

Nonviolent **Peaceforce**

Capacity Statement 2023 - 2024





Introduction

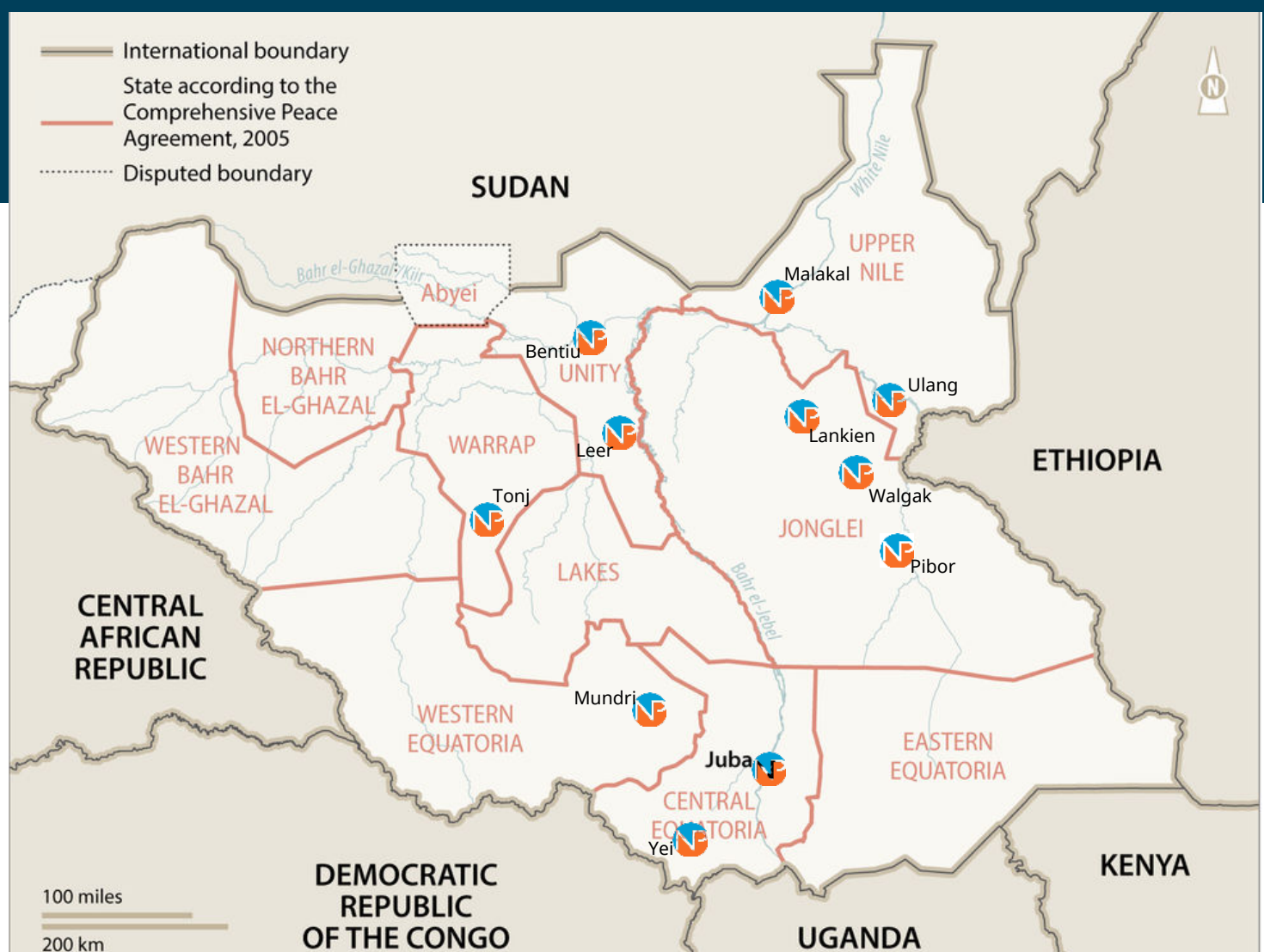
Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) is a global civilian protection agency that utilizes the methodology of Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP), an innovative, evidence-based approach with a demonstrated track record of reducing violence against civilians across the world. UCP is based on relationship building, acceptance and trust by the community that utilizes a mix of strategies to prevent violence, enhance the safety and security of civilians, build and strengthen local peace infrastructures, and create an enabling environment for communities to devise and implement locally led peace and protection strategies.

