

Field Notes

Fall 2013



*transforming the
world's response
to conflict*

Head Office
Rue Belliard 205
1040 Brussels, BELGIUM
+32.2.648.0076

US Office
425 Oak Grove St.
Minneapolis, MN 55409
1.612.871.0005

Building Real Peace

by Robert Koehler

“Imagine if we sent 5,000 well-trained nonviolent peacekeepers from throughout the world to protect civilians and work with local civil society in building the peace.

Indeed, imagine if we knew that doing this was an option.”

Mel Duncan, cofounder of Nonviolent Peaceforce, was talking about Syria, the country we almost bombed and maybe still will. In lieu of tossing godlike lightning bolts at Bashar al-Assad, “The CIA has begun delivering weapons to rebels in Syria, ending months of delay in lethal aid that had been promised by the Obama administration,” the Washington Post reported last week.

“The shipments began streaming into the country over the past two weeks, along with separate deliveries by the State Department of vehicles and other gear -- a flow of material that marks a major escalation of the U.S. role in Syria’s civil war.”

So our war with Syria is only partially averted, apparently. It plunges back into something covert, mini-



Syrian refugees

mally publicized, silently lethal, silently insane: our normal relationship with so much of the world. “... the efforts have lagged because of the logistical challenges involved in delivering equipment in a war zone and officials’ fears that any assistance could wind up in the hands of jihadists.”

The aim of peacebuilding is peace, not strategic advantage. It’s not an “international chess game” or any other sort of game. It’s basic humanity. With an extraordinarily small commitment of money -- and a large commitment of courage -- we could have peace and stability on this planet in relatively short order.

The main problem is that peacebuilding, at least in the volatile, resource-rich, up-for-grabs regions of the world, is also a complete irrelevance to most of the world’s elite political and corporate players, who are interested mainly in gaming the situation for strategic advantage -- our children and our future be damned. I doubt we have any chance of moving out of this spiral of global violence until we figure out how to bypass them, that is to say, until we stop being spectators.

In the wake of the aborted U.S. missile assault on Syria, I heard encouraging talk about “the other superpower” -- the ordinary people of the world, tired of war, organizing for peace. The late Dr. Robert Muller, former assistant secretary general of the United Nations, used that term in 2003 to describe the millions of people around the planet who took to the streets to

continued, p. 2

continued from p. 1

protest the invasion of Iraq. The idea was: Now they're back, demanding a non-military solution in Syria.

I believe there is another superpower out there, but it has to do better than show up once a decade to protest a looming war, then disappear when the headlines fade. This leads me back to my conversation the other day with Mel Duncan, whose U.N.-sanctioned NGO has been doing fieldwork in troubled regions of the world -- such places as South Sudan, the Philippines, Myanmar and Sri Lanka -- for the last 10 years.

The work is intense, culturally engaged, disciplined and professional. Field workers, who receive serious training before they are placed, build trust with every side in local conflict situations. They have succeeded in defusing violent tribal feuds and establishing weapon-free zones -- always the long, slow, hard way, from the ground up, by working with local peacemakers and convincing all parties that their best interests are served by cooperation. This isn't easy, but it's doable.

"Peace can never be achieved using a one-size fits-all model, and effective, long-term projects that last are those that are created by the communities themselves," concludes a Nonviolent Peaceforce paper

on the establishment, by widespread mutual agreement, of a weapon-free zone in the town of Yirol, South Sudan.

Compare this slow, painstaking work with the U.S. government's approach: When missiles are too politically awkward to use, it ships weapons and hopes they remain in the hands of our alleged allies among the rebels, which, of course, will never happen. All it's doing is fueling the violence in yet one more country it fails to understand. Yet there's no discussion in the mainstream media about alternative courses of action; and those who support "doing something" generally can't imagine any form of intervention except military. This is a failure of imagination of enormous proportions.



young Syrian combatant

The good news is that not everyone among the "other superpower" is content being a spectator. "We are advancing our exploration of a peacekeeping project in Syria," Duncan told me.

A group of Nonviolent Peaceforce members visited the country in May. On their return, Duncan wrote in MinnPost: "At this very moment, courageous Syrian women and men are working for a peaceful settlement. They are mostly ignored by the world. Most of them are opposed to the government. Some lean toward the regime. They are doing peacebuilding and reconciliation work. They are establishing local cease-fire zones. While differing in viewpoints, they share a commitment to a peaceful, pluralistic and democratic Syria."

If an international team of trained peacemakers could assist the locals and, at the same time, give their efforts global credibility and a place at the negotiating table -- my God, give women a place at the table -- the gangbangers wouldn't have it all their way. As another Nonviolent Peaceforce paper notes: "... in many cases, belligerent parties are not necessarily legitimate representatives of their societies."

Duncan told me that it costs his organization about \$50,000 a year to keep one peacekeeper in a given country. Compare this to the million dollars per year it costs the United States for each soldier in Afghanistan, or the billion dollars per month that Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, estimated it would cost to maintain a full-scale military operation in Syria of the sort originally planned.

