

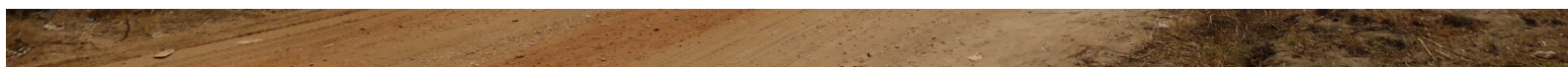


# WIELDING NONVIOLENCE IN THE MIDST OF VIOLENCE

Case Studies of Good Practices in  
Unarmed Civilian Protection  
*Summarized*

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## Executive Summary

Written by Ellen Furnari

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This project examines unarmed civilian protection (UCP), also called unarmed civilian peacekeeping or accompaniment, in four conflict-affected regions: Colombia, Mindanao (Philippines), Palestine/Israel, and South Sudan. We focus on what is emerging as good practice in these varied contexts and whether any commonalities can inform the expanded use of UCP. Each case study includes desk reviews of documents, interviews with UCP practitioners and others knowledgeable about the intervention, and several weeks of fieldwork. The fieldwork and interviews were conducted between December 2014 and August 2015.

The Colombia study examines work that began in 1994, when Peace Brigades International (PBI) started to accompany threatened organizations and human rights defenders. Since then approximately 12 organizations have provided UCP or accompaniment in various regions there. During this long period, characterized by violence committed by the army, militias, and guerrillas, in the form of massacres, displacements, disappearances and assassinations, much has been learned about how to effectively protect civilians individually and in community. The study focuses on the work of PBI, Red de Hermandad, Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), Operation Dove, Swedish FOR (SweFor), and Presbyterian Peace Fellowship (PPF).

The Palestine/Israel case studies the work originally initiated by CPT in 1993, in Palestinian refugee camps. In 1994 the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH) began providing protective presence at the request of the UN and the invitation of both the Israeli and Palestinian governments. Since then other UCP type organizations have become active in the area, including the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI), Operation Dove, and the International Solidarity Movement (ISM). In this case UCP interventions are working in a context of occupation and tremendously asymmetrical power. The case study reveals how UCP has been effectively protecting civilians in difficult circumstances.

The Mindanao case highlights the work of local civil society organizations (CSOs) working for peace and informally monitoring ceasefire agreements, and how their work was strengthened and expanded by the presence of an international UCP organization, the Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP), who fielded a project beginning in 2007. After demonstrating the effectiveness of UCP, NP and three CSOs were invited to join the official International Monitoring Team, responsible for civilian protection.

Lastly the South Sudan study looks at the effectiveness of UCP during civil war. In a context with poor infrastructure and low levels of organized civil society, NP initiated a project in 2009 and has become a lead protection agency, second in size only to the UN mission itself. UCP has protected civilians in communities as well as in Protection of Civilian (PoC) areas. Like all international actors in South Sudan, the project is small compared to the need, but the case study reveals deep learning in a challenging and rapidly changing context.

Perhaps the central good practice of UCP highlighted in the case studies is the necessity of grounding interventions in relationships with local actors and their complex understandings of conflict dynamics. Comparing the cases reveals that common guiding principles of nonviolence, independence and the primacy of local actors, when implemented in different contexts, lead to quite different programming in terms of actual action in the field. Strict nonpartisanship was important in some of our contexts but contested in others and may not be universally essential to UCP.

The positive impacts of much of the work explored in our case studies support the expansion of UCP in areas where civilians need protection. However, while many of the interventions in these case studies

grew over time and their experiences can guide future expansions, the need to base UCP in the specific conditions revealed through thorough conflict analyses suggests that entering new contexts is complex. UCP's underlying principles, sources of guidance, and approaches to conflict analysis and to building relationships are replicable, but they can lead to significantly different programming, perhaps even different models. Moreover, the safety of both civilians and UCP staff could be compromised by simply reusing a program developed for one context in another. Most of the organizations fielding UCP projects have identified underlying core principles, knowledge, and skills that they share with incoming staff and volunteers through training. These can be identified as good practices, even though their actual application varies considerably. Many of the good practices identified here are general enough that they apply to other kinds of interventions. Only a few appear to belong exclusively to UCP.

We did not define specific good practices nor even set specific criteria for them at the outset of this research. Rather, good practices emerged as those that were endorsed by multiple sources and were consistent with the principles of UCP. And while the research focuses on practices rather than their outcomes, this focus begs the questions: "Good at what?" and "How do you know?" Thus, each case discusses (but does not evaluate) the evidence that the interventions studied improve civilian safety.

The cases also reveal tensions and dilemmas. Certain dilemmas confronted most of the organizations: preserving independence while simultaneously honouring the primacy of local actors; responding to immediate needs versus making time to pursue long-term goals; having clear mandates yet remaining flexible; using shorter term volunteers so as to involve more people who may be active when they go home versus using longer term volunteers and staff who may understand the context better and maintain continuity in local relationships; and relying on internationals who have greater protective impact versus relying on local staff who better understand the context but also face greater risk. Most UCP organizations face the challenge of maintaining nonpartisanship in the face of asymmetrical conflicts in which one side inflicts more harm on civilians (though the South Sudan case is more complicated); and most, too, face dilemmas about how best to intervene directly in local situations.

These case studies provide rich descriptions of how a variety of organizations have implemented UCP in diverse contexts, raising as many questions as they answer. For example, it is unclear how organizations' choices about nonpartisanship, advocacy, and independence relate to their effectiveness. Additionally, further research might link specific practices to specific contexts. In a newly emerging field, there is still much to learn.

What is clear from these case studies is that unarmed civilians using nonviolent practices are effectively protecting civilians in diverse contexts and with diverse configurations of missions and methods. Most of these projects have a range of effects beyond protecting civilians, such as contributing to women's leadership, protecting people whose work has made significant political difference in their country, and contributing to peace processes. While UCP is a complex process, there is much here to support its effective expansion.

## To Be By Your Side: Unarmed Protection and Accompaniment in Colombia

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Written by John Lindsay-Poland and Michael Weintraub

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**The Conflict in Colombia:** The armed conflict in Colombia is framed in a larger history of political and economic exclusion, dramatic inequality of income and land tenancy, and political and criminal violence. Rooted in the partisan conflict between 1948 and 1958 known as *La Violencia*, the current

conflict began in the 1960s with asymmetric fighting between the Colombian government, paramilitary groups, criminal organizations, and guerrilla groups (such the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia [FARC] and the National Liberation Army) for territorial and political control. The growth of paramilitaries in the 1990s and 2000s was responsible for the large majority of massacres, mass forced displacement, and forced disappearances, in concert with the armed forces, drug traffickers and regional elites. In December 2012, the FARC and Colombian government began negotiations in Havana, Cuba to end the armed conflict. In November 2016, the Colombian government and the FARC guerrillas reached a peace accord, marking an “end” to the official conflict.

**Profile of UCP Practitioners and their Methods:** International organizations have provided unarmed civilian protection—or accompaniment—in Colombia for more than 20 years. In many ways, PBI opened the way for other accompaniment organizations, demonstrating that the methods they used worked. The Red de Hermandad (“Sisterhood/Brotherhood Network”) came to Colombia in 1999; Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) arrived in 2001; the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) established its team in 2002; SweFOR and Presbyterian Peace Fellowship (PPF) arrived in 2004; and Operazione Colomba, (“Operation Dove”) came in 2009.

Some organizations have broader mandates, and in general, the organizations understand protection through accompaniment as complementary to other objectives they seek, and vice-versa. PBI has developed deep expertise in protection, but other groups offer contributions—relationships with constituencies, policy advocacy, or entry points for accompaniers—that PBI does not. Other methods used by these groups include: relationship-building between accompaniers and those accompanied, as well as with the Colombian government and foreign governments; advocacy; distribution of advance letters of notice to alert authorities of their movements; international speaking tours; publications and communications; risk analysis; and the use of logos on t-shirts, vests, etc.

#### **UCP Good practices in Colombia (partial list)**

- **Identify and strengthen the dissuasive power of accompaniment.**

The risk analyses conducted by accompaniment organizations or by those accompanied are important not only to measure the risk of a given situation, but also to identify plans for advocacy and to determine if and what advance notices are given about the accompaniment.

The use of formal procedures and protocols to analyse dissuasion for concrete accompaniment requests is very valuable, although their institutionalization may lead to a caution that limits new knowledge; and they merit periodic evaluation, especially if the macro-conditions are changing. The use of logos, T-shirts, and flags that visibly identify the accompaniment organizations has a demonstrated dissuasive effect.

Although Colombian state entities and (perhaps to a lesser degree) those that act with the approval of state agents respond more to international presence and advocacy, some Colombian sectors also have dissuasive power, such as the Church and other state entities (Ombudsman’s office and Prosecutor General’s office).

