

Field Notes

June 2014 (Second Quarter)



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The Humanitarian Crisis in South Sudan

by Amy Hansen, Nonviolent Peaceforce Communications and Development Associate

The humanitarian crisis in South Sudan continues to escalate after seven months of renewed civil war. Tiffany Easthom, Nonviolent Peaceforce's (NP) country director, is directing our team of 125 peacekeepers in a country on a collision course with devastating famine. All of which while, Tiffany notes, 1.3 million people have been displaced from their homes, cholera has broken out and pockets of severe malnutrition are emerging. With the onset of the rainy season, these problems will intensify and reaching displaced people becomes all the more difficult - with areas being only accessible by foot or boat.

Our teams are seeing starvation-caused deaths as militias block the transport of food. "In Southern Unity state our mobile protection team interviewed a butcher who is employing a group of separated/unaccompanied children who are there without food. They do small jobs for him and he

pays them in (cattle) blood which is what they are surviving on," Easthom reports.

Our team's observations illustrate UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's warning to the Security Council that "if the conflict continues, half of South Sudan's 12 million people will either be displaced internally, refugees abroad, starving or dead by the year's end." He also reported that five million more people needed humanitarian assistance. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has warned that 50,000 children are at severe risk of dying of malnutrition.

This is an excruciating time for the country and its people. While we do not have the power to stop these crimes against humanity, we can make a difference one life at a time. Take for instance, the attack in Bor on the UN base in South Sudan on April 17th. Derek Oakley and Andre Gutierrez, two NP peacekeepers, provided direct protection

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The Protection of Civilians site in Bor, where 5,000 internally displaced people are sheltered. A fire broke out destroying makeshift homes and the few belongings people had left.

While some more armed UN peacekeepers with a robust protection mandate could help in the short term, peace will not come out of the barrel of a gun. It is time to try out the new modality of unarmed civilian peacekeeping that is already working in parts of South Sudan.

Mukesh Kapila

Here at the NP protection tent, unaccompanied/ separated children are registered, alternative and safe care is organized, adult relatives are traced and families are reunited.

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for 14 civilians, women and children, with whom they took shelter in a mud hut. They engaged armed actors who approached them on three occasions and stayed with the civilians while clarifying their roles as humanitarian workers. Their nonviolent training focused on a combination of strategies dealing with violent conflict and ethnic tensions, allowing them to effectively save the lives of civilians.

On May 6th, NP launched a mobile response team in South Sudan, to reach displaced people in areas accessible only by boat or foot. Accompanying the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the team provided protection during the distribution of aid, identified gaps in protection for 1504 displaced families, and established important links with religious leaders in the area. These leaders then requested NP's support for ecumenical trainings on nonviolent conflict resolution and unarmed civilian peacekeeping.

The work of the women's peacekeeping teams has also become more important than ever, and the women have formed even more teams within the displacement camps. The women's teams are engaging in everything from advocacy to activism to direct humanitarian services. These teams are emerging as partner leadership structures to the traditionally male systems. They are also calling for an end to the hostilities, the protection of civilians and the participation of women in all levels of the peace process.

We must also remember that NP was founded to protect civilians and reduce violence in dire situations such as this. In 2008, Founder Mel Duncan remembers being up to his knees in mud as hundreds of people streamed into a village



Women and children walk tens to upwards of 100 kilometers to reach the relative safety of the UN base in Bentiu, Unity State.

square. This was during an outbreak of war in Mindanao, the Philippines and Mel recalls asking himself "what can we do here?" Though the situation was calamitous, NP stuck to its mission. Many groups and people came together and a ceasefire was called. Now violence has all but stopped and a comprehensive peace agreement is in place. So, while there is a difficult road ahead, we must not lose hope for South Sudan.

We can also be grateful for the \$600 million which was pledged in humanitarian aid at a recent donor conference in Oslo. CEO Doris Mariani, Mukesh Kapila, an NP Senior Advisor, and Tiffany Easthom, panelist on the Protection of Civilians panel, all attended this conference hosted by the United Nations (UN) and the government of Norway.

