



## What I Saw on My Trip to the Philippines

By Tim Wallis, Executive Director

*“If not for NP’s presence, we would all have been displaced — once again.”*

In August, I toured our field sites in Mindanao, the Philippines. The work our teams are doing there is exceptionally exciting.

Let me introduce you to Bertrand Lumaque, the mayor of Kolambugan in Mindanao. On August 18, 2008, following a breakdown in the peace talks, Mayor Lumaque’s town was attacked. Twelve civilians were killed, 14 homes burnt to the ground, 5 classrooms destroyed, and 20,000 people displaced.

NP has been working with his community ever since. On the day of my visit the NP team was training community leaders to use an Early Warning Early Response system. It could prevent another violent outbreak like the one that happened in 2008.

“It’s so important that you are here,” Mr. Lumaque told me. “We have the army, we have the police, we have vigilante groups, and plenty of weapons... But what NP is teaching these people is that they can protect themselves a lot better by knowing how to read the danger signals.”

Let me now introduce you to the “barangay captain” (local community leader) of Panyan, another village in Mindanao. Panyan is directly between two large military camps. These people live on the frontline of a war that has been going on for over 25 years. On March 9th, soldiers from both sides were inside the village boundary and within firing distance of each other. The entire village started packing their bags and getting ready to evacuate, expecting bloodshed at any moment.

But NP had been working in the village. Our team had already set up an Early Warning Early Response system like the one we’re setting up in Kolambugan. The NP team got a call from the Panyan barangay captain and within 30 minutes our team was in the village talking to commanders from both camps, and convincing the villagers not to leave their homes. The soldiers received instructions to withdraw.

“If not for NP’s presence, we would all have been displaced — once again,” the barangay captain said. These people have spent more time in displacement camps than in their own homes. But this time it was different, thanks to NP.

These are just two of the many stories I could tell you from my brief visit. And stories like these could be told in every country we work in — stories of lives being saved, children being rescued, displacement being prevented, violence being averted. Thank you for making all of this possible with your generous support.



# Meet Dmitry Medlev

## Regional Director of the South Caucasus Program



**W**hen we set out to find a dynamic, innovative leader to head up our new civilian protection program in the South Caucasus, we had high hopes. We were looking for someone who combined outstanding management expertise, broad technical competence in civilian protection, and a nuanced understanding of the dynamics in the region.

We're thrilled to introduce Dmitry Medlev, who exceeded our expectations, as the Regional Director of Nonviolent Peaceforce's South Caucasus program. Dmitry, a Russian national raised in Georgia, built his career in the former Soviet Union, serving a number of roles at peacebuilding and humanitarian agencies, largely in the former Soviet Union.

Prior to joining Nonviolent Peaceforce, he was Senior Advisor to International Alert in Kyrgyzstan, where he played a vital role in advancing the National Dialogue, a high-level process engaging a wide range of stakeholders. The process contributes to a creative and peaceful resolution of conflict issues in the country.

Dmitry has also served as Emergency Manager for the Danish Refugee Council in its response to the June 2010 inter-communal violence in Kyrgyzstan, and with the same organization in positions including Country Director in Azerbaijan, Program Manager in Abkhazia, Emergency Assistance Program Manager in



Sudan, and Head of the Liaison Office in Moscow. He worked as Regional Director for CIS of the International Union against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease, and with the UN World Food Program and World Vision International.

"I am delighted to join NP," Dmitry says, "because I will be in charge of a challenging task: to pioneer the methodology of unarmed civilian peacekeeping in the South Caucasus—in a region to which I feel a strong attachment through my previous personal and professional engagements. I feel that with NP I will be able to add value to the transformation of conflicts and help ordinary people affected by hostilities to feel more secure and safe."

Dmitry launched our South Caucasus program this month. The initial goals of the program are to increase the safety and capacity of civil society actors addressing human security threats, improve the day-to-day safety and security of communities affected by contentious boundaries, and strengthen early response and preventive action mechanisms.

His main focus in the next month is recruitment of international civilian protection staff and local support personnel. Dmitry is in the process of opening NP's administrative office in the Georgian capital, Tbilisi, and will lead establishment of field offices in the coming months. Please join us in welcoming Dmitry.

# Peacekeeping in Action

## Bringing Two Communities Together in South Sudan

By Tiffany Easthom, South Sudan Country Director

**V**iolence breaks out every day during the dry season in Greater Mundri, home of our first field site in South Sudan. Usually the violence is relatively contained and short-lived, as the conflicting Mvolo and Yirol West communities have a history of peaceful coexistence, including shared schooling, health care facilities, and intermarriages.

But 2011 was different. Fighting started abruptly on February 9 after a youth was killed while traveling through Mvolo. Youth from both sides moved along the borders and violently attacked communities on the other side.

In South Sudan, a country that has been at war for the past 50 years, violence is often the reflexive response to any type of conflict.

The violence this year was more brutal and further reaching than it had been since the end of Sudan's civil war in 2005. In just two months, 6,000 homes were burned down, 76,000 people were displaced, dozens of civilians including children were killed or injured, and hundreds of cattle were raided.

As the only civilian protection agency working in the area, Non-violent Peaceforce got involved in the early days of this conflict. We protected people affected by the fighting and supported the development of a peace agreement.

We were the first to find many of the civilians who were displaced when the first fighting broke out — groups of primarily women and

children who had been hiding in the bush without food or water for days. We linked humanitarian service providers with these displaced people.

