



Peace in Sight

TRANSFORMING THE WORLD'S RESPONSE TO CONFLICT

SEP
2026



NP and Community Peace Teams meet in Bentiu, South Sudan. 2026. ©NP

Peace is not Passive

Youth Cultivating Peace in Bentiu

Nhial Gatluak was ten years old when the life he knew ended overnight.

His family lived in a comfortable house in Bentiu, in the north of South Sudan. His parents and relatives held steady jobs, he went to school, and food was on the table. This sense of order and safety was normal for Nhial. Though he saw the aid vehicles moving through town, he had little idea what they were for. And for some time, he had no reason to know.

Then, in December 2013, war broke out.

Now 24, Nhial recalls fleeing into the bush with his family, running with whatever they could carry. They spent weeks without food, water, or proper clothing. "The majority of them did not survive," Nhial shared. Some relatives were killed while others died of hunger, disease, or untreated wounds from

walking barefoot. Those who survived eventually found their way to an Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp on the outskirts of Bentiu, where Nhial still lives today.

Becoming a Peacebuilder

It was in the IDP camp that Nhial first encountered Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP). "The NP team members were cooking for children in the camp, giving kids a few hours each day to play and forget the stress outside," he shared. He remembers NP staff working around the clock to register unaccompanied children, trace their scattered families, and reunite them.



It all goes back to my childhood, to NP looking after us, and reunifying my friends with their mothers.





Nhial. South Sudan. 2026. ©NP

By 2015, NP had formed Women's Protection Teams that moved from block to block across the camp, raising awareness of child protection and laying the groundwork for community safety and peace in the camp. Nhial watched their work for years before officially becoming a member of NP's Youth Protection Team (YPT) in 2022.

Today, Nhial and his fellow team members patrol not only during the day, but also at night, when groups known locally for their negative influence on young people are most active. Rather than confront them, the team relies on peaceful dialogue, talking with young people about the toll these behaviors take on their community and their own futures. He says the approach is beginning to shift things: some members of these groups have approached the YPT themselves, asking to join.

Beyond the patrols, the YPT works to reduce child and early marriage, encouraging families to keep their daughters in school. They also mediate disputes among young people, drawing on shared experiences and their relationality as youth to reach people who camp elders often cannot.

South Sudan's Unfinished Peace

Bentiu's IDP camp has become one of South Sudan's largest displacement sites, sheltering more than 100,000 people today. Recurring floods since 2019 have made

returning home impossible, submerging farmland and forcing thousands more into the camp. Many, like Nhial, have spent most or all of their adult lives there.

In a place where so much remains uncertain, the work of young peacebuilders like Nhial and his teammates is vital. But the strains of sustaining this work are immense. Renewed fighting and political tensions have deepened South Sudan's humanitarian crisis, while international support has dwindled drastically over the last few years. This has meant fewer aid workers in the camp, though Nhial commends the many who have stayed voluntarily, even without pay.



NP's early investment in the team is the reason it still exists at all.



Amid all these challenges, Nhial worries about the cost of a peace agreement that continues to fray. "Young people in South Sudan are dying to drug abuse, to violence, to the absence of the basic security that would let a country function normally, one where school fees would not be an obstacle, farming would be safe again, and families would not depend on daily food distributions to survive."

For Nhial, peace is not an abstract idea. He has lived the consequences of its absence—and experienced what it means when people choose to protect one another. "We are tired of being confined in one area for more than 13 years," he says.

His message to those in power is simple: take the peace agreement seriously, and do not let it be violated again.

Finding Safety at Night Markets

REFLECTING ON TWO YEARS OF PARTNERING FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY

As small businesses felt the impact of the pandemic and anti-Asian harassment surged across the U.S., NP became a key safety partner for Think!Chinatown's Night Markets—an initiative designed to bring neighbors back into public space, drawing up to 3,000 community members.

Two years after our partnership began, NP's role has evolved from direct intervention to a more capacity-building approach, training 20–30 staff and volunteers per Night Market.

Today, Think!Chinatown has established their own safety infrastructure and protocols for public-facing events, and manages a staff and volunteer safety team that is equipped to independently address most conflicts that arise.



T!C Safety Volunteer Training. 2026. ©NP

NP has been an incredible supporter and a vital community safety resource for our Chinatown Night Market... Their guidance and in-person support helped us build a strong plan for heat, crowd control, police presence, and outside agitation.

- Anna Ye, T!C Special Events & Culinary Programs Manager

Ebola Does Not Choose Its Victims

HOW CONFLICT IS UNDERMINING THE EBOLA RESPONSE IN EASTERN DRC

The Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo remains a global health emergency as the death toll surpasses that of the country's 2018–2020 outbreak.

"We saw it during the many previous Ebola outbreaks, and we are seeing it again now," said Douce Namwezi, NP's Head of Mission in the DRC. "Ebola does not spread in a vacuum. It spreads where trust has broken down, where health workers cannot move safely, and where communities have long-standing reasons to be suspicious due to broken communication channels and lack of safety."

In South Kivu, NP teams have integrated Ebola risk awareness into their broader community protection work, through supporting awareness-raising on Ebola transmission and prevention, monitoring protection risks linked to the

response, and sharing emerging concerns with health and humanitarian partners.

Currently, our focus remains on maintaining trust and addressing misinformation to help prevent future outbreaks. This reflects a broader challenge across Ebola outbreaks, as rumors and misinformation can spread rapidly, delaying those seeking treatment, fueling stigma, and undermining trust in public health authorities.

Along with Life & Peace Institute and International Alert, NP has jointly called on the Congolese Government, health authorities, humanitarian actors, and international partners to anchor the response in existing local networks, keep the response demilitarized, invest in community engagement, integrate peacebuilding actors, and ensure border and movement restrictions apply equally to nationals and internationals alike.

"Ebola does not choose its victims, and neither should the response," Namwezi said. "A response that ignores the realities of conflict will not just fail to stop the virus—it will allow the virus' spread to accelerate and will fail to protect people."

SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT



Virgil Mathiowetz

Virgil Mathiowetz's commitment to nonviolent action began during the Vietnam War era. As he prepared to leave the seminary, he knew participating in the war was inconsistent with his Christian values and beliefs. In making his case for Conscientious Objector status, Virgil drew inspiration from Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr.'s use of nonviolent action to advance social change.

Virgil continued to participate in protests against the Vietnam War and advocate for other social causes. So when he heard co-founder Mel Duncan speak shortly after NP's founding in 2002, the organization's mission immediately resonated with him. He was especially drawn to this line in NP's mission statement: "We envision a worldwide culture of peace in which conflicts within and between communities and countries are managed through nonviolent means." That vision has kept Virgil connected to NP for more than two decades. "For these reasons, it has been my pleasure to be a supporter and legacy donor since the beginning," he said.



It has been a joy to see Mel's vision being put into action in a number of conflict areas around the world and to see the UN recognize that Unarmed Civilian Protection is a viable option to prevent, reduce, and stop conflicts.



Giving Today, Sustaining Peace Tomorrow

Visit nonviolentpeaceforce.org/make-a-gift for more information.

Your commitment to peace can make an impact for generations to come. Consider including Nonviolent Peaceforce in your estate plans through a legacy gift, helping ensure communities can continue building peace long into the future.

You can also make a meaningful gift today by donating appreciated stock or recommending a grant from your Donor-Advised Fund (DAF). These giving options can offer tax benefits while helping sustain unarmed civilian protection around the world.



For more information on ways to give, go to NonviolentPeaceforce.org or call +1 612-871-0005