UCP provides a framework for NP to work uniquely on the spectrum of protection and peacebuilding, especially with the most vulnerable such as women, youth and children. NP's activities include direct protection activities such as protective presence and patrolling, inter-communal peace dialogues, early warning and early response, rumor control, strengthening of local conflict mitigation capacities, and community security meetings, focusing on hard-to-reach hot spot areas where there is inadequate humanitarian presence or significant need for protection programming, including areas of return and where displacement occurs as a result of violence. All activities are designed to respond to the immediate protection needs of beneficiaries as well as to support the resilience, adaptive capacity and recovery of communities from violent conflict and insecurity. UCP's flexibility enables NP's programming to respond to an evolving context while maintaining an emphasis on the centrality of civilians and communities.

NP has had extensive experience and presence across South Sudan since 2010. Currently, NP's program in South Sudan is comprised of 11 static field teams in six states and one administrative area: Upper Nile, Jonglei, Greater Pibor Administrative Area, Central Equatoria, Western Equatoria, Unity and Warrap. NP also operates a mobile response team in Upper Nile and Unity States in response to the April 2023 Sudan crisis. These complement NP's broader protection programming with mobile response teams that cover areas where there is either a lack of static protection partners or that require immediate protection response.

NP's programming in South Sudan includes peacebuilding, social cohesion, protection, gender-based violence prevention and response, child protection, youth engagement, and reconciliation with a particular emphasis on the prevention of violence. NP works closely with different partners through protection mainstreaming and other interventions to ensure the centrality of protection so that material aid and services are safely provided to communities. NP utilizes its constant and in-depth community engagement to support effective and coordinated multi-sectoral response that is relevant, holistic, conflict sensitive, and ensures the centrality of protection. NP has continued to maintain a deep field presence and serves as a co-lead for the Protection Cluster in several parts of the country, serving as an important partner with reliable information on the local context which helps partners improve program implementation and demonstrates NP's ability to coordinate response in a variety of context.

STATIC PRESENCE LOCATIONS



ACTIVE GRANTS

INTERVENTION	THEMATIC FOCUS	DONOR	LOCATIONS
Mitigating violence, increasing the safety and security of civilians and strengthening the resilience of populations affected by conflict and environmental shocks'	Child protection, GBV prevention and response, youth engagement, conflict management, and protection mainstreaming	Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA): United States	Jonglei: Lankien, Nyirol, Uror; GPAA: Pibor, Lekuangole, Gumuruk; Unity: Rubkona, Mayom, Panyijiar, Leer, Koch, Mayendit; Central Equatoria: Yei, Morobo, Lainya, Kajo-Keji; Warrap: Tonj South, Tonj North, Tonj East.
Fostering a safe and enabling environment for inclusive and sustainable peacebuilding	Community protection, social cohesion and peacebuilding, women's and youth engagement,	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation & Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands	Central Equatoria: Juba; Unity: Rubkona; Western Equatoria: Mundri West, Mundri East; Upper Nile: Ulang
Community violence reduction in Jonglei and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA) - Phase II	Violence reduction, accountability and rule of law, civic participation and governance, human capital development and peace dividends	South Sudan Reconciliation, Stabilization, and Resilience Trust Fund (RSRTF) Consortium	Central-southern Jonglei and GPAA: Weikol-Pulbura, Kadiang, Nanaam-Bichbich-Keriak-Kotome-Wuno-Lekuangole, Burmath-Nyandit, Anyidi-Manyabol-Gumuruk corridors.
Increasing the capacities of Human rights defenders and their network in South Sudan to operate safely and effectively	Human rights, journalism, protection	European Union Consortium	Country wide
Supporting community resilience and non-violent conflict management in conflict and flood affected areas of Upper Nile and Jonglei States, South Sudan	Peacebuilding, nonviolent conflict management, resilience building, conflict sensitivity, WASH, and FSL	European Union Consortium	Upper Nile: Malakal, Baliet, Melut
Increasing the safety, security and operational space of South Sudanese Human Rights Defenders	Direct protection, civic engagement, and civic development	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands Consortium	Country wide
Delivery of life-saving assistance to people fleeing Sudan and host communities in Upper Nile and the Northwest region of South Sudan	Emergency response to Sudan Crisis: Conflict sensitivity and protection, SNFIs, WASH	The Crisis and Support Centre (CDCS) French Ministry of Foreign Affairs Consortium	Upper Nile: Renk, Manyo, Melut; Unity: Pariang, Rubkona, Guit

Community Protection Teams

The effective establishment and strengthening of over 85 Community based Protection Teams (CPTs) is a cornerstone of NP's successes in protection and peace throughout the country, and a core operationalization of NP's UCP methodology the Women and Youth Protection Teams (WPTs & YPTs) form the core structure of the CPTs. These CPTs have been trained on topics encapsulated in the UCP methodology such as peacebuilding, nonviolent conflict resolution, protection, and GBV prevention and response and have already begun implementing relevant independent and joint activities with NP and other community groups. The trainings provided to them both reaffirm what these community members already know, and expand their knowledge base, which ultimately increases their confidence to be able to take on new roles within their communities. These community mechanisms ensure inclusive participation of youth and women in the local decision-making processes in peace and security issues, transforming them from being traditionally perceived as perpetrators or victims respectively, to agents of change and role models for peace and social cohesion.