Our teams on the ground gathered information, checked facts, analyzed the situation, reached out to local partners, and developed a strategy. The communication network in South Sudan is severely limited, so the team had to travel in person to the villages to gather information. The roads in South Sudan are atrocious, severely limiting access to communities; it can take 4 hours to travel 30 miles.

An essential piece of our work is developing relationships on both sides of the conflict. At the beginning of May, our teams learned that the chiefs from the conflicting communities — Mvolo and Yirol West — wanted to meet about the conflict. They had scheduled similar meetings before, but they always fell through because the chiefs were afraid to travel to each other's side of the border to meet.

Nonviolent Peaceforce coordinated with local organizations to arrange peace talks and accompanied chiefs and local leaders to meet. This was the first time since the start of the conflict in February that chiefs crossed the border from one side to the other.

The dialogue was remarkably successful. Peace and freedom of movement were officially declared between the two communities.





*Tiffany meets with chiefs*

Despite this progress, more dialogue was necessary. In order for the peace talks to be sustainable and effective, the chiefs of the other affected areas needed to participate and buy into the peace agreements.

Our teams organized and accompanied a convoy of four vehicles to carry more chiefs, elders, and youth to the second round of peace talks. The talks were emotional and intense. Chiefs on both sides expressed a strong desire to restore peace. As a result of the talks, peace and freedom of movement were officially declared between all communities along the border and displaced people were encouraged to return home.

Finally, we accompanied chiefs from Yirol West into Mvolo and monitored a meeting where all participating chiefs officially signed a peace agreement.

I immediately saw the effects of the peace agreement in the communities. Nurses returned to the hospital to resume their work. Displaced families safely returned home without the threat of further attacks. A businessman approached one of our peacekeepers to thank her personally. He had been forced to close his shop for months because of the conflict, but now has reopened it because peace has been established.

Honorable Simon Malual Deng, a member of parliament from the South Sudan Legislative Assembly, told us that what Nonviolent Peaceforce had accomplished – steps toward a sustainable peace – “was a miracle.”

This is just one example of the powerful, life-changing work Nonviolent Peaceforce is doing around the world. Peace and security take work, dedication, and time, but they are possible. Violence still breaks out throughout South Sudan, but these two communities have become more peaceful. As a result, we have saved lives and helped people feel safe in their communities. I am proud of Nonviolent Peaceforce’s role in making South Sudan a safer, more peaceful place.



# Diary of a Peacekeeper

## Healing and Security for Miracle

By Maria Helena Ariza

I was born and raised in Colombia, a country that has endured more than 50 years of armed conflict between the government and armed groups. Thousands have died and 3 million people have fled their homes. But like the majority of the urban middle class population, I never directly witnessed political violence.

I'm lucky for having felt safe and free. But I know that people in remote villages are vulnerable to terror and recruitment by armed groups. They are underserved by the government, deprived of education and other services, and forgotten by those who have the luxury of security.

I have made it my personal mission to overcome the indifference that leads to vulnerable people being ignored. I have built my career around protecting people threatened by violence.

Working for Nonviolent Peaceforce gives me the opportunity to be an agent of change in the South Sudan. Every day, my fellow peacekeepers and I strengthen relationships with locals, build their capacity to prevent violence, and provide protective accompaniment to people at risk of violence.

I recently had the privilege of meeting Miracle.\* She was kidnapped by the Lord's Resistance Army and forced to become a combatant and a "forced wife" of soldiers. Days before we met, she was reunited with her family. Like other returnees she faced the risk of re-abduction and being ousted — or even killed.



photo: David Tunguo

Miracle desperately needed psychosocial services and safe transportation to the Child Transit Center where she would receive them. Our peacekeeping team and a government social worker met with Miracle's family at their home and explained the services available for Miracle.

Miracle was deeply traumatized and unwilling to speak. Although she didn't talk or smile, she got into our car and waited for the adults to finish their conversation — a sign that she felt safe in our presence.

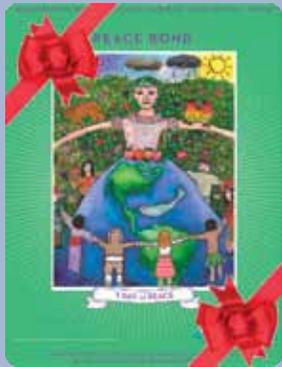
With Miracle in tow, we traveled for hours on one of the most dangerous roads in the region. We dropped Miracle off at the Child Transit Center and she began the long journey toward overcoming the effects of abduction, physical abuse, and sexual violence.

After Miracle spent a month in the transit center, the NP team accompanied her to her family's new home. As she adapts to her new, more secure life, we have follow-up visits with her, monitor her physical and emotional wellbeing, and address the security challenges she faces.

Stories like Miracle's demonstrate the vital role Nonviolent Peaceforce plays in remote areas. For me, it's personal. Visiting Miracle's village takes me back halfway around the world to Colombia. I can empathize with the vulnerable communities in isolated areas of my home country. As I travel dangerous roads to meet with Miracle, I know that I am overcoming the indifference that is pervasive among my countrymen. I am risking my safety and moving out of my comfort zone to stand up for people affected by violence. Each time I meet with Miracle, I defy indifference.

*Maria Helena Ariza (back row center in the photo) is a peacekeeper in South Sudan. She was born and raised in Colombia and has an M.A. in International Peace Studies from the University of Notre Dame.*

\* Name changed to protect client.



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