"We're the fiscal conservatives in this equation," Duncan said. "We're not your big-spending militarists."

The Post article about weapons delivery notes that the U.S. has committed itself to "a \$250 million effort to support moderate factions of the Syrian opposition" -- a mere trickle of spare change, in Defense spending terms. Yet that's what it would cost to sustain Duncan's vision of sending 5,000 trained peacekeepers to Syria for a year.

This sounds like the next thing we, "the other superpower," should demand. We stopped a war, or at least drove it out of the headlines and back into the shadows. Now let's turn our effort toward building real peace.

reprinted with permission from Robert Koehler Blog

International Civilian Peacekeeper of the Year



Robert Rivers (right) with NP staff

Unarmed civilian peacekeeping is not an easy job. It takes dedicated and courageous people to do the job of an international civilian peacekeeper. The International Governing Council’s co-chair, Simonetta Costanzo Pittalunga, is thrilled to name Robert J. Rivers as the International Civilian Peacekeeper of the Year. The award is given for outstanding service in the practical application of unarmed civilian peacekeeping (UCP).

Robert’s introduction to Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) was when he was invited to a training, NP was having in Romania. It was here that he saw how NP could strengthen their unarmed civilian peacekeepers for the work they were doing in the field. After his work with NP in Romania he went to Sri Lanka with NP. Robert worked for NP in Sri Lanka for a year to get a better understanding of the work being done in the field and to help better prepare the unarmed civilian peacekeepers for the work they have to do.

He has been a global trainer for NP since 2010. He has trained over 2000 people from over 80 countries to carry out unarmed civilian peacekeeping in nine different conflict zones around the world. Robert said his favorite part as a global trainer for NP is:

“Having the chance to connect—on an ongoing basis—with the many wonderful people NP has in the field. On a daily basis, they do incredibly difficult work in some of the most challenging places on the planet. Until you can feel the reality of their work, it is hard to understand how much they sacrifice to live alongside conflict-affected people and work with them to create better security for all people. The choice to engage proactively on conflict like this is honorable and I feel very lucky to be a part of their lives and the evolving process of unarmed civilian peacekeeping. Returning to some of NP’s projects year after year and seeing how many of the staff grow and how much of a positive impact they are having is deeply meaningful. “

We are thankful for the work Robert does for NP and are excited to present him with the International Civilian Peacekeeper of the Year Award.

Doris Mariani, Executive Director

Corinne Youngberg, Development and Communications Associate, sat down recently with the new Executive Director of Nonviolent Peaceforce, Doris Mariani, to talk about how she came to NP, and what she sees for the future.

Corinne: Tell us about your path to Nonviolent Peaceforce.

Doris: I grew up in Estonia, where I was educated as an economist. My first job was as an economic correspondent for Radio Free Europe. When the Berlin Wall came down in 1989, I found myself looking at a whole different world! I then joined International Executive Service Corps for 10 years, covering economic development across Eastern Europe and the former Soviet countries.

After the 9/11 attacks in the United States, I switched from economics to national and international security. I worked with people from Africa, Europe, and the United States, looking at how security systems, civil society, rule of law and economic development all have to work together. You can't have development without peace, or peace without development. My professional journey is a little bit like a pyramid upside down – I started with economic development, worked through security and now at NP I focus on peace. Peace is the prerequisite.

Corinne: What do you see on the horizon, for NP's second decade?

Doris: Growth and expansion. There are so many places in the world where we are needed. As an organization, we need to raise our profile to gain supporters. In addition, we will continue to champion the concept of unarmed civilian peacekeeping so that other organizations will practice it.

One area that I am looking into is how we could better employ technology. An example would be the Ushahidi Open-source Platform. It was developed to measure the outbreak of violence in the 2008 Kenyan elections, and has been used very successfully since then in every crisis and disaster. This platform is very well-suited to NP's early-warning, early-response work and to enhancing our field operations. It can also help us raise our profile with new donors.



Doris (center), Lisa Fuller and Mel Duncan

Two areas where we can build on our successful work are with peace and security initiatives engaging women and youth. Our work in South Sudan with groups of women can be expanded in many places. Regarding youth, it's essential for durable change to encourage youth to be our active partners in peacekeeping work.

We have developed some first class training courses which we can expand to both promote the concept of unarmed civilian peacekeeping and to generate revenue. Just as an example, there are 80 armed peacekeeping training centers and other organizations with whom we could explore partnerships. Just today I met with UNITAR, United Nations Institute for Training and Research which is very interested in collaborating with NP to advance the concept of unarmed civilian peacekeeping. As an economist, I like numbers that address economic impact and return on investment. The Institute of Peace and Economics in New York publishes the Global Peace Index. Now, for the first time, it measures the economic impact of violence containment. What they have found is that it costs the world 9.46 trillion dollars, or 11% of the global GDP. This figure is 75 times the size of official development assistance which in 2012 amounted to 125.6 billion. Compared to war, peace is cheap!

