



Nonviolent **Peaceforce**



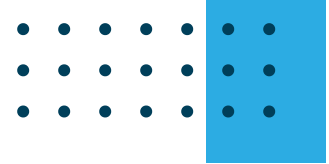
Sobat River during rainy season, Upper Nile State, South Sudan. Wikimedia Commons

Case Study

Enhancing Food Security through Unarmed Civilian Protection in Ulang

July 2025

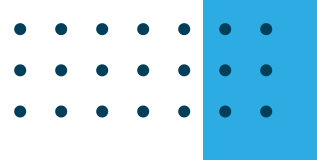
South Sudan



In Greater Ulang, the notion of communal identity and support for each other is core to local cultures. This serves as an important way for people to look after themselves and each other, especially when facing individual or collective difficulties. At the same time, revenge killing has become a norm passed down across generations as grievances interact with this strong sense of community. As a result, there has emerged an overarching environment of generalized insecurity as people become at risk of targeting due to their communal identity, which in turn, creates food insecurity. When people from Ulang travel along the Sobat River through neighboring counties such as Nasir and Nyirol, they are fearful due to the risk of inter-communal or interclan violence and revenge killings. Yet, traveling by boat across the border to Ethiopia is essential for trade and enabling independent livelihoods as Ulang does not produce any goods. Everything, including food or non-food items like clothes and household items, have to be brought into Ulang by the river, which is the cheapest option, or by air as the location lacks road infrastructure.

However, there is fertile land within Greater Ulang and water available from the river that could support agriculture. When asked by an International Protection Officer in April 2023 why people do not then cultivate the land instead, a member from the community responded, "People don't cultivate because they fear that their crops will be destroyed or that they may be killed whilst they are cultivating due to issues of revenge." This directly results in food insecurity in this difficult-to-reach location due to this actual, as well as perceived, threat. Furthermore, the resulting food security challenge is not limited to the present but extends to future generations as well. Without examples and opportunities for the youth to learn from elders how to cultivate the land, when to do so, and what to look out for, a generational capacity gap as the knowledge of elders is not able to be passed down.

Consequently, the protection issues arising from generalized insecurity perpetuate a chronic cycle of food insecurity that can extend beyond years and generations. Nonetheless, NP has been working alongside communities to address these challenges in Greater Ulang. The dry season runs from December to April and during this time, movement is more possible, which increases safety and security concerns as those with grievances from previous killings can move more easily to other areas for revenge killings. During the dry period in 2024, there have been numerous reports of youth being armed.



In Ying, three people died as a result of revenge-related incidents¹ in February whilst in Doma, one person was killed in March. As revenge-related killings are treated as an assault on the whole clan or community, such incidents can result in large-scale violence, casualties, and destruction.

To mitigate these consequences, NP works to interrupt cycles of violence and enhance nonviolent responses to conflict through the use of Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP) strategies such as shuttle diplomacy, multi-track dialogue, rumour control, and monitoring. As youth are the ones usually affected and involved in revenge killings, NP has worked closely with youth association members through training and mentorship to encourage nonviolent responses to violence. Greater Ulang was almost crippled by violence between the Ririnyang and Ying communities in February 2024, when three people were killed during a violent conflict just one day before a youth-led dialogue had been planned. To support a locally-led response and prevent a violent escalation in revenge killing, NP conducted deterrent patrols, and community protection meetings and accompanied youth association members during shuttle diplomacy between the two communities. As a result, they reached an agreement to pause revenge killings and allow the process of negotiations to start to address the incident through blood compensation.

NP also engaged the local authorities, who then prioritised the continuation of this nonviolent process to the conflict as an alternative to a spiral of revenge killings. In addition to this, the NP team also supported the community protection teams to continue their independent activities and conducted training on UCP with the Ririnyang, Ying, and surrounding communities to further support and enhance the skills of community members to prevent and mitigate the potential for consequences of revenge killings through nonviolent methods in the future. Supporting communities to identify the needs underlying violent conflict helps identify ways beyond violence and works towards improved social cohesion. Through this work, revenge killing has now become more limited with family members rather than whole communities being targeted. Still, more work needs to be done to completely stop revenge killings and the subsequent food insecurity that it causes.