- **Combine physical presence with advocacy with entities that could affect security.**

This appears to be an almost universal lesson from experiences in Colombia, and has implications for programs and efforts in other parts of the world. Advocacy mechanisms can be direct with Colombian authorities or indirect through chains of influence.

A necessary condition for effectiveness is that the people to whom this advocacy is directed care about the issue, whether for ethical reasons (commitment to the law, solidarity, shared goals), for pragmatic reasons (pressure is reduced if they comply, directives from above, international aid affected), or for both.

- **Establish healthy relationships with those accompanied and others.**

It may be obvious that accompaniers should have healthy and respectful relationships with those they accompany in order to effectively protect them and meet other goals. Although there is no single

model to achieve good relationships, they require good communication and respect for others, including for their autonomy. Individual accompaniers should be aware that their relationships with those accompanied are part of a longer history, which extends both before and after their service. The presence of accompaniers who share cultural backgrounds with those who are accompanied, from language to nationality, often opens doors for trusting relationships that benefit the work of accompaniers, even those who do not share that culture. If racism or other factors weaken the dissuasive power of that presence relative to *gringos*, that effect can be more than compensated by the knowledge and trust that shared culture can help to generate. But each case deserves its own analysis. Effective relationships between accompaniers and national and international authorities are conducted professionally, using documentation, written follow-ups, coalitions to multiply efforts, and coordination with those who are accompanied.

- **Be consistent with values and identities of the accompaniers.**

A strength expressed many times during the interviews, sometimes implicitly, is the conviction and commitment with which accompaniers undertake the work of protection, solidarity, fellowship, and advocacy. Their diverse religious and political identities are key to the exceptional commitment the accompaniers make. The diversity of accompaniment projects and organizations has allowed a broad array of Colombians to be accompanied and a broad array of people to participate as accompaniers.

- **Maintain both institutional memory as well as the flexibility to adjust to new needs.**

As demonstrated in the interviews for this study, the institutional memories of accompaniment projects in Colombia contain a variety of impressive readings and lessons that are useful to the work. It is more difficult to maintain historical memory of the internal functioning of accompaniment than of the armed conflict or of issues outside the INGOs, but maintaining and having access to that memory is critical for accompaniers to confront new situations.

At the same time, the forms and dynamics of violence carried out against human rights defenders and communities in Colombia are changing, especially in relation to the process between the government and FARC to end the armed conflict between them. It is probable that the process will not resolve all structural conflicts, and it could even deepen some conflicts not addressed by the accord (e.g. mining investments or organized crime) or that affects sectors excluded by it.

In that context, it is probable that accompanied human rights defenders, organizations, and communities continue to be vulnerable. But the leverage, methods of dissuasion, and resources for accompaniment must be adapted both agilely and solidly. Experimentation brings risks, but it may also develop new knowledge and improve effectiveness.

- **Make the work of the projects internally efficient and sustainable.**

As they are exposed to armed conflict and political repression, as well, sometimes, to extreme climate or rural conditions, accompaniers and their teams need good practices of self-care and health at the institutional, team, and individual level.

These practices include: having a support group in their country of origin before, during, and after their service as accompaniers; having time away from accompaniment (vacations and shorter leaves); having access to therapy provided by their organization; practicing check-ins and care within the teams; seeing doctors promptly when there are symptoms of illness; sharing self-care skills among team members; and, if needed, separating team offices from the physical spaces where accompaniers live.

- **Strengthen the collaboration between accompaniment organizations.**

Accompaniment organizations in Colombia collectively have enormous knowledge, perspective, and documentation of accompaniment and of the elements that make it effective. Even in the best circumstances, there are benefits from exchanges and learning between them. Because they do not have the same strengths and weaknesses, mutual support could strengthen the groups' capacities. Some organizations and individuals have well-developed analyses of dissuasion, while others have gone far in analysing power and ways not to replicate forms of exploitation. This knowledge may be deeply intuitive or very organized in documents.



**Effects, Outcomes and Impacts:** The most obvious and significant effect of accompaniment in Colombia is the survival of people who have been accompanied. Another significant effect is the arrival of many other accompaniment organizations: after early organizations like PBI and FoR showed successes, it opened the door for other groups to come in and support the community. Also, outside of Colombia, accompaniment deepened awareness of Colombia and the humanitarian crisis there, as well as helped to increase the visibility, purpose and effectiveness of human rights defenders through presentations by volunteers when they return to their countries. Additionally, accompaniment often helps erode the difference in how officials treat internationals and Colombians. The visibility of the Christianity of religious accompaniers—as pastors or in the act of prayer—can dissuade armed groups who may identify as Christian. Court hearings attended by victims and human rights defenders are often very sensitive because of the presence of perpetrators, and international accompaniment can be critical, both in the hearing itself as well as entering and departing from it.

Accompaniment groups helped strengthen and support the self-protection tools used by the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó in Colombia. These tools/practices include: not using a phone to set up meetings, not living on the first floor, daily communication with their organization and with Peace Brigades. The government, under court order provided limited hours of bodyguards to some in San Jose and at least one organization found a way to work with the bodyguards by having them put down their weapons, when they were together.

Besides being a method for protection, accompaniment is also a cultural encounter between people who are born and come from different countries, cultures, norms, and ethnicities. The impact of this encounter is even more notable in the countryside than in the city. This can generate both positive and negative effects, such as cultural clashes of perspectives, tensions within the indigenous or other local communities regarding lack of mobility in contrast with the mobility of the accompaniers. However, accompaniment has also helped to create an openness towards the United States, because the people who came are grassroots people, contrasted with an image of wealth and power.

Accompaniment has also served as a training ground for many members of international teams (which can be valid, but it should always be transparent, and accompaniers should not forget the objective of the work that they have committed to doing). Colombians who are accompanied have gained access to security assessment tools such as: looking at who threats are coming from, how to respond, and how to protect the organization during those threats. Accompaniment has strengthened local organizations, “given them a sense there are people there who care.”

**Dilemmas, Challenges, and Unintended Consequences:** Accompaniment organizations in Colombia respect and value each other’s autonomy, but some observe that the actions of one foreign organization can affect the space in which the others operate. Fears include: The State will not distinguish between international organizations; or will distinguish between them, but manipulate the differences and make categories of “good” and “bad” organizations; or stigmatize all of them.

Accompaniment sometimes raises the profile of an accompanied individual or organization, which may contribute to raising the level of threat as well, making the continuity of accompaniment, especially advocacy, important. In some cases, this visibility also turned accompaniment into a status tool.

One source spoke of the dilemma when an accompanied person shared very sensitive information that was as important as it was ambiguous for the accompaniment team’s analysis, but also asked that the information not be shared with others on the team.

Organizationally, there is a tension between the perspectives of support (coordination) offices and field teams. Both FoR and PBI operated for many years with coordination offices in the United States and England, respectively, until they moved their main offices to Bogotá. Regarding internal conflicts on a team, it was noted that it is “better to shut down for a week or two than have to shut down the whole project” because an internal conflict became too big.

One dynamic referenced by several groups is the creation of dependency between accompaniers and those accompanied. Additionally, the question was raised: Is accompaniment reinforcing in some way that the lives of the accompaniers matter and the lives of the accompanied do not?

The rotation of accompaniers every year or so takes away from institutional memory, causes uncertainty and frustration, or fatigue among those accompanied after continuously building new relationships and trust.

There can be a tension between immediate needs and emergencies, on one hand, and the work for long-term objectives. For CPT, an action that fulfils a short-term need could also be something that risks its relationship with the government and, as such, its presence in the country. Its Colombian counterparts in the city think in the long-term and have encouraged CPT not to do things that could cause them to lose their visas. “In [rural] communities, though, it is different, as they are obviously confronting daily threats to their livelihoods through displacement, and they don’t always think about such trade-offs.”

**Conclusions:** The evidence is overwhelming that international accompaniment in Colombia in the last 20 years has significantly benefited the social movements and communities attacked by political violence, especially human rights defenders. Neither the level of protection nor the breadth of individuals, communities and organizations covered by that protection would have been possible with just one accompaniment organization or model of accompaniment. The achievements of accompaniment result in part from the combination of physical presence of people who represent organizations with dissuasive power over armed groups with advocacy at several levels, both inside and outside of Colombia. They are also due to the commitment of funding agencies and donors that support this protection strategy. Accompaniment’s effectiveness in the future depends on the continuation of that commitment from funders. In a context of possible reductions in resources for human rights work in Colombia, collaboration may become even more useful. Knowing the results of new experiences in the times ahead would also be of benefit to all.