While Tiffany says the aid is most welcome for the UN and non-governmental organizations to scale up operations, it is not a solution to a political situation. "We continue to call upon the conflict parties to bring a rapid end to the violence and to make every effort to reach a political solution, putting the safety, security, and dignity of the people of South Sudan above all other concerns." Mukesh Kapila most powerfully wrote; "While some more armed UN peacekeepers with a robust protection mandate could help in the short term, peace will not come out of the barrel of a gun. It is time to try out the new modality of unarmed civilian peacekeeping that is already working in parts of South Sudan."



Building Competence for Peacemaking

An interview with Paul Fraleigh, Nonviolent Peaceforce's Senior Program Manager in Myanmar

In the Philippines, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the government of the Philippines recently signed a final peace agreement. Having spent two and a half years in the Philippines and now working as Nonviolent Peaceforce's Senior Program Manager in Myanmar, what do you see as the major difference between the processes?

Paul: First, it is worthy to point out that the final signing of the peace agreement in the Philippines happened after 17 years of difficult negotiations marked by periods of sustained violence. In those 17 years, the government and the MILF learned a great deal about the peace process. When working with both parties, their level of competence and expertise in speaking about the peace process is striking. It should be noted that the level of peace process expertise the MILF possesses was born out of hard-learned lessons including two periods of all-out war, hundreds of thousands of civilian displacements, and scores dead.

The process in Myanmar, on the other hand, is in its infancy. All parties in the conflicts are undergoing a very steep learning curve in basics of peacemaking. In my six months here alone, I have witnessed a marked increase in the competency of the parties and in particular with some of the ethnic armed group representatives.

You mentioned "conflicts" in its plural form when speaking about Myanmar. Can you speak to this?

Paul: Yes, going back to the Philippines comparison: NP was engaged in the peace process between the government and only one non-state armed group (the MILF). The government here in Myanmar is negotiating with no less than 16 armed groups in one process. Furthermore, the estimated number of armed MILF soldiers is 18,000; in Myanmar there are closer to 100,000 non-state armed actors. Those 16 armed groups are trying to

negotiate with one voice. Positions within various ethnic armed groups differ and further complications arise with differing positions amongst the 16 different groups. It is a very complicated process, which also makes it fascinating.

What exactly are they negotiating?

Paul: At this point, political dialogue has not even begun. The parties are currently negotiating a nationwide ceasefire agreement. Although there are many bilateral ceasefires between the various armed groups and the government, there is not one nationwide ceasefire involving all the armed groups. If a nationwide ceasefire can be agreed upon, it is envisaged that this will stipulate a timeline leading directly to political dialogue. The ethnic armed groups are adamant about this -- they want guarantees. There is little trust between the parties.

There have been a lot of ceasefires between the government and various ethnic armed groups in the past. How will this ceasefire differ?

Paul: The nationwide ceasefire currently being negotiated will differ a fair deal in comparison to previous ceasefires. As mentioned earlier, it will contain guarantees leading to political negotiations. This can allow a long-term political solution to be struck between the government, the ethnic



Paul Fraleigh at Civilian Ceasefire Monitor Training in Chin State, May 2013

armed groups and democratic parties within Myanmar. The previous ceasefires merely froze the armed hostilities as a short-term military solution. The signing of the nationwide ceasefire will represent only a first step in a broader peace process. It is not an end in and of itself, but is meant to create space for political dialogue.



Paul in South Sudan. Paul has worked with Nonviolent Peaceforce in the Philippines and is now situated in Myanmar.

How does NP fit into all this?

Paul: We are currently assisting local civil society in setting up civilian ceasefire monitoring mechanisms. Previous ceasefires were not monitored and they also did nothing more than essentially freeze the fighting. The monitoring of ceasefires, presently, will help to ensure that the space created by the signing of the ceasefire is maintained. This space is where political negotiations will take place. Simply put, if the parties are shooting at one another on the ground (a situation that has horrible consequences for civilians living in the area), there would not be an atmosphere conducive to fruitful negotiations. Of course, concessions will have to be made by both parties.