In closing, I want to say that I am thrilled to be with NP, leading this amazing organization into its second decade. We would not be here today without our loyal supporters and friends – THANK YOU.

I would invite our readers to share with us their thoughts about all of this. They most likely will have ideas that we have not even thought about, and need to hear.

Diary of a Peacekeeper

by Hannah Hyati, Child Protection Officer,
Juba, South Sudan

Child Protection Officer Hannah Hyati, left



I'm Hannah Hayati James from Mundri West County in Western Equatoria State, South Sudan. I am 28 years old and South Sudanese, born in a country that endured 21 years of armed conflict between the government of Sudan and the people of southern Sudan. Millions of people lost their lives and property, over 3.5 million fled to other countries such as Kenya, Uganda, Australia and the USA. Those who remained in remote areas were vulnerable, being recruited as soldiers and having heavy labor imposed on them. During the war, most of the southerners were underserved by the Sudanese government in areas such as education, health and infrastructure.

I was lucky; my family relocated to Uganda and I was able to study and later develop my career in peace building and conflict resolution. Through my experiences with NP I was able to reach conflict zones and bring the parties together to discuss their differences using nonviolent approaches or tactics, and encouraging dialogue between communities in conflict.

Work with NP as a peacekeeper and Child Protection Officer gives me the opportunity to be an agent of change in my country and also gives me the opportunity of strengthening my relationships with locals, building their capacity to prevent violence using non-violent tactics and providing protective presence and accompaniment to unaccompanied minors and separated children at risk.

I recently had the privilege to meet Pitia Emmanuel, an 11-year-old boy who was abducted in 2011 about 200 meters away from

his home in Central Equatoria by members of another tribe from the neighboring state of Jonglei. He later escaped to the nearby town and was rescued and taken to the commissioner of the county. Here he was referred to NP via UNICEF and Save the children.

Informed by UNICEF Juba, we went to his village, met with his parents and completed forms for the formal Family Tracing and Reintegration (FTR) process. The information was confirmed by UNICEF and Save the Children, and Pitia was flown from Bor to Juba in a UNMISS Helicopter. NP together with Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) went to the airport to receive him.

It was November 2012 when we traveled with Pitia, together with the Director for Child Welfare from MoSD, for about two and a half hours outside Juba to reunify him with his parents. When we arrived some rituals were performed, and a goat was slaughtered for Pitia to walk over, which traditionally signifies a sign of peace among his community. Pitia couldn't communicate immediately because it was a bit of a shock and surprise for him to be amidst his parents. I felt happy and encouraged with the work I am doing with NP on seeing the emotional reunification.

I feel so embarrassed and de-motivated when I think of the past, how children were being abducted and tortured during Sudan's 21 years of war. NP's mandate with its grass roots approach gives me courage to reach remote areas and help my people of South Sudan with peace-building and conflict resolution, and child protection and awareness activities.

Your Generosity Helps in Many Ways!

For example:

\$/€ 25: Sends two national peacekeepers to patrol an insecure neighborhood on foot

\$/€ 75: Supplies vital uniforms to a peacekeeper and interpreter

\$/€ 100: Deploys a team of peacekeepers to a threatened village for an afternoon

\$/€ 250: Allows two peacekeepers to help a vulnerable person access local police

Donate today

Go online to:

www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/supportpeace
or call 612.871.0005 x12



425 Oak Grove Street
Minneapolis, MN 55403

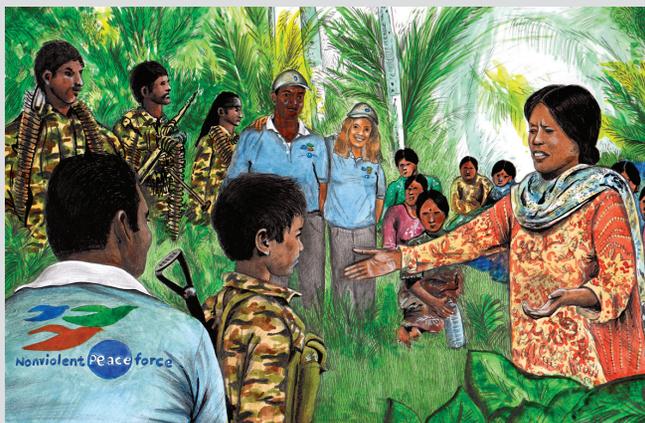
nonviolentpeaceforce.org
Phone: (612) 871-0005

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT #3675
TWIN CITIES MN

Field
Notes

Fall 2013

Give the
This holiday season,
Gift of
invest in peacebonds
Peace!



Peace Bonds represent the work our peacekeepers accomplish around the world everyday. When you buy a Peace Bond you are supporting and investing in an alternative to violent conflict. Your Peace Bond purchase means our unarmed civilian peacekeepers can protect civilians in areas of conflict, prevent violence, and promote peace wherever they are! Invest in peace today!

Browse the designs and buy online at: www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/buypeacebonds
or call 612.871.0005 x 232