## Unarmed Civilian Protection in the Israeli and Palestinian Conflict

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Written by Eli McCarthy and Jonathan Pinckney

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**The Conflict in Israel/Palestine:** The modern Israeli/Palestinian conflict has its roots in the origins of the state of Israel in 1948, although earlier events in the 1900s are also relevant. Today, the conflict is characterized by deep distrust, military occupation, distinct systems of justice for the two peoples, regular clashes, and cycles of intense armed conflict. Ongoing attempts to reach a negotiated solution to the conflict have been unsuccessful. Both populations have significant unmet needs, including security on both sides, and freedom of movement and access to basic resources on the Palestinian side. The rapid expansion of Israeli settlements makes reaching a solution to the conflict a matter of urgency.

**Profile of UCP Practitioners and their Methods:** The organizations whose interviews informed the good practices fall into three basic categories: international, Israeli, and Palestinian. The international organizations include: Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI), Operation Dove, Meta Peace Team (MPT), the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), and the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH). The Israeli organizations include: Machsom Watch, the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD), B’tselem, Combatants for Peace, and Ta’ayush. The Palestinian organizations include: The Holy Land Trust, the Palestine Center for Peace and Democracy (PCPD), and local protection groups. Most UCP groups in this conflict employed protective presence, accompaniment, monitoring and documentation, and relationship building. Other groups also engage in capacity development, intervention, and advocacy.



### UCP Good practices in Israel/Palestine (partial list)

- Some form of local direction combined with a degree of organizational independence and discernment.
- Clear communication by international organizations of the mandate to the local population.
- Training for international staff/volunteers that includes language skills, cultural norms, conflict context, laws and regulations, monitoring skills, values/nonviolence, team-building, and skills for transforming internal conflict.
- Diversity among team members, who normally have civilian backgrounds.
- Regular attention to team members' personal growth, value systems/spirituality, team-building, self-care, and trauma healing.
- Strong risk analysis and strategic risk-taking through strong local relationships and a commitment to nonviolence.
- Deployments in areas embodying a microcosm of the conflict.
- Strategies to facilitate strong institutional memory.
- Relationship building that includes high integration into the local community, cooperation with other UCP groups, and partnering with Israeli lawyers.
- The use of credible messengers (i.e. older Jewish women) to prevent soldier and settler violence.
- Protective presence on a wide and consistent basis, particularly at olive harvests, home demolitions, and checkpoints.
- Accompaniment of those in danger, particularly school children and shepherds.
- Interposition and intervention in carefully considered circumstances when abuse is occurring, particularly verbal expressions, and when children are being harmed.
- Monitoring and documentation, particularly at checkpoints or tracking incidents of violence. Sharing data, using video, and activating the media were also identified.
- Advocacy to promote policy changes, particularly internationals in their home countries and Israelis in their own society or abroad.
- Capacity development, especially by enhancing nonviolent resistance and training locals in protection.

**Effects, Outcomes and Impacts:** Helpful effects on the protected or accompanied population include: enhancing Palestinian leadership and nonviolent resistance; keeping land and communities; less violence from soldiers, settlers, and Palestinians; saving houses; protecting school children; decreasing checkpoint abuse; better use of law and government; and improved economic development. Regarding law and government, some respondents reported that UCP groups have used international law to protect Palestinians and improved Palestinians' treatment under occupation law. Video footage captured by various UCP organizations has been particularly effective in acquitting Palestinians falsely accused of violent offenses in Israeli military court. UCP has also had some economic effects, both directly through grants, and indirectly through the greater feeling of security provided by the work.

In addition to the effects on the Palestinian population, respondents reported that UCP deeply transforms the practitioners themselves. Some international UCP groups have integrated anti-oppression and anti-racism into their training and regular practices. Thus, Palestinian team members feel more support from internationals and stay in their organization longer, increasing its capacity, and putting their best efforts into it. Other respondents reported that practices of spirituality and virtue development incorporated in their UCP work have had various positive effects on practitioners, including personal growth, better relationships with team members, better discernment, and even connections with the local community that have led to practitioners being protected. Coordination between UCP organizations, particularly between international organizations and Israeli or Palestinian groups, has affected the practitioners themselves, increasing their ability to deal with conflicts, legal issues, locals who abuse women, incident reports, and common advocacy.

Helpful effects on the long-term conflict situation include: more international understanding and attention, increased Israeli and Palestinian self-reflection, transforming violent actors, increased solidarity and practice of nonviolence, maintaining some Palestinian property and people, and increased advocacy. Combatants for Peace have helped former participants in violence to change their behaviour and even commit to nonviolence. As former combatants, they provide a unique, effective model of former Israeli and Palestinian violent actors transforming and cooperating nonviolently for a just peace. Even amid conflict, such witnesses powerfully affect some of those prone to violence. Further, they challenge stereotypes of the ‘other’ as inevitably violent or evil. Such stereotypes are a means by which cultural violence perpetuates direct and structural violence in this conflict situation.

**Dilemmas, Challenges, and Unintended Consequences:** One of the key dilemmas involved how UCP groups position themselves along the spectrum of nonpartisanship and partisanship. There are advantages and drawbacks to the different positions taken by UCP groups. However, there is still some ambiguity both in some UCP actors and in some stakeholders about the most appropriate and beneficial position to take on this issue. The authors noticed that there is not presently a UCP group on the ground that combines NGO status, nonpartisanship, and willingness to regularly directly intervene. Another key dilemma was related to short- vs. long-term impact, particularly the question of the ongoing occupation and conflict. Part of this relates to the capacity of UCP groups, but also touches on broader questions of practices and strategy. For instance, should UCP organizations be doing more and smarter advocacy? Should they include a broader set of dialogue partners and even promote trauma healing or restorative processes? Should they begin to or do more direct interposition and intervention? How deep should be their commitment to nonviolence and how do they relate to the escalation of constructive conflict? Some respondents reported that international UCP members have sometimes acted too provocatively with soldiers. For instance, insulting soldiers or settlers was identified as unnecessary provocation. Even when completely peaceful and respectful, UCP groups were also sometimes reported to escalate situations unhelpfully. Should UCP groups be directly involved in humanitarian aid or development work? Does UCP perpetuate the occupation by making it “bearable” and playing into the Israeli government’s narrative of a “humane occupation”?

Further tensions arose regarding mandate and group proliferation: are there too many different mandates and UCP groups? So many groups caused confusion within the Palestinian community. How long should UCP members commit? Who should UCP groups hire--Israelis, Palestinians, or internationals? What is the appropriate decision-making structure for a UCP group? How much independence should international UCP groups maintain in determining their strategy and practices? There is a tension here between local knowledge and trust, and with relying on a narrow perspective.

Other dilemmas centre on the philosophies of UCP. Should UCP groups more clearly recognize the dignity of all? If so, how should this get expressed? Should they promote love of enemies, especially Christian UCP groups?

Another dilemma arose regarding whether ‘protection’ is the best language for what UCP groups offer. Several respondents expressed discomfort with the term ‘protection’ to refer to their work due to implications it has regarding power, privilege, and dependency. On the other hand, this term implies a change in the narrative that protection can only be offered by weapons.

**Conclusions:** Those interviewed for this case study emphasized the contingent nature of their knowledge. However, Eli McCarthy and Jonathan Pinckney believe some of the core good practices from this study may be helpful in other conflicts where UCP is or should be deployed. After reflecting on the practices, effects, and dilemmas, the authors raised a few explicit recommendations: that UCP groups seek to expand their presence in as wide and consistent a way as possible, to carefully discern their mission following the direction of local partners, and perhaps most centrally to cultivate a deeper commitment to nonviolence. The authors see these as key to wiser strategy, better practices, and a more

sustainable, just peace.

## Unarmed Civilian Protection/Peacekeeping in Mindanao, Philippines

Written by Ellen Furnari

**The Conflict in Mindanao:** The conflict in Mindanao between the Muslim (sometimes referred to as Moro/Bangsamoro), and Christian inhabitants is a conflict of self-determination and of historic grievances. The origins can be traced to the displacement of Muslim populations through the promotion of Christian settlement by the colonial powers. The current conflict began with the start of an armed struggle for an independent Muslim state in 1969 and the formation of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). In 1996 the Government and the MNLF signed a Final Peace Agreement, creating the framework for an autonomous region within the Philippines. However, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)—which split from the MNLF in 1984—did not support the agreement, stating it did not sufficiently meet their political goals.

The Government and various separatist groups have called numerous ceasefires since then, including three significant ones. An agreement in 2002 created Local Monitoring Teams (LMT), providing the focus for the creation of local ceasefire monitors; in 2004 the parties agreed to the formation of an International Monitoring Team, bringing internationals charged with influencing the peace into the region for the first time; and in 2012 the historic peace breakthrough which set the road map for the creation of a new self-governing region in Muslim-dominated areas of Western Mindanao, called the Bangsamoro. The focus now is on transition: implementing the peace agreement and creating the new Bangsamoro.

