



## Diary of a Peacekeeper: *Responding Personally in Juba, South Sudan*

*By Brenda Floors, NP South Sudan Program Officer*



**T**he year opened with catastrophe in Jonglei State, South Sudan. Attacks beginning in late December and lasting until early January killed an estimated 3,000 civilians, displaced more than 120,000 and resulted in abductions, injuries and widespread destruction of property. This was one in a long cycle of attacks and revenge attacks between three tribes: the Murle, who were mostly targeted in these particular attacks, the Dinka and the Lou-Nuer. The most shocking thing about this outbreak of violence was that attackers from all sides admitted to actively targeting women and children. Throughout January, attacks and counter attacks continued in each of the tribal areas, resulting in further interruptions to humanitarian services and causing concern for the stability of the new country.

In early January, when victims began to be airlifted from Jonglei to Juba Teaching Hospital, NP's Juba field team suspended all other activities, taking 12 hour shifts, offering direct protection against possible tribal flare-ups in the hospital.

Besides de-escalating tensions and providing protective support—especially for unaccompanied children—the NP team acted as the focal crisis response agency and helped register victims who needed family tracing. Many patients were unable to ask for help because of be-

ing traumatized, because of the severity of their wounds or because they were children. As the only ongoing INGO presence in the hospital, NP actively advocated for improved medical attention, both with the hospital staff and in high-level meetings with government officials and other INGOs. These efforts lead to UNICEF and the Ministry of Social Development distributing blankets, soap, diapers and children's clothing.

Working 24/7 put a severe strain on human resources. The team had to reach out to another field site where they were able to “borrow” one team member who joined them in their courageous efforts at Juba Hospital, an extremely emotionally and physically stressful activity for all.

Juba Team leader Kudzanai Mativitira described the experience as “terrible.” Babies with gunshot and machete wounds, women who had their breasts shot off, patients suffering from gangrene or withering away while waiting for treatment. There was an ever-present smell of rotting flesh. Many victims lost their limbs to amputation. The hospital team was completely understaffed and unprepared for the influx of patients. In the Murle ward, there were only ten beds; dozens of patients were forced to lie on the floor. Some had to stay outside.

Two patients stood out among the many tragedies. Peter was nine months old when he arrived from the town

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of Pibor, where he was found still breastfeeding from his dead mother. He was dehydrated with stab wounds on his body and a machete wound to his skull.

Twelve-month old Paul was found in the village of Likongule, clutching onto his mother who had died from gunshots. A machete blow to the top of this skull was deep enough to expose his brain.

The NP Juba team, including NP's South Sudan Country Director, took up the cause personally, bathing and feeding both children while taking care of their wounds. The team monitored their physical health, advocated for medical treatment, and helped trace any surviving relatives. Both babies were officially discharged on February 7 but remained in the hospital since neither family had yet been found.

The team continued their efforts at the hospital for six weeks. On the 25th of February, three flights were made available to transport people back to Jonglei State. The NP Juba team, together with a representative from the Ministry of Social Development and a local child protection organization, were requested to offer protective accompaniment to the 51 patients set to return home. Among the group were Peter and Paul.

After a 1½ hour flight, the planes were welcomed at the Pibor airstrip by several government officials and representatives from a number of INGOs such as UNICEF, UNHCR, Save the Children, Med-air and Solidarity. The returning patients were most interested in being reunited with their relatives and these

encounters were highly emotional. Many tears were shed over on seeing surviving loved ones, and many more on learning that others had not survived. The conditions in and around Pibor were horrible. Entire villages had been burned down. The very few homes left were now shared by a great number of people who had nowhere else to go.

Having gotten to know these people so well and having heard all their horrific stories about the fighting, Kudzanai explained, "It was painful to see that there was nothing more we could do for them. We felt like we were a part of them and were very concerned with their safety." They had lost their homes, their cattle, their livelihood and their families, leaving them all traumatized. Somehow

they would have to rebuild, though it was obvious they did not feel the violence had ended and still feared for their lives. This is what made the return to Jonglei State so hard to bear.

*An after note:*

*After arriving in Pibor, Peter and Paul were assigned to a temporary caregiver. Within one week of their return, Peter's uncle and sister and Paul's father were found. Now reunited with their families, they are in good health.*

*About 30 victims of the December-January attacks remain in the Juba hospital. NP's Juba staff continues to conduct regular monitoring visits and act as interlocutors to ensure they are getting the treatment they need.*



# Training for Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping

## A Strategy for Reducing Conflict and Preventing Violence Through Engagement With the Community

By Jimmy Okumu, Former NP Team Leader, Greater Mundri, Western Equatoria State, Republic of South Sudan

### Part One of Two

**T**he people of Greater Mundri counties (Mundri East, Mundri West and Mvolo) in Western Equatoria State are basically farmers. In neighboring Central Equatoria and Lake State the people are predominantly pastoralists. There has been tension between them historically, with conflicts arising from cattle keepers grazing on farmers' land.

In July, 2010, conflict arose over cattle raided from the Moro people in Mundari East, Kediba County, by some Mundari people of Terekeka, in Central Equatoria. Nonviolent Peaceforce had learned that such disputes sometimes were settled by different tribal leaders and, in case of further escalation, the national government would step in. In this case, NP, giving primacy to local actors, encouraged a search for nonviolent solutions to the conflict that later proved vital for regaining peaceful co-existence.

A similar conflict occurred between the Jur of Mvolo and the Dinka of Yirol West in Lake State, lasting several months in 2011. NP, together with the Mundri Relief and Development Association (MRDA), was able to organize several forums for dialogue among state level government, local government and at the community level involving the chiefs and community administrators. The result was peace throughout those communities.