In addition, NP establishes and supports early warning and early response (EWER) groups that are mobilized to identify potential sources of violent conflict including within and between communities, as well as armed actors. Through NP's existing interventions, these groups have been up-skilled to intervene non-violently to prevent escalation of conflict through dialogue facilitation, negotiation, and advocacy. EWER groups are formed with the intention of creating community-led mechanisms to identify early signs of conflict and violence and then lead their communities in response to mitigate the impacts of violence and displacement on the community, particularly for the most vulnerable members of that community. When the violence cannot be prevented the EWER groups implement security measures to ensure that their communities remain safe. Members of these EWER groups, comprised of traditional leaders, women, youth, and religious leaders, often begin as participants of NP's UCP trainings and grow into established groups in communities that are particularly vulnerable to violence and displacement. Since the establishment of the EWER groups in Mundri, for example, community members have reportedly felt more connected to leaders and empowered to face mutual challenges utilizing the power of their shared voices. The EWER group in Madiba Payam of Mundri East even managed to engage in dialogue and dispute resolution with Mundari cattle keepers migrating through their communities, de-escalating tensions between the Mundari and their communities, to prevent recurrence of cyclical violence in the community between farmers and cattle keepers.

WOMENS PROTECTION AND PARTICIPATION

In Ganyiel, Panyijar County, a WPT focal point has been invited to observe traditional court processes for GBV cases, a forum traditionally reserved for males. In Hai Kuzee, Yambio County, a WPT member had been elected the community's first female head chief. In Juba IDP camp, WPT members have been invited to attend decision-making forums at the block, zone, camp, and humanitarian levels. As part of these decision-making forums, members of the WPTs took part in nominations for camp leadership. During the subsequent elections, 14 WPT members were selected by the community to become community representatives.

In Bentiu, NP initiated a meeting between the Rubkona commissioner and the WPTs which resulted the commissioner agreeing for the WPT to serve as an immediate point of communication between IDP camp authorities, the community and county authorities. By linking community groups with peace actors, authorities and signatory parties, community groups are empowered to use their voice for positive change. Additionally, authorities and signatory parties are more likely to hear and respond to the needs of their communities, thereby improving their response to civilian concerns and strengthening cohesion.

NP has significant experience working alongside and providing direct protection for women facing immediate threats of violence, including through protective accompaniment to post-incident support services, referral services to GBV survivors, awareness raising sessions on pertinent women's protection and gender issues, trainings on gender-based violence prevention and response, and advocacy to civilian, military, and traditional authorities to support women's protection efforts.

As of July 2023, NP actively supports 56 WPTs throughout South Sudan. Each WPT is comprised of approximately 30 women who are trained and mentored to identify security and protection concerns, respond to protection threats and escalation of conflict, and serve as leaders for peace and protection in their communities. WPTs are also linked to civilian and military authorities, and traditional leaders to facilitate their legitimacy as community structures and, eventually, support their inclusion into local peace and decision-making processes. WPT members have also been critical for implementing protection strategies to prevent violence in their communities by providing protection mainstreaming for distribution partners and inter-positioning themselves to de-escalate conflict.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

NP supports 27 YPTs throughout South Sudan, comprised of approximately 30 youth per team. YPT members are provided with a suite of unarmed civilian protection trainings, including nonviolent communication, conflict management, SGBV prevention and response, and positive masculinities. Then, youth are supported to identify community concerns and work with community leaders to develop locally-driven solutions. Engagement with youth is determined by the context of each location and the specific needs and requests of youth. For example, in Pibor, NP is liaising with leaders of different age-sets and bringing divergent age-sets together for dialogue.

NP works closely with community structures, such as YPTs, all across South Sudan. These groups are brought together into a group and provided with opportunities to form new relationships, develop new skills, change their perceptions, increase their self-awareness, and work to bring about positive change for their community. NP helps these groups to form, or works with existing structures, and then supports them until they continue their work independently. Membership is entirely voluntary, NP does not provide payment of material aid. The benefits of being part of these groups relate to the soft skills members develop, the relationships they formulate, and the accomplishments they are able to achieve.