**Profile of UCP Practitioners and their Methods:** The overlapping network of Filipino Civil Society Ceasefire Monitors include: Kadtuntaya Foundation, Inc. (KFI); Tiyakap Kalilintad (TK); Mindanao People's Caucus (MPC) and Bantay Ceasefire; United Youth for Peace and Development (UNYPAD); Mindanao Action for Peace and Development (MAPAD); Magungaya Mindanao Incorporated (MMI); and Grassroots Peace Monitoring Network (GPMN). The methods these organizations use to protect civilians include: advocacy for peace, human rights and good governance; community engagement and mutual understanding between communities; supporting community-based monitoring organizations; creating networks of communication; and grassroots ceasefire monitoring to complement the formal monitoring units. Some organizations also engage in aid and development work (i.e. building schools, training people in human and gender rights), considering this work as involving/integrating civilian protection. Nonviolent Peaceforce in the Philippines (NPP) has been the international UCP organization located in Mindanao since 2007, working to complement and enhance the impact of local efforts. Together with the local CSOs, Nonviolent Peaceforce uses proactive engagement, monitoring, capacity building, and relationship building to carry out their mandate.

### UCP Good practices in Mindanao (partial list)

- **Grounded in Local Analysis:** Several people from within and outside of NPP appreciated the value of NPP sharing its analysis, which is frequently updated based on what they learn in their frequent visits to communities.
- **Centrality of Relationships:** Relationships are both the context in which UCP work takes place, and the vehicle through which UCP influences thinking and behaviour of others. This requires meeting people, listening to them, visiting them, and demonstrating trustworthiness, all while being sure to do this with people from many different organizations, communities, levels of governance, etc.
- **An Organized Formal and Informal Monitoring and Reporting System:** There are monitors, responsible organizations to receive and act on reports, and armed actors who change their actions in

response to the interventions of these responsible organizations or their monitors. The system is structured and clear, with international oversight to ensure accountability and impartiality. Thus, good practice in UCP, when the context is conducive, is to participate as fully as possible in structures and systems such as these.

- **Civilians Are Trained and Supported in Ceasefire Monitoring and EWER:** All the organizations that field civilian monitors provide training whether the civilians are volunteers or paid staff, or if they are local or internationals. While some monitors only address the ceasefire agreements, many have also been trained in early warning and early response issues.
- **Consistent, Credible, Collaborative:** These words were used frequently to describe good monitoring.
- **Independent and Nonpartisan – Critical Collaboration:** In interviews monitors frequently attributed their acceptance by the armed groups to their reputation as impartial or nonpartisan. Monitors believed they were accepted and credible if they were seen as independent and criticized whichever group was threatening harm to civilians.
- **On the Ground:** Being on the ground has a protective aspect in that the presence of particularly international UCP staff influences armed actors as well as the willingness of civilians to stay put when they might displace. It sheds light on the conflict, as regular visiting produces updated information from many perspectives. It means monitors are already in place, rather than having to struggle to get to areas impacted by violent conflict or IDP camps.
- **Aid is Protection:** In this context, with local CSOs training and supporting volunteer monitors to do direct protection, many believe that aid is a form of protection and protection a form of aid.
- **Connect Different Levels:** One of the good practices that is possible in this context is to connect people at the ground level to mid-level government and armed group leadership, and even to top level peace processes, and vice versa.
- **Train Armed Actors and Community People:** While using similar material much of the time, trainings are designed in response to specific requests, which have grown out of their discussions. Trainings are also given by NPP and CSO staff to networks of volunteer monitors and to others in the community. These trainings cover ceasefire monitoring, EWER, IHL, HR, child protection, gender-based violence, and other critical topics.
- **Security is Based on Acceptance:** the security of unarmed civilians, who are independent and nonpartisan, depends on being accepted by people in the communities where they work, the armed actors and other stakeholders.
- **Clear Communication:** Having relationships and systems in place that support clear communication between many different groups supports civilian protection. Good communication can prevent misunderstanding and support coordination.
- **Respond to Relevant Violence – *Rido*:** In the specific context of the work in Mindanao, there are complex webs of relationships and politics between armed groups, government officials, and powerful families. Thus, a particular *rido* (traditional fighting between families or clans) is likely to have connections to other conflicts. It would not be useful to draw a hard line around the fighting between the GPH and MILF, and neglect all other violence as outside the concern of UCP.
- **Ensure to Do No Harm:** Though not unique to UCP interventions, good practice requires considering the dictum ‘to do no harm’.

### Effects, Outcomes and Impacts

*Civilian monitoring by CSOs:* Interviewees claimed that monitoring, along with other civilian advocacy and activism, had influenced the military and the MILF to declare ceasefires at two different times and to refrain from starting new fighting at another time. CSOs built relationships, reputations for being nonpartisan, and some degree of acceptance, allowing them to work without a single monitor having been killed due to their monitoring activities.

On many occasions, monitors called authorities to say that there were civilians in the area being shelled.

The shelling stopped to give time for civilians to evacuate. Although none of the CSO groups interviewed kept track of the actual number of times their monitors helped protect civilians, nor of the number of civilians protected, it appears to the authors that thousands of people were impacted by this volunteer, civilian monitoring system.

Members of the military and MILF interviewed for this research acknowledged that they were responsive to ceasefire monitors. It seems that civilian monitoring by local CSOs worked both because the MILF and military saw it in their interest to appear to, and for some, genuinely to care about the IHL, HR, and ceasefire agreements. They wished to maintain the moral high ground with the international and local communities. Critically, they also accepted the monitors because of their nonpartisan and unarmed stance. The monitors' efforts to build relationships with many different people, treating them with respect, and demonstrating that civilians were active agents, in large numbers, on their own behalf also appears to have contributed significantly to the acceptance and effectiveness of CSO monitoring.

Several people mentioned the value of having large numbers of people doing the monitoring. Literally hundreds and then thousands of people joined this effort. Additionally, some thought that the government appreciated the reports provided by monitors. Much of the area where the fighting occurs is quite remote and may not have normal mobile signal, which often makes obtaining accurate information slow and difficult.

*Civilian monitoring by NPP:* As envisioned when the project began, much of the work has focused on strengthening local efforts. NPP has offered numerous trainings to local organizations in EWER analysis and methods, as well as going with the staff of local organizations to provide greater safety, transportation, and connect small CSOs to larger international organizations that work with NPP. In some communities, NPP has created structures or systems (groups of trained monitors connected to local government or other sustaining institutions) for monitoring and reporting. Other national and international organizations have relied on NPP's information and analysis, sometimes to connect IDPs and other civilians to needed services. Additionally, both formally as part of the Civilian Protection Component (of the IMT), and as part of its wider mandate, NPP has intervened with the CCCH or directly with known commanders, to negotiate temporary pauses in fighting, to allow civilians to evacuate. NPP has then told others about these IDPs and their needs.

Direct protection effects include: helping civilians evacuate, linking IDPs with other organizations, supporting civilians to stay in their homes or to return home from IDP camps, and accompanying families, staff of local and international organizations, and occasionally armed actors. NPP informally and formally influenced the peace process directly, through informal relationships and visits, training and formal dialogues, and supporting the connections between local civil society and armed actors (including *rido*); by convening and chairing meetings or processes; and reporting possible violations to the International Monitoring Team.

People consistently said that the presence of international and national staff as part of NPP had a protective presence that was needed. Their ability to travel to isolated places meant someone outside that community was watching, which was believed to have a protective impact.

**Dilemmas, Challenges, and Unintended Consequences:** In a certain way, the existence of monitoring organizations present a dilemma, as they replace what the government ought to do. Additionally, as an international organization, NPP brings knowledge, resources and protective impact, yet several people worried that at the same time NPP might displace local actors, either in the community or at higher levels of the peace process: it might receive funds that would otherwise go to local CSOs; and it might have more influence than local actors.

Several people described dilemmas concerning how to relate to a militant group, the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF): connecting with them could be seen as giving them unwarranted legitimacy, while both nonpartisanship and effectiveness require reaching out to all legitimate armed groups, yet the government considers it illegal to reach out to BIFF, and NPP operates within national and regional laws.

The official International Monitoring Team imposes some conditions on CPC member organizations, which has had many positive effects, but it has imposed significant limitations on how the information gathered as part of the IMT can be used. While this perception was to some degree shared by a few NPP staff, others noted that while the actual reports to the IMT could not be shared, the information was shared with others. Membership in the CPC was also seen to limit local CSO's participation in advocacy.

Another dilemma relates to the sustainability of the practice of civilian monitors, and how long NPP should remain. Is this a practice that should continue indefinitely, permanently sustained? Comments suggested there is tension between the view that reductions in fighting is a time to decrease UCP type activity and the assessment by many who are engaged in the work that it is time to expand, or at least maintain current levels.

