



NP WPT members meet in Diror, South Sudan. 2023 ©NP

## *Case Study*

# Enhancing Food Security through Unarmed Civilian Protection in Akobo

July 2025

South Sudan

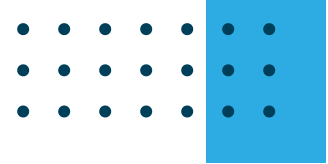


In February 2023, there was an incident between two sub-clans of the Jokjok from Diror and Kaikuiny within Akobo County. One youth was killed due to a case of mistaken identity and another youth was killed in revenge during the subsequent conflict. The incident raised a follow-up food security, as well as protection, concern because both Kaikuiny and Diror communities share the same distribution point in Kaikuiny, and food distribution was scheduled to take place one week later.

Seven months previously, a similar incident between sub-clan male youths had resulted in a conflict breaking out between the women attending a food distribution. This resulted in the distribution itself being suspended, which then went beyond affecting those involved in the direct violence as individuals, families, and communities uninvolved did not receive their food assistance as expected. Furthermore, NP found through its engagement with communities uninvolved with the incident that there was a concern amongst them that if any tension were to erupt between the Diror and Kaikuiny during the distribution, the conflict could spread outwards as the cycle of revenge engulfs other clans and negatively impact their area also.

To respond to the incident, NP facilitated a community security meeting in Diror to understand the status of the relationship between the Kaikuiny and Diror communities and identify if any strategies needed to be implemented to mitigate any potential violence during the planned food distribution. Community members and local authorities from Diror, as well as the Boma Administrator of Kaikuiny, participated in the meeting. Although the situation was calm, they were concerned about the conflict erupting between those from Diror and Kaikuiny attending the distribution and the risk that this might prevent everyone from receiving their rations.



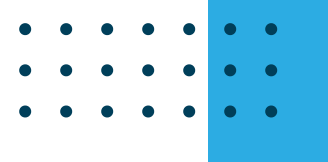


Through the meeting discussion, three violence prevention strategies were agreed. Firstly, the local authorities would request the Executive Director to host a dialogue as they identified a need for higher-level intervention to prevent conflict. NP was also requested to support the dialogue by participating as an impartial observer. Secondly, meetings should be held in each community with the women before they go to the distribution to specifically emphasise the need to avoid further conflict and violence due to the harm it would cause to everyone. Thirdly, community members also proposed revising the distribution schedule to separate the distribution days for the Kaikuny and the Diror as a way to minimize the risk of conflict. NP supported the third strategy liaising with the food partner and presenting this locally-identified protection strategy so that it could be mainstreamed into the design of the distribution, which the partner willingly incorporated.

As a result, the sub-county Executive Director responded to the request of the local authorities and hosted a peace consultation, which included local authorities and community members from Diror and Kaikuiny, as well as members from nearby locations whilst NP participated as an impartial observer as requested. During the meeting, everyone agreed that avoiding further violence was essential for all. Local authorities emphasised that,

**“When conflict erupts, it is the community that is affected and, in this sense, as people under the main Jokjok clan, they must come together to solve their conflict in a peaceful manner.”**

Both the Diror and Kaikuiny communities agreed that the incident could be managed nonviolently “through compensation, not revenge”, and another community member echoed the local authorities in voicing that “the focus today for the Jokjok clan is to ensure that this incident does not spill over and affect other issues ... the whole community will be negatively impacted as a result.” Representatives from uninvolved communities in nearby locations also expressed support for this way forward and reiterated that, “Conflict in the rubhall will impact the community here in Kaikuiny negatively, as well as those who have traveled from Padoi and Diror”, whilst another stated, “Today, we should focus on this issue. We should contain it and not let conflict escalate. We should act as one Jokjok community.”



Consequently, the communities gathered agreed that the food distribution should go ahead so that everyone could receive their rations and some men should be selected to patrol during the distribution and intervene when tensions arose to calm the situation and prevent any conflict outbursts. However, one challenge remaining was how to ensure consideration for the grieving family, respect for traditional customs, and avoid anyone suffering from worsening food insecurity. As one elder had highlighted, “the only women ... who should not attend [the distribution] are those immediate relations of the perpetrator [because] the incident happened so recently that the mother of the deceased will feel grief when she sees the mother of the perpetrator and this may lead to an escalation of violence. Furthermore, we have a traditional custom that says the mother of the perpetrator should not drink from the same cup as the mother of the deceased, otherwise, they will both be cursed.” Everyone agreed that the family members of the perpetrator should stay away from the food distribution to avoid provoking conflict but there was a need to ensure that this family did not then suffer by missing out on their rations. The solution proposed was that a representative should receive rations on behalf of the family.

Following the decisions from the locally-led peace dialogue, NP stepped in to support their decisions and protection strategies by immediately informing the relevant authorities that it had been agreed that the food distribution could go ahead so that preparations could be made. NP also collected the names of the immediate family members of the perpetrator, who were affected by the collective decision to abstain from the distribution, and liaised with the food partner so that an exception to the standard ration card procedure could be implemented that allowed a representative to collect for the family of the perpetrator instead on this occasion.

On the day of the food distribution, NP further supported the community-led protection initiatives with their protective presence at the distribution site. The procedure established for providing rations to the family of the perpetrator was implemented smoothly via the selected representative and the distribution took place without any incidents. NP also followed up with a patrol in the area one week later to monitor and assess the context following the distribution. One woman from Diror reported, “During the distribution, we went and received our portion. All women from Diror went except the women [from the immediate family of the perpetrator] that they mentioned during the [peace dialogue] meeting. For those of us who went to Kaikuiny, we were treated fairly. They did not look down on us. We came back home safely. No



one from us came back home unhappy that she had quarreled with anyone in the distribution centre. All went well.” Another man stated, “We are still trying to make it calm completely. It is not like before, but it is at least better, even our youths have returned home.”

NP continues to work alongside the communities in Akobo county every day to support their locally-led efforts to break cycles of violence and enhance nonviolent conflict resolution. The impact of this work goes beyond direct protection. Interrupting cycles of revenge killing through proactive protection interventions is essential for mitigating insecurity and enabling efforts to address other needs including food insecurity. Supporting locally-led, unarmed civilian protection (UCP) initiatives also ensures that intervention measures are contextually-appropriate and grassroots transitions to nonviolent conflict resolution are sustainable in the long-term.



Community Members in Diror, South Sudan, 2023 ©NP