

Strengthening Protection of Civilians through Community-led Approaches

[Sunday Stephen]

My name is Sunday Stephen, National Protection Officer working for Nonviolent Peaceforce, Juba IDP Camp. I'm together with Hannan Mahamoud, Community Protection Team Leader from the community.

[Sunday Stephen's translation for Hannan Mahmoud's remarks]

Her name is Hannan Mahmoud Patchol. She is part of the Women Protection team that is a part of the protection of civilians site/IDP camp. For the past few years, she has been working with the community, closely with the Nonviolent Peaceforce.

She [Hannan] started working in 2013 since the start of the crisis in South Sudan broke out in Juba. She joined the Women's Protection Team (WPT) with Nonviolent Peaceforce, which was formed in Tomping before people moved to Juba. From that time, she continued her work helping, and working for community members along with her advocacy for women and girls. Currently the number of WPT's is 220 in 6 state members working for camp 3. The other two camps do not have WPT operations. Therefore, she is happy with the work she is doing as a member of the community and advocating for their own community to get services that they were not receiving before.

As a woman leader that is working closely with the Nonviolent Peaceforce and the community members at the same time, she feels that she is more empowered because before the crisis she couldn't get this chance to advocate for women or sit at the table together with men to talk about the protection issues that are facing women in the entire community. Because of the perception that women are not given these chances. But since the crisis, she has been given that chance to come to POC. She now uses this privilege to use whatever was in her mind and advocate the women and girls.

Being a part of Unarmed Civilian Protection in the community is not easy because people are used to protection with weapons. The first time, we found it very hard to approach the communities because they expected us to have weapons in order to do protection. We told them our weapons are our knowledge and awareness raising on the community level. To know you are right, to claim it and also to stand against inner violence that is in the community level so that your voice can be heard. As a woman who has nothing, as well as the youths, the boys, it's continual ... they feel like the importance of them being unarmed civilian protection in the community is actually creating a great relationship between them and the stakeholders within the community, as well as reducing some expectations because already their mission is known to the community and they know that these groups of protection teams are just there to protect women and girls.

They also will respond to any gender-based violence, things that may have happened, they follow the referral pathway. Also, they do have some cases, file them to the courts, and do mediation within the community when there are disputes within the levels of families. These acts make community members feel like it is important to have them there and associating women with this particular team was a great achievement in the way that the men see their wives claiming their rights in a good way and not in a violent way. They also know how to mediate between people when conflict arrives.

Her last point is about gender equality. They are really fighting towards gender equality with their end goal being everyone being equal. They want all genders to come together to make the best decisions for the entire community. Also, in the leadership level they are advocating for women to be leaders at the community level. That is her last point, and she is giving the floor.