The authors found that other unintended consequences included: the proliferation of volunteer monitors; re-humanizing the military; and that decreasing violence and internal displacement has brought monitors into conflict with people/groups that directly profit from the fighting and/or related aid.

Additionally, the author found that specific individuals matter. Sometimes there is the unplanned and serendipitous effect of charismatic leadership, of sensitive army personnel at high levels, of the right person at the right time.

**Conclusions:** The Bangsamoro area of Mindanao is a very specific context with a complex history. What is good practice here must be based in an analysis of the conflict and context and updated regularly. Two of the features that distinguish this context are the vibrant civil society and the proliferation of volunteer civilian ceasefire monitors. Other aspects of this particular context are the interest in and discussion of HR and IHL and that while in earlier years, activists and human rights defenders were threatened, during the period with active civilian monitors, the main threat to civilians was crossfire, rather than targeted attack. While the specifics of how they are implemented differ from context to context, most of the good practices here would be good practices elsewhere. These include broad networks of relationships, frequent analysis, on-the-ground connections to communities, independence, and nonpartisanship, and using the leverage of UCP work to connect people and their issues from the grassroots to others. As the other case studies have found, UCP in Mindanao has influenced armed actors, the government and local civilians with the effects of protecting civilians and promoting the agency of local actors.

## Unarmed Civilian Protection in South Sudan: Emerging Good Practices in the Midst of Civil War

Written by Ellen Furnari

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The Conflict in South Sudan: Despite the efforts to create a functioning government in South Sudan since its independence in 2011, many areas still lack basic government services, such as police, judicial systems, or health care. The present is also shaped by the history of often contentious and violent relationships between ethnic and political groups within the territory that has become South Sudan and by the difficulties of building an inclusive, multi-ethnic state. Civil war broke out within South Sudan in December 2013, and has evolved into fighting on several fronts, with several different armed groups. The territorial struggles can be understood as a complex interaction between large-scale fighting for control and power, as well as very local cycles of hostility and revenge. The fighting is characterized by horrific attacks against civilians and is creating massive displacement, devastation and starvation for civilians in many parts of the country.



**Profile of UCP Practitioners and their Methods:** Nonviolent Peaceforce first started working in what was then southern Sudan in 2010. The UCP methods used in Nonviolent Peaceforce South Sudan (NPSS) can be understood in four main groups: proactive engagement, monitoring, capacity development, and relationship building. All methods and activities are presumed to be based on and infused with the principles of nonviolence, primacy of local actors, non-partisanship, independence, and International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights. Methods and actions are based on conflict and context analysis informed by local staff and local input. The people interviewed for this case study most often attributed UCP's effectiveness to community engagement, community acceptance, and building good relationships across many sectors.

#### **UCP Good practices in South Sudan (partial list)**

- **Initiating a New Country Program and Developing Partnerships:** Quickly start the program; use updated conflict analyses to develop programs and write grants; exercise caution in referring to any organization as a partner but instead look for solid, valuable advisers; have sufficient infrastructure in place from the beginning; have clear security protocols in place before fielding a team; adequate training and support of new staff; building on previous experience and knowledge; making documents about that previous experience readily available within the organization; consciously choose the level of inadequacy to tolerate in regards to the tension between waiting to start until funding is available to 'do it right,' and starting a program with whatever resources are available.
- **Clear and Flexible Mandate:** Posting the NP vision and mission statements on large banners in many NP offices; Clearly state the mandate, not just the overall organizational mission or a list of goals and objectives; the mandate should guide the work flexibly (this flexibility is linked to the primacy of local actors and building relationships, as well as ongoing context and conflict analysis).
- **Organizational Culture:** Creating and maintaining a positive organizational culture, characterized by good communication; explicitly state that everything is discussable; good hiring decisions and good training also help with organizational culture.
- **It Takes Time:** Take the time to meet people from diverse social sectors, armed groups and government; rushing can undermine the perception of nonpartisanship and the completeness of the information gathered. This includes a period of initial community engagement and supporting staff through the confusion of this period.
- **Other Team and Leadership Practices:** Choosing effective team leaders; using security surveys; deep community engagement; carefully analysing the context before starting a new team; gender balance; systematized evaluation process to demonstrate to others the effectiveness of their work; document changes in community perceptions of security.
- **Building and Using Relationships, Primacy of Local Actors, Bring Voices to the Negotiations:** Cooperative, trusting relationships underpin effective UCP interventions. Relationships provide information, analysis, and vehicles for influencing others. Link grassroots perspectives to high level aid and governance discussions via multi-level diplomacy; connecting across various divides demonstrates nonpartisanship and learns about the conflict and context from different perspectives, contributing to a more accurate conflict and context analysis. Regular staff meetings, where everything is discussable, support this intention.
- **Remain Nonpartisan, Distinct, Independent, Visible:** Establishing nonpartisanship and maintaining that perception is critical for several reasons: the security of staff, which is based on acceptance by the community and by many, if not all, armed actors; and getting information from many sectors to do programming well and avoid mistakes. There is a need to maintain a distinct visibility and independence (ex: NPSS changed their uniform to orange shirts, because their previous blue shirts were too close in colour to the UN).
- **National Program Staff: Strengths and Challenges:** As expected, national staff bring tremendous strengths to the programme because they understand the context with a depth that newcomers cannot; they have relationships with various parts of the community, which builds trust and a flow of

information sharing. Challenges include: cultural differences relating to time, meeting participation, and decision-making pose challenges to team function; and national staff may be at risk because of their ethnicity, but also more generally because they lack the protective factor of being international. Need to be clear that national staff will not get evacuated if they are in their 'home' territory.

- **Security:** Always have a security plan in place and adequate preparations. Because staff members are in the field, actively building good relationships in many sectors and regularly updating their context analysis, they are very well positioned to understand the security risks where they are working, and stay in the field longer than other international staff. Additionally, providing adequate time off for rest and recuperation contributes significantly to security.
- **Relating to Government, Governance, Not Competing with Government:** NP supports governance, not the government, always aware that civilian protection is the underlying goal.
- **Early Warning/Early Response, Emergency Response, and UCP in PoC and IDP Areas:** Communities in South Sudan are in all phases of violence: some areas are at risk of impending violence and need training in early warning/early response (EWER); an emerging good practice is NPSS's deeper involvement with what they have come to understand as protection mainstreaming within other agencies to share the protection responsibility. The creation of the mobile team can be understood as an emerging good practice in response to crises (acting quickly).
- **Build Community Protection Mechanisms and Structures:** NPSS has initiated, contributed to and supported: Women's Peacekeeping Teams, Child Protection Teams, Security Meetings, Weapons Free Zones, and UCP Training.
- **Proactive Presence:** The mere presence of NP staff, whether because they are international or simply because they are witnesses sometimes deters violence against civilians. At other times their direct engagement with youth, soldiers, or other groups who are considering violence dissuades those others from it. Staff members connect with the humanity of the others, reminding them of their shared concerns about civilian safety, as well as deterring them in more veiled ways such as by referencing other international organizations' concerns.
- **Accompaniment, Referral to Services, Volunteers Work in PoC and IDP Camps:** NPSS teams all accompany individuals, families, and other service providers at one time or another; NPSS makes many referrals to other agencies for health care, education, and basic needs such as food and shelter. Another set of emerging good practices with individuals is the direct work in PoC areas where volunteers are paid small stipends, trained, and supported by regular NP staff though there are emerging challenges in working with volunteers in this way.
- **Ongoing Conflict and Context Analysis, Communication and Reporting:** Information and opinions are gathered from many perspectives. NPSS weekly report templates include a section on conflict and context analysis, and monthly reports analyse how the changing context impacts the work; team members are careful not to undermine community trust by sharing what should be kept confidential.

**Effects, Outcomes and Impacts:** NPSS has protected the lives and dignity of thousands and trained or otherwise developed the capacity of hundreds. Other effects include: negotiating peace agreements among ethnic groups or clans; directly protecting people through presence and by accompanying them; patrolling and being visible in communities and PoC or IDP areas; training for and implementing early warning early response processes; coordinating with other protection actors such as the police and the UN mission; helping develop local peace committees; peace teams and women's peacekeeping teams; helping create weapons free zones; sharing the needs and opinions of mostly rural and isolated communities with aid agencies and policy makers. Although they have not been formally counted, tens of thousands have apparently benefited directly or indirectly from NPSS's work in communities and PoC/IDP areas and from the development of local protective structures, and thousands have benefitted directly from protection, training and referral to needed services. NPSS has influenced other humanitarian agencies' choices about what processes to use, where to work and what kind of work to do. The author was unaware

of any evidence that NPSS has ameliorated the political conflicts fuelling the civil war, but there is little evidence that any organization, multilateral institution or individuals are moving the parties toward peace, and on the contrary, possibly significant evidence (in early 2015 when the study was written) of outside support for the violence. The ongoing violence makes it hard to see long-term change. However, several South Sudanese staff (both NPOs and Team Leaders) see nonviolence and the new protection structures gaining acceptance in their communities. Two suggested that attitudes about resolving conflicts non-violently are shifting more rapidly than attitudes about violence against women and children.

