to raise their voices against what is affecting them, even if women are not educated, their voice could be translated for everyone to hear, this can end women's suffering." Aya, Lui WPT member

Having attended many NP trainings, the WPT members, YPT members and other participants discussed the importance of social cohesion for a peaceful community drawing on skills developed during these trainings. The social cohesion aspect of the forum is testament to NP's work in these communities. Since the forum and with the assistance of NP, leaders who were present at the forum have started disseminating the information and progress made during the forum to the East Mundri community. In the programs that occurred since the forum took place, NP teams have received positive feedback from community members in Lui, Langyi and other communities about the success and value of the forum. The Peace Forum was a successful start in the process of reconciliation and forgiveness in the East Mundri region, and NP will be right there working with local actors and leaders to continue facilitating and assisting these initiatives to create sustainable peace

A PATHWAY TO PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE: JOINT EFFORTS OF THE INTER-COMMUNITY PEACE COMMITTEE INITIATIVE IN JUBA

JUBA/SOUTH SUDAN/March 2021

The prolonged conflict in South Sudan has kept many people in internally displaced people's (IDP) camps, Protection of Civilian (POCs) sites or in refugee camps outside South Sudan. The Juba IDP camp is surrounded by the communities of Yei-Road checkpoint, Merelotor, Nakitom, Lokwilili and Moryok. Since there has been almost no interaction point between host communities (HC) and IDPs, mistrust has grown over the year and has not been addressed. Consequently, there was no relationship with the surrounding communities due to the mutual allegation of crimes and other incidents. In addition, trust between the police and the HC has not been existing neither and lead to many cases of vigilante justice.

In order to build trust and strengthen the weak relationships between the HC, IDPs and local authorities NP facilitated one inter-communal dialogue in September 2020 with different relevant stake holders. As a result of the meeting, the participants decided to establish an Inter-Community Peace Initiative (ICPI) Committee comprising 30 members, 5 members from each of the sub-communities of Yei-Road checkpoint.

In its first meeting, the ICPI committee signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to define relationships among the six communities and their expected role when addressing protection concerns. According to the committee, after the signing, the members were able to hold meetings with the communities about the peace agreement and spreading messages on peaceful coexistence in the 3 locations of check point, Moryok and IDP 3 and they are planning to expand their work to other communities. The ICPI will continue to conduct dialogues between those six communities to bridge the gap between the different communities and to build trustful relationships. Besides the relationship building between community members, the committee is also seeking to establish a better relationship between the local police and security coordinators in the camp by sharing information about camp related issues as well as about the peace agreement. John, a member of the committee, has attributed the change in his perception to being a part of the committee.

"When this initiative was formed, I was not sure and not convinced that we will achieve anything from the MOU we signed because I was wondering how people from different communities can work together but after our first meeting with the community in Checkpoint [yei road checkpoint]"

"I was surprised and happy at how people are willing to listen and do something for peace to come in this country" John, Inter community peace Initiative committee member, Juba IDP camp

Moreover, the committee agreed on sharing information about the work of other humanitarian agencies in the communities in order to improve the transparency and coordination among humanitarian partners as well as community members. Over the time, the committee have received positive feedback from community members as they mentioned that they feel more comfortable to report cases of harassment and concerns to the community leaders and the local police station in the area as they did before. This has not only improved security but also improved interaction between the communities, the local authorities and the local police.

"The real insecurity is when people look at each other as a security threat, people in this communities used to fear moving because of fear of being attacked by other members who are not from their community but now I see this fear is going away because people are getting to know each other ,all I can say is our security has greatly improved and I consider this as a work of the peace committee because they have made communities to understand that they are one people and not enemies, I thank NP for working closely with committee as well" ICPI Security Adviser.

Since youth have been a constant concern within the communities, the peace committee focused and will continue to focus on bringing together the youths of the different communities, especially through sports. Agnes, Deputy chairperson of ICPI explained during a focus group discussion:

"We are planning to have a football peace tournament here; we have already cleared the field. We plan to have the youths from the different communities of Checkpoint Metolor, MoryokLokwili and Juba IDP to form a team to play against the South Sudan national football team. We will use this tournament as a platform to talk about the importance of diversity and peaceful co-existence for peace in South Sudan"

The ICPI is planning to have more engagements with communities on the importance of dialogues to promote peaceful conflict resolution for a safe environment

"We are planning to engage the communities in dialogue as the best means of resolving conflicts, peace is when violent is not an alternative for settling issues among ourselves" ICPI Security Adviser