CASE STUDY: YPT FORMATION IN GUMURUK GPAA

While on patrol in Gumuruk (GPAA) the NP team entered a tea shop and found the benches along the walls of the small shop lined with young men smoking shisha and sipping tea with their AK-47s leaned up against the bench. This was a great opportunity to have a chat with these youth. NP pulled up some chairs, and as they sat down one of the youths stated that NP's international protection officer (IPO) looked like his future brother-in-law. This joke easily opened up a conversation with the youth. Although the majority of staff in NP's team in the GPAA are Murle and the team had conducted significant analyses on Murle culture and the causes of violence, the NP team utilized the naïve inquiry method and began asking the youth basic questions about age-sets, such as:

What are age-sets? How are age-sets formed? Who are the leaders of age-sets? Why do age-sets fight? Does fighting for your age set bring a sense of pride?

When the last question was asked, the youth replied that they do not take pride in fighting, but they actually fear fighting and wish they didn't have to. As the conversation went on, NP asked them what could be done to help prevent the violence and the youth suggested that a group should be formed with members from the different age-sets who could be trained to intervene and resolve the conflicts before they escalated into violence. This was the beginning of the YPT in Gumuruk.

After the initial meeting in the tea shop, NP came back to meet youth in Gumuruk frequently. The leaders of the age-sets were introduced to NP, and together discussions were held about the functions of the group and who should be part of it. Over a couple of months NP and the age-set leaders identified youth to join the group. Upon formation, the group is first taken through a series of trainings on a range of topics including how to respond to and prevent sexual and gender-based violence, early warning and early response, leadership, and nonviolent conflict resolution, to name a few. These trainings are given to make sure that all members have a common understanding of the tools necessary for community protection, and more importantly, so that they have the confidence to engage with the decision makers in their community and feel that their presence in these settings is legitimate. During the period while the youth are trained, a process which took a few months, NP simultaneously spoke to the community leaders (elders, chiefs, government authorities, women, and religious leaders) about youth engagement in preventing and responding to violence. NP also introduced the group to these leaders, and the broader community. Following this period, the YPT was encouraged to engage in activities with NP, a type of on-the-job training and mentorship. These joint activities helped the community begin to perceive these youth differently, no longer as armed trouble makers but now as positive contributors to their community. With time the group slowly began to take on independent initiatives and was accepted by their community. In fact, one of the original YPT members has since been elected chief by his community.

Violence still occurs in Gumuruk, in the form of intercommunal fighting (such as the attack by the Lou Nuer in December 2022) and as a result of disputes or feuds. However, it is not a common sight anymore to walk into a tea shop and see a dozen armed youth sipping tea, as NP had two years prior. The divisions among the age-set have reduced, and you can see groups of mixed youth socializing and playing games together in the market. The YPT in Gumuruk fulfills an integral role in supporting the community to resolve disputes and prepare for early warning and early response plans for potential intercommunal attacks.

SOCIAL COHESION & PEACEBUILDING

NP conducts initiatives targeting local leaders to link women, youth groups and other traditionally excluded groups with state peace actors as well as community forums that bring together women, youth, and state peace actors with the aim of establishing and enabling joint peace strategies, amplifying voices of women and youth, and promoting social cohesion within communities. This, in turn, facilitates the participation of civilians in community decision making processes and civilian protection initiatives. This work is streamlined through all of NP's approaches.

NP facilitates communal dialogues and peace conferences with traditional leaders, women, and youth to enhance trust, build confidence, and provide an enabling environment for cohesive communities. In Juba, for example, NP brought together the Moryok, Lokwilil, Nakitom, Merelotor and checkpoint communities to strengthen relations between the communities in and around Juba IDP camp. Due to high levels of mistrust between different ethnic and tribal groups, the host and the IDP communities have been blaming one another for incidents, perpetuating divides between them and instilling fear in one another. The conference initiated positive engagement between these communities and NP also established intra-communal peace committees and one inter-communal peace committee to continue peace efforts and sustain positive impacts.

Through dialogues and shuttle diplomacy between communities and members of signatory groups, NP increases effective communication and trust between groups and improves civil-military relationships. Dialogues are often facilitated between communities and the signatory parties that live in nearby barracks where, despite close proximity, peaceful communication is often limited or completely absent. Following dialogues, members of the signatory parties have expressed their appreciation to NP, committed themselves to improving their response to civilian concerns, and encouraged civilians to report to them. For example, after tensions arose between the community and the SSPDF next to the Juba-Yei road checkpoint in Juba, NP facilitated a dialogue between the SSPDF and community. As a result of this dialogue as well as the commitment of both sides to effectively participate, initial trust and a line of communication has been established between the community and the SSPDF commander. One of the participants expressed that, because of this dialogue, they can now directly raise their concerns to the commander whereas they previously only communicated with the soldiers through complaints to UNMISS.