**Dilemmas, Challenges, and Unintended Consequences:** There is a tension between serving immediate needs, which seem endless and urgent, and working toward longer-term goals, which might decrease the flow of immediate needs. NPSS works best in areas with few or no other international organizations; it was also noted that identifying service needs when there are no services only raises expectations that will not be fulfilled. Staff members have grappled with how to advocate for services from other organizations and how to adjust their own work when more organizations move into the region where they work. As the programme has grown, there is a tension, if not dilemma, between remaining flexible, creative, and adaptable and adopting more systematization, more mid-level management, and more structure. There are some concerns about operating more closely with, even as part of, the humanitarian structure; team members do not want to raise expectations for aid that is outside of the work of NPSS. There is a concern or tension between respecting the primacy of local actors and non-interference and providing training, support, role modelling and even stipends for participating in some activities such as child protection teams. A major dilemma relates to what kind of violence to respond to, what is the boundary of NPSS' work, or even if there is one. Because of the obvious and subtle links between domestic abuse, intra- and inter-clan violence, other forms of community violence and larger cycles of inter-ethnic conflicts, NPSS addresses many kinds of violence in order to protect civilians and be accepted in the community. This raises questions regarding the definition of political violence and UCP and whether it is interpreted in a broad or narrow manner: are methods such as implementing child-friendly spaces and helping women affected by domestic violence really UCP, or something else? Linked to the discussion of what kind of violence is the discussion of organizational identity. Is UCP a humanitarian intervention, a peacekeeping intervention, a peacebuilding intervention, or some hybrid?

**Conclusions:** NPSS is in some ways like a collection of different country projects: what works in one team may not be directly transferable to another. The practice of UCP must respond to the context both in terms of program effectiveness and staff security. While building relationships with key people and with civilians in the community broadly is a critical practice for all UCP interventions, the rate at which this will happen, the degree of acceptance, trust and cooperation, and the ability to use relationships to influence a decrease in violence will all vary.

## Synthesis of Case Analysis

Written by Ellen Furnari

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The case studies convincingly demonstrate that there is a knowledge base, developed over time and through practice, which expresses itself in different configurations or models, reflecting the specifics of the fielding organization and the context. While perhaps not yet a fully mature field, it is clearly on the path.

### Organizations

The organizations in these case studies are quite varied; they demonstrate that UCP can successfully achieve differing visions and missions. There is a range of goals or visions among these organizations, and for some, protection or accompaniment grows out of more fundamental purposes.

The organizations discussed in the case studies vary according not only to whether they are secular versus religious and how long they have existed, but also whether they are international or local/national CSOs; what kinds of violence they address; and several other factors. It seemed clear to the author that each organization worked out for itself a combination which was a good fit given its primary purpose and specific context. Projects by the same organization, but in different places, can express the same core purpose with different practices.

These organizations share: the commitment to nonviolence as a fundamental cornerstone; the practice of basing the work primarily in the communities and with the people to be protected; and developing and maintaining relationships across several social sectors (though methods differ widely), which provide both guidance and security. And while all the organizations have an interest in protecting those less advantaged—whether activists, minority communities, women, children or disadvantaged groups—they differ in the priority they give to protecting the vulnerable and supporting social change agents, as well as individuals/groups vs communities and regions.

**Contexts:** All the case studies highlight the need to implement UCP work flexibly to fit the changing contexts in which people work. Thus, a shared good practice was to base an initial intervention not only on a request by local partners and on need, but on a careful analysis of the context, including the general potential for UCP, and the specific capacities of the intervening organization to have a protective and supportive effect. Another good practice frequently mentioned was to conduct ongoing conflict analysis and maintain flexibility in implementation, so that actual practices change with changing circumstances.

**Basic Models:** While there are distinct differences between what appears to be diverse models of UCP, there are shared commitments to underlying principles, which are expressed in and through day-to-day practice. Each organization expressed not only a commitment to the principle of nonviolence, but also the experience that their practice of nonviolence was essential to working in places that would be closed to them, or might be too dangerous, if they were armed. Organizations understand this commitment somewhat differently, in terms of their willingness to be associated with local groups that advocate for violence, or the specific strategies used to pressure or influence armed groups. Similarly, all of these organizations are committed to the principle of the primacy of local actors, which may mean following the lead of local organizations and/or advisers, or at least, being highly influenced by local organizations and/or advisers. It also means acting, as best as can be determined, for the benefit of local people in the communities where UCP works. Each organization in these case studies are active and engaged in the communities where they protect civilians.

All organizations and interventions address the following core elements one way or another.

- **Nonviolence:** In some instances, it is a fundamental practice of nonviolence, others value nonviolence more for its strategic power to open doors and enable intervention in contexts where being armed would undermine the work or make it impossible. Some organizations will only protect and support organizations and individuals that are committed to nonviolent approaches. Others stipulate that those they accompany or protect must simply be nonviolent when being protected, although they recognize a right to violent self-defence to resist injustice.
- **Nonpartisanship:** Some organizations hold this as a central tenet, while other organizations openly advocate for the positions of those they accompany. Additionally, whether international or local, organizations' advocacy for civilian safety and other social changes varies. Some advocate directly with governments or diplomatic missions, while others advocate more publicly. This advocacy is intended to create pressure on specific persons or organizations to change. Most of the CSOs that protect civilians are partisan to some degree: their analysis of the armed conflict inspires opinions about how to resolve it.

- **Independence:** Discussion of independence must ask, independent from what? All the UCP organizations maintain the final authority for decisions internally. Many of the international organizations work with local people they may or may not term ‘partners’ or ‘advisers.’ Organizations see the decision to protect civilians from all sectors differently: some protect all civilians, while others protect a certain sector. While some of these organizations receive funding from national governments or multilateral funders (as well as private foundations and individual donors), they all maintain some independence from their funders’ agendas. Local or indigenous organizations have a different challenge that relates to both nonpartisanship and independence: some local organizations are partisan, while others are less political and more focused on civilian protection, or a range of issues, but not actively partisan for a particular cause or position. These organizations are independent of the government, in that they are civil society organizations, but they may be very connected to political parties or the government. Some CSOs have ties, often obscured, to armed groups.
- **Local Ownership:** For their initial and ongoing analyses, international UCP organizations must assess who is local and who is actually working for peace. These questions must be addressed within the context of protecting civilians, preventing violence, and promoting local ownership. UCP organizations experience a tension between supporting local actors who work for social change and working directly for social change themselves. CSOs that protect civilians face a different quandary: they must navigate relationships with international organizations, such as the struggle not to become overly dependent on their international partners, nor to allow the recognition from international organizations and especially funders, to distort their work.
- **What Violence:** Those interviewed stated it was important to address the violence in the communities where they worked, without trying to distinguish political conflict from personal or communal conflicts. The UCP curriculum written by Oldenhuis et al. (2016) defines UCP as protection of civilians from political conflict. However, the NP project in South Sudan addresses more than politically motivated violence. The UCP community needs to discuss this. Does it undermine or strengthen UCP to address more kinds of violence? Is it even helpful to categorize violence? Who is served by a particular definition, and whom might it harm? If there is no *a priori* reason to focus, how should an intervention with limited resources decide what violence to respond to?
- **How Violence is Prevented:** Different organizations using similar practices understand their work to stem from different strategies to address violence. Some believe UCP works by means of dissuasion or coercion, emphasizing the threat of unwanted consequences if violence occurs. Other organizations stress encouragement, believing that through relationships, meetings, trainings, presence, modelling, patrols, and advocacy, they encourage those who might commit violence to see the value in nonviolence. It would further the practice of UCP to understand more deeply what, if any, connection exists between the orientation toward coercion versus encouragement on the one hand, and effectiveness at protecting civilians and/or influencing a larger conflict trajectory.
- **Who Does the Work:** One of the distinctions among the different models are the factors that determine who does the work: international or local, global south or global north, volunteers or staff, which genders, short-term or long-term, and level of training, etc. Employing international staff could add to the narrative of colonialist perpetuation, and although local staff have a wealth of indigenous knowledge, they may in fact be less of a deterrent and less respected by armed actors. While there appears to be little difference among the organizations in terms of the participation of women, it is recognized that gender influences armed actors and, therefore, contextual analysis is needed to address what is appropriate in different situations.