*Mundari youth with cattle*

Some of my colleagues have been asking me “How is it possible to have such successful unarmed civilian interventions in the midst of violence?” I have always told them that facilitating dialogues, peace building and promoting civilian violence reduction is risky by its very nature. It can upset the balance of power and raise expectations unmanageably. Living up to the principle of nonpartisanship blended with trust and confidence building is paramount to Nonviolent Peaceforce’s work with the communities.

The second thing I have told them is that it is detailed conflict analysis that gives the necessary overview of the context. Detailed conflict analysis seemed to some a remote endeavor; having reasonable emotions and good personal experiences are enough to help in the intervention. Like all social phenomena, though, conflicts like these tend to be extremely complicated. Our experience shows that careful understanding of the particular conflict setting is crucial for success.

My work in the Greater Mundri area has convinced me. It is thorough understanding of the context that has enabled us to lay out proper strategies for intervention. By exploring specific conflict related issues in each county independently, the NP team was able to understand the background of each conflict, identify the actors involved, and understand their perspective and their relations to each other.

We have found that engaging civilians directly to find solutions to their problems has a sustainable impact on the communities. We see that communities already have many interactive systems that create stability. Sometimes our work is to help people realize what they already have and be more proactive about it. In other cases we help establish early warning, early response systems so that local people quickly identify and communicate flash points. The local actors are well situated to implement this. Hence provision

of support to civil society leaders in organizing dialogues for promotion of strategic violence prevention includes problem-solving, social cohesion, peace building and reconciliation.

*In the next issue, Jimmy writes about specific community trainings in Greater Mundri—trainings employing various nonviolent strategies that open political, social and religious space needed for communities to become protagonists in conflict transformation.*



*Jimmy Okumu with NP Senior Advisor Ann Frisch*

*The inauguration ceremony of the WPT formed in Terkeka County, together with NP Juba team's leader Kudzanai Mativira*



## Women Taking the Lead in South Sudan

Nonviolent Peaceforce is pioneering the formation of Women Peacekeeping Teams (WPTs) in South Sudan. These are teams of local women who monitor incidents of conflict-related Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and help create safe spaces for women to address these in their local communities. There are between 10 and 25 women on each team and the first one was set up by NP in November 2011 in Juba. There are now five WPTs covering two districts in Central Equatoria State and three districts in Western Equatoria State. As we demonstrate the effectiveness of this model, there will hopefully be many more WPTs to come!

*Photo: Philip Giana*

# Building Momentum

## For Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping

By Mel Duncan, Director of Advocacy and Outreach



*Tiffany Easthom speaks at a High-level Briefing at the UN*

**U**narmed Civilian Peacekeeping (UCP) had its highest level of exposure last March when an NP team presented our work at nine events over a nine day period in New York and Washington DC. Starting with a luncheon hosted by World Vision for nongovernmental organizations working at the UN and culminating with a High-level Briefing at the UN, hundreds of people learned that UCP provides a serious policy option for protecting threatened civilians and preventing violence. This event marked the first time UCP has received this level of attention.

Peace Brigades International joined us for presentations to the US Institute of Peace and the US House of Representatives, providing a concrete example of how all practitioners need to work together to advance the field. Host of the Congressional Briefing, Representative Keith Ellison noted how easy it is for Congress to come up with resources to wage wars while they seem to be unaware of nonviolent peacekeeping. He pledged to bring Congressional leaders together to discuss how the US can join other governments in supporting UCP.

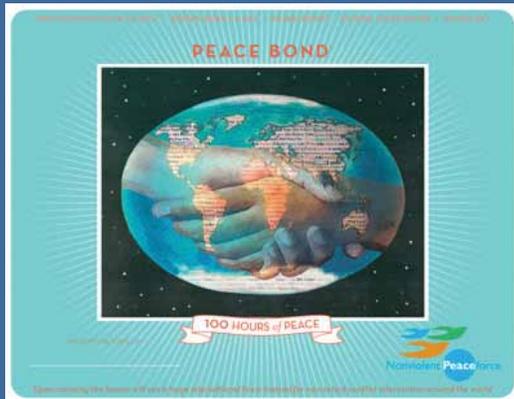
The highlight of the tour was the High-level Briefing at the UN. Hosted by the UN missions from the Philippines, Belgium, Benin and Costa Rica, this event marked the first time UCP has received this level of attention—a breakthrough event for Nonviolent Peaceforce. Representatives from 58 missions to the UN as well as UN entities and NGOs heard Rafael Seguis, the Undersecretary of the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs affirm the strong contribution civil society can play in protecting civilians amid violent conflict. Citing the choice of NP by both the government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front as

the only international NGO to be part of the official agreement on Civilian Protection, Undersecretary Seguis stated, “Both parties were already aware of Nonviolent Peaceforce’s presence in the very ‘hotspot’ areas of Mindanao...its track record on the ground with respect to conflict prevention activities and the good relations it continues to maintain with local stakeholders.”

Tiffany Easthom, NP’s South Sudan Country Director, told the crowd that, “Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping is an entirely appropriate response to violent conflicts in many more countries in many more situations and needs to be scaled up.”

At the session’s end, Ambassador Jan Grauls from Belgium observed that there had been a lot of convergence at the briefing and that UCP linked to a number of other debates at the UN. “The interest, energy and motivation are high to pursue this discussion,” he said.

We are now vigorously pursuing the next steps of building a strong base at the UN for UCP. Watch this space for progress. Someday soon, Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping will be a readily available and oft used resource to protect civilians and support them in preventing further violence. The momentum builds.



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