CASE STUDY: MANYIRANY AGE-SET DIALOGUE

The Murle tribe of the Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA) has a cultural practice of dividing themselves along their generations, what they call age-sets. This practice was formed as a means of communal protection. One age-set is the primary protector of the community, and the younger age-set fights with them in order to hone their skills and abilities until they prove themselves capable of becoming the primary protectors of their communities. Once the younger age-set proves themselves, they assume the role of protectors and the other age-set moves on to fulfill other roles in their society. The age-sets remain a constant affiliation amongst the Murle, individuals grow old and transition through the passages of life together.

Throughout the long periods of conflict experienced by South Sudan, violence has become normalized and firearms are easily accessible. Today the age-sets often use guns, as opposed to sticks, when fighting with one another. Disputes between two individuals from different age-sets, or between the same age-sets from different communities, can result in a type of gang warfare. This means that a simple dispute in the market between two individuals can quickly escalate into deadly violence, which is what occurred between the Kurenen and Lango age-sets of Manyirany Boma.

The Kurenen are the youngest age-set, preceded by the Lango. The Lango would be considered the primary protectors of the Murle community, according to tradition, meaning the two are natural “rivals”. This rivalry is widespread in Murle-land, as the two groups fight over cattle, women, and resources. The conflict between the Manyirany Kurenen and Lango was first typical of rivalry, however, instances of adultery and cattle raiding escalated the tensions. These tensions often resulted in deadly violence, and could be sparked by anything. The killing of nine people following the marketplace dispute is just one example of the deadly violence. The clashes become worse, as each side wanted to revenge against the other for the past loss of life and resources. Violence could occur suddenly, and occurred on a regular basis (every few weeks, sometimes more frequently).

NP had received continual reports of the ongoing violence and death caused by the tensions between the two groups, and took steps to resolve the conflict. The first step taken was to engage with the chiefs of Manyirany. The chiefs have the knowledge of the conflict and the capability to calm the situation temporarily so that steps in relationship building, analyses could begin in order to determine if the situation was ripe for peace.

NP began to meet with both the Lango and Kurenen independently, mapping out the grievances, interests and positions of the two groups, as well as establishing a level of trust with the leaders and influential members of the groups. Peacebuilding work is not quick, you can only move at the speed of trust. After continued engagements with the groups building trust, the groups agreed that they both wanted to end the cycle of violence. At this point NP used shuttle diplomacy in order to prepare the groups for dialogue. These continued engagements by NP allowed us to strengthen our relations with both groups as well as with the community. This ultimately cultivated the trust needed for the groups to be willing to meet each other unarmed at a later point.

The dialogue followed cultural practices and included leaders from the Lango and Kurenen, as well as chiefs (from Manyirany and neighboring Bomas), elders, women and religious leaders – together these individuals formed the Peace Committee. The paramount chief of Pibor heard the concerns of both groups and prepared them for dialogue. During these preparations the influential leaders of both the Kurenen and Lango had to persuade their cohort on the merits of dialogue, and build trust among them to participate and attend the dialogue without their weapons. Over three months of engagement by NP and the Peace Committee, the Lango and Kurenen were no longer fearful of meeting one another and were ready to discuss their grievances and explore a peaceful way forward.

The dialogue resulted in both the Lango and Kurenen forgiving one another for past aggressions, and the two groups agreed that if a dispute amongst individuals arises it should not escalate into a dispute between the two age-sets. For instance, cattle raiding should be resolved interpersonally by raising the issue to the chiefs and elders for dispute resolution, rather than mobilizing for larger scale attacks. The two groups agreed to rely on cultural judicial practices to resolve disputes peacefully instead of employing violence against one another. After these agreements were made, a traditional ceremony was held to mark an official end to the violence. More than one-year later the peace between the Lango and Kurenen of Manyirany still holds, and the broader Murle community look to this as an example to be replicated, often requesting NP to facilitate similar processes between other groups. NP continues to engage with the Lango and Kurenen of Manyirany, as well as the chiefs of Pibor country to reaffirm the resolutions of the dialogue and discuss methods of preventing violence before it occurs.

NP is a global civilian protection agency (NGO) based in humanitarian and international human rights law. Our mission to protect civilians in violent conflicts through unarmed strategies, build peace side by side with local communities, and advocate for the wider adoption of these approaches to safeguard human lives and dignity.