- **Process of Project Development:** Whether organizations arrived with a narrow or broad focus, most seemed to experience turning points when they demonstrated effectiveness, creating further requests for services and fuelling expansion. Many projects needed time to find actions that influenced the violence, conflicts, and civilians. This reflects not only the deepening of knowledge about the communities and conflicts, but also the creation and maintenance of relationships with civilians, government officials, armed actors, and other influential people.
- **Exiting:** As these case studies involve currently active projects, none provide examples of exits. Comments in the studies, however, relate ongoing exit decisions to concerns about independence, primacy of local actors, nonpartisanship, and most fundamentally to changing contexts that indicate whether the project continues to be needed and effective.

**Different Models or Different Categories?** This combination of shared commitments or principles, as well as differences in principles and practices, begs the question of what is UCP?<sup>1</sup> Are the organizations studied doing a wide range of the same basic category of work, termed here UCP, or are they doing categorically different interventions, which happen to share some practices, most commonly accompaniment and presence? Who and what does it serve to define UCP a particular way and include or exclude certain organizations and practices? Is nonpartisanship essential to UCP? Is eschewing direct nonviolent action essential? For international organizations, is some independence from local organizations required? If an organization addresses violence that is not generally defined as political violence, is it still UCP? Are organizations that primarily support social justice activists and activities including nonviolent resistance, and for whom protection is in a sense an outgrowth rather than the primary motivation, a different category or model?

The intention of this project is to improve the practice of UCP. So, it is with some trepidation these questions are raised. Given the financial pressures on nonprofits and the politics of how organizations work together or split apart at local, national, and international levels, there is sometimes competition between organizations. Offering evidence that some aspects of the work are ‘better’ than others could fuel this competition. At the same time, all the organizations want to do the best work they can, to protect those whose wellbeing is their focus, and to promote local peace and human rights. It is my hope that future research and exploration of these questions will reflect the complexity of contexts and organizations, resisting simple answers, while at the same time engaging UCP organizations in ways that further develop their work.

**Shared Ethical Commitments:** International UCP organizations, like other international interveners, are committed to doing no harm although it is not always easy to decide what this means. For example, some respondents worried that if a UCP intervention makes a context more tolerable, it may, in some indirect way, slow resolution. There is a need, as part of the regular context and conflict analysis, for staff to ask themselves and the people they work with, are we being ethical? This issue is raised not because the case studies reveal ethical lapses but because as the field grows, discussing ethical practice is essential. Although UCP is unarmed and nonviolent, it is still a very powerful form of intervention. At their current sizes, UCP interventions are unlikely to influence local economies in the way that large peacekeeping forces and humanitarian aid organizations often do. However, any intervention has unforeseen impacts. And it is critical to involve others in the community in these discussions, as it is easy to be unaware of one’s own impacts at times.

### **Implications for Replication and Expansion**

The first criterion for replication is to be clear that UCP is particular to its contexts. Related to this is the importance of using the basic principles clearly and flexibly in the project mandate. Flexibility is

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<sup>1</sup> As previously noted, there is no existing standard for using the phrase unarmed civilian peacekeeping or protection to describe this work, nor if the ‘P’ in UCP stands for peacekeeping or protection.



essential so that an intervention is not stuck in a practice that has become irrelevant, or unable to respond to emerging protection needs. Invitations to undertake UCP need careful consideration, to learn what these organizations do and how they are understood in their own communities. In every case the initial conflict and context analysis must consider whether UCP is likely to protect civilians, and what kinds of practices are most suited for the needs and context. Many of the projects studied here have grown over time, which may indicate that it is useful to start small, or at least smaller than the intended full size, to allow for a period of interactions, learning, and developing critical relationships. The cases reflect significantly different experiences with local organizations; there is no clarity from these case studies as to what model is better, but rather they suggest that this be well thought out and, again, implemented flexibly. While some of the practices in UCP are used by other organizations, it isn't clear from these cases what results would be gained through, for instance, an official UN agency undertaking a UCP intervention.

Sufficient administrative capacity, resources, and the ability to recruit and train appropriate volunteers or staff, are also critical elements. Many other issues need further elucidation: What are the most essential criteria and processes for beginning new projects? What organizational capacity issues must be addressed? And what kinds of organizations are best suited for these interventions?

As to expanding existing UCP interventions, many of the same issues apply. Generally, expansion must rest on good conflict and context analysis, invitations or in any case good relationships with advisors or partners, and sufficient administrative capacity to both recruit and maintain new sites. For existing organizations, attention needs to be paid to how UCP work relates to what the organization is already doing.

The process through which UCP work is initiated by CSOs is clearly critical. None of the local organizations in the case studies began UCP work because there was funding available to do so. Rather they either developed it on their own, out of their understanding of the needs in their communities, or they asked for and received training from others. This seems an essential point in both depth of commitment to the work and its sustainability. As CSOs initiate or expand their UCP projects, they, like INGOs, need to clarify their strategies and consider their capacities.

## Conclusions

**Written by Ellen Furnari**

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Unarmed civilian protection or unarmed civilian peacekeeping, or accompaniment, is an emerging field. The disagreement about what UCP stands for, or even whether it is the best name, reflects how the work has evolved from a core commitment to nonviolent action, in different ways, propelled by different visions and needs. The purpose of these case studies and analysis is to improve the practice and grow the field at a time when there is huge need and opportunity. There is increasing focus within the Responsibility to Protect discourse on protecting civilians nonviolently, using military intervention truly as a last resort. UCP has recently been mentioned in the UN report from the High-Level Panel on Peace Operations (2015) and a report on the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2015). At the same time, there are more refugees now than at any time previously recorded, and Crisis Watch is tracking at least 70 active conflicts worldwide. Millions of civilians need some direct protection and support for their own protection strategies and practices. In addition, in many contexts social justice activists and nonviolent resisters also need protection.

With such great need and opportunity and a 30+ year history of UCP interventions beginning with PBI in the mid-1980s, it is a rich time to research good practices in the field. What has emerged from these case studies is a view of the depth and variety of practice. While there is great variation in the purpose, size, and practices of UCP, coupled with significant variations in the contexts in which it is

applied, some bedrock good practices are emerging. These include commitments to nonviolence, independence, and support of local actors. The commitment to nonpartisanship is more mixed and complex. All the UCP organizations work in the communities they protect; many live there, have offices there, and in other ways embed their work in the local community.

However, one of the core good practices is to particularize the practice based on the needs and specific conditions in each context. So, while UCP efforts share general principles, the practices not only vary by context and organization, but also over time as these contexts change. Good analysis of the communities being protected and supported pairs with flexibility in implementing mandates to enable this evolution. These aspects of the work are expressed in the many variations of good practice briefly summarized in the chart of good practices.

These case studies, as rich as they are, leave many questions unanswered, awaiting further research. Like UCP, this research must be carried out with commitments to nonviolence, independence, primacy of local actors, and nonpartisanship. In particular, the respect for local actors and practitioners challenges many traditional research practices. It is critical that the knowledge and perspectives of local actors, practitioners, and other stakeholders are included in the research design and implementation.

Research questions that are drawn from these case studies include:

- Is there a connection between elements of UCP organizations such as purpose, partisanship, independence, interpretation of and commitment to nonviolence, understanding of who constitutes the local community, composition of teams (i.e. volunteers, local staff, etc.), and effectiveness?
- How, if at all, does UCP influence the strategies of self-protection and community resilience in the areas where they work?
- How do UCP interventions influence conflict trajectories? For interventions such as in Colombia and Mindanao, are there links between UCP work and political changes (looking at attribution, not causation)?
- Is there a difference in how armed actors and communities experience interventions based on deterrence versus encouragement strategies?
- What do armed actors, community members and other NGO and INGO staffs understand to be the usefulness and impact of UCP interventions?
- What happens to staff and those protected when international UCP organizations exit and how is this related to context, intervention strategies, etc.?

Another area of needed research is the relationships between CSOs and INGOs doing UCP.

- How do they perceive each other?
- In what, if in any ways are INGOs seen to perpetuate global north or colonial power dynamics and what are the implications of this?
- What might be done to change this, if even needed?
- How do these different organizations complement or impede each other's work?

As an emerging field, there of course many other questions to be asked and explored.

It is important to acknowledge that UCP is a paradigm shift for many. Most people reflexively believe that weapons effectively empower armed actors to assert their will and dominate. We tend to believe that the best-armed, biggest, and strongest actors will win. Such beliefs persist despite the inability of the NATO intervention in Afghanistan to 'win', or of UN peacekeepers to protect civilians in places such as the DRC where their mandate allows the use of great force to pre-empt violence directed at civilians. This failure to protect is repeated in numerous contexts by other multilateral armed peacekeeping forces such as those fielded by the AU, EU, and others.

Both the theory and experience of UCP suggest that in many situations using nonviolence, tailoring interventions to the particularities of contexts, embedding teams within communities, and the many other good practices, can more effectively protect civilians than using weapons or threatening their use. This holds true whether civilians are general targets of violence, or targeted due to their political activities. While much remains to be learned about which contexts most lend themselves to UCP and which are less

conducive, these case studies and the growing body of literature on UCP suggest that the question is not *can* UCP work, but rather *when is it more likely*, and *how it can best work*?

In conclusion, it is clear from these case studies that unarmed civilians using nonviolent practices are effectively protecting civilians in diverse contexts and with diverse configurations of missions and methods. Most of these projects have a range of effects beyond protection, such as contributing to women's leadership, protecting people whose work has made significant political differences in their countries, and contributing to peace processes. Protection is provided by both international and national staff, within both local and international organizations. While UCP is clearly complex, there is a strong knowledge base of good practice to support its effective expansion.

Lastly, this research was possible due to the generosity of several hundred people who took time to share their knowledge and experiences with the researchers. They included practitioners of UCP as well as people in various sectors who work with them. It is hoped that this project makes a significant contribution to growing the field and increasing the safety of civilians, who can then work nonviolently for the social changes they envision in their communities.

## Summary of Good Practices

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The following is an extensive, though not exhaustive, selection of 77 good practices mentioned in one or more case study. A major conclusion of these case studies is the importance of context when identifying good practices; not all practices work in each situation and they are not all agreed upon. In fact, some organizations disagreed on certain practices depending on factors such as the country context, or whether the organization is international or a local CSO. Thus, there is some contradiction between these practices. It is important to keep in mind that different practices are important in different situations, and no practice can be applied without contextual analysis.

If you would like the full Table of Good Practices, with a breakdown of how each practice relates to the different contexts in each case study, please see Appendix A of the full book version of *Wielding Nonviolence in the Midst of Violence*.

### **Program Initiation**

1. Initiate new programs quickly or update the analysis.
2. Remain independent of local connections, have advisers and colleagues (possibly eschewing formal partners) and avoid raising unrealistic expectations.
3. Be aware that initial explorations may be biased by the disproportionate inclusion of local people with international connections and language skills. This may challenge the perception of nonpartisanship in the beginning.
4. Acknowledge that starting may be slow; it takes time to create a team, build relationships, learn a context, and build a reputation for nonpartisanship. It's important that funders don't press for quick results.
5. Deal with tension between the urgency to start and the need to be deliberate and thoughtful in order to achieve better results.
6. Start small and grow with knowledge of context and needs.

7. Have a clear mandate so that everyone understands it.
8. Implement mandate flexibly.

#### **Consistent Analysis**

9. Analyse the conflict and context frequently, using local input, input from national staff, and input from different perspectives. This is especially critical before initiating new accompaniment, new teams, or other new work.
10. Use all available resources to dissuade and influence armed groups to prevent violence and protect civilians.
11. Confirm through analysis that source(s) of threats are likely to care about and respond to UCP actions. Effectiveness is extremely context specific and changeable.
12. Share updates and analysis, as appropriate and allowed, with HQ, funders, other UCP organizations, and even the media. This both improves the work of others AND influences violent actors if they know that violence against civilians is reported outside the immediate vicinity.

#### **Commitment to Nonpartisanship**

13. Maintain perception of being nonpartisan, independent. This requires ongoing attention and work.

#### **Training and Protocols**

14. Have security protocols in place before team starts.
15. Train and orient new staff before they start.
16. Include language, culture, conflict history, specific skills such as monitoring, and team processes in the training
17. Act appropriately within local cultures – honouring norms for behaviour, clothing, and religious practice – and refrain from sexual relationships with community members.
18. Provide national/local staff the same training as international staff
19. Start with existing handbooks and manuals from previous projects before creating new materials.
20. Create manuals and handbooks to provide clear guidance, infused with principles and mission and supporting flexibility.
21. Commit to the effort and training needed to maintain an organizational culture characterized by creativity, good communication, and adaptability.

#### **Organizational Culture**

22. Establish a team culture in which everything can be discussed.
23. Hire the right people.

- 24. Have a clear decision-making process. Aim for consensus but use hierarchy, if there is one, as necessary.
- 25. Have a way to make decisions quickly when needed
- 26. Attend to team dynamics: they are critical for effectiveness, staff well-being, and good security analysis, and poor relations can lead to security risks and other difficulties.
- 27. Provide regular feedback on performance.
- 28. Hold frequent and regular team meetings that include everyone.

#### **Coordinated Effort**

- 29. Connect with other INGOs, service providers, and UCP organizations.
- 30. Coordinate with service providers, refer people for needed services, and coordinate with governance.
- 31. Multilevel diplomacy. Advocate for individual and community protection needs with national and international agencies and organizations, influence others to better prevent violence, protect human rights, and address community needs.
- 32. Reliably follow through after meetings with diplomats and others: send follow-up emails and any promised information.
- 33. Advocate for human rights within country – government and embassies – and in ‘home’ countries too.
- 34. Disseminate publications and other communication widely, as communication to the public strengthens advocacy and protection.

#### **Staff**

- 35. Clearly identify hiring or volunteer selection criteria
- 36. Maintain gender balance on the teams, so that women staff members can talk to women in the communities, and because armed actors may react differently to women UCPs than to men.
- 37. Make use of the special advantages of international staff: they may be more credible and respected and therefore have more deterrent influence with armed actors. Having internationals from many countries can be important.
- 38. Make use of the special advantages of national staff: they know the context and, because they are local actors, using them promotes the primacy of local actors.

#### **Evaluations**

- 39. Allocate time and resources to document work and build the historical record – institutional memory.
- 40. Have a regular, systematized learning and evaluation process.

#### **Security and Well-being**

41. Build good relationships with many sectors, including all or most armed actors, to improve influence, analysis, and security.
42. Remain independent to avoid compromising the work and to maintain relationships, though not at 'all cost'.
43. Keep organizational affiliation distinct and visible through uniforms and markings on vehicles.
44. Rely on acceptance by some combination of local community, government, and armed actors as the basis of security.
45. Have security SOPs everyone knows and follows.
46. For the sake of security, frequently update the conflict and context analysis in the field, and, unless there is a good reason based on wider perspectives to override them, delegate decisions to the people working locally who think about the conflicts every day.
47. Send letters of notice, i.e., tell people ahead of time where you are going and coordinate movements.
48. Attend to staff mental health, for the sake of well-being and for the sake of security.
49. Encourage staff to attend to self-care and to know sources of own resiliency, physical health, and mental health. Require R&R.

#### **Ongoing Practice**

50. Many kinds/forms of violence concern the community. Develop and maintain clarity about which types of violence this intervention will address, and revisit this as contexts change.
51. Support good governance – including traditional practices and institutionalized mechanisms for civilian protection – and complement rather than compete with the government when possible, while maintaining independence.
52. Build community-based protection mechanisms, such as ceasefire monitoring groups, inclusive security meetings, child protection teams, and women's peacekeeping teams.
53. Build capacity of local actors through support, do 'with', not 'for': empower, support, and encourage local peace, human rights, and justice actors.
54. Training in early warning and planning for early or emergency response augments civilian self-protection strategies and behaviours.
55. Protection mainstreaming — work with service providers on conflict sensitivity, do no harm, etc. and provide protection at distributions.
56. Work with IDPs and refugees in their camps and on relationships between host community and IDPs.



57. Have emergency response capacity via quick response plans, mobile team, emergency response, and in coordination with others.
58. Live in communities or visit often, know what is happening in small, rural, isolated areas, and in cities i.e. on the ground.
59. Provide proactive presences: consistent; long-term; shuttle diplomacy; rumour control; provide logistical support; patrolling; being at the grassroots, in the community, as main place of work.
60. Support face-to-face meetings, dialogues, and processes to address conflicts at community level.
61. Engage directly with those who threaten violence – see their humanity, encourage them, and deter them from violence.
62. Create Zones of Peace.
63. Accompaniment.
64. Have clear criteria and formal agreements about who is accompanied.
65. Interpositioning.
66. Model nonviolence, promote nonviolent ways of dealing with conflict.
67. Advocate in a partisan way for peace, human rights, with those accompanied.
68. In addition to protection, support peace, justice, human rights.
69. Support nonviolent resistance movements.
70. Use resources wisely, stretch impact, multiplier effect.
71. Emerging issue of accompaniment in response to private business and multinational resource exploitation; what are good strategies here?
72. Hold state responsible for protection, even as UCP is needed.
73. Bridge relationships between local actors and others: funders; government; local, national, and international actors.
74. Organize a formal and informal monitoring and reporting system with civilians at the centre.
75. Provide aid, recognizing it as a form of protection, protection is aid.
76. Make it a priority to have good administrative practices.
77. Have an exit strategy.