Specifically we are at present setting up mechanisms with a local partner, the Shalom Foundation, in both Chin and Mon states. We will have some 120 monitors, 60 per state, active at the village level where violence is most likely to occur. As there is not yet a nationwide ceasefire, they will be monitoring on the basis of the bilateral ceasefires. This includes the various ethnic armed groups and the

government.

Why not wait for the nationwide ceasefire to be signed to set up ceasefire monitoring mechanisms?

Paul: Peace must be proactively pursued. In the eventuality that no nationwide ceasefire is signed, civil society will still be able to monitor violence and ceasefire-related civilian protection issues. Having an active and informed civil society operating at the grassroots level will contribute to an environment conducive to a process in which a just and lasting peace might be negotiated. This will also ensure communities' interests and views are taken on board. This increases dialogue between civil society, communities and their governments making up key elements in Myanmar's transition.

How is that going?

Paul: It's not without its challenges. For example, in the Philippines the international third parties were invited to monitor the ceasefires. Here in Myanmar the military is very wary of having any third party internationals on the ground monitoring. This arguably makes civil society organization comparatively weak.

Where does that leave NP?

Paul: There is still a lot of room to operate and a lot of space to be created in which local civil society can confidently enter.

However, we need to be sensitive to the local dynamics and move strategically. At this point, we are acting as technical advisors to local entities or wanting to get into monitoring of ceasefires. Civilian ceasefire monitoring can be seen as a vehicle through which the peace process might gain legitimacy. This is done through participation at the grassroots level. Communities can see, interact with and benefit from it. For peace to be robust, it must be inclusive. It is envisaged that the current project's locally-led civilian initiatives will compliment the top-down peacemaking initiatives, which emanate from the government and the ethnic armed groups

Furthermore, there is an abundance of civilian protection-related issues associated with armed conflict that need support, regardless of any ceasefire(s). This is the bread and butter of Nonviolent Peaceforce.

Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping in the Philippines: A Great Success

Everyone at Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP), including our supporters, can be very proud of how effectively the organization has implemented unarmed civilian peacekeeping in the Philippines. You are likely aware that NP began working in Mindanao, the Philippines, in 2007, with the original focus specifically being on civilian protection and human rights issues using proactive and nonviolent methods. Because of this work the team was invited in 2009 to be a member of an official national mechanism to monitor the ceasefire agreement between the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

As a member of the “Civilian Protection Component” (CPC) of the International Monitoring Team (IMT), NP was tasked with providing safety and security of non-combatants as well as ensuring that

parties of the conflict respect key protocols signed under the Ceasefire Framework Agreement.

Recently, Canan Gündüz and Raul Torralba, from mediatEUR and Initiatives for International Dialogue respectively, conducted a study on the team’s effectiveness as a part of this structure. This evaluation was based on findings from a field evaluation in March-April 2014, a desk review of

past evaluations, and program documentation. This external evaluation successfully demonstrated that unarmed civilian peacekeeping is a relevant methodology in addressing grassroots-level security concerns through third party monitors on the ground and engaging higher level peace process mechanisms [1].

Interestingly, findings regarding effectiveness stated “Those community representatives sampled for the evaluation have confirmed that they feel safer as a result of NP’s presence and role as part of the

CPC. They understand that passing information on to NP means it can reach ‘higher echelons’ of decision-making, which on their own they are not able to reach” [1].

Another marker of effectiveness was that “armed actors on both sides confirm that the presence of a third party, including NP, ‘watching over them’ has served to temper their behavior” [1]. Gündüz and Torralba note that NP’s strategy to make international and national staff highly visible (via prominently displayed logos, IDs, uniform...) is relevant in situations where outside intervention and presence of international staff are seen as positive.

The evaluators observe, “as part of CPC, NP demonstrably contributed to the strength of the IMT mechanism overall, including its information gathering capacity, its field-level visibility, and by extension, its legitimacy in the eyes of stakeholders” [1]. They also conclude that with this mechanism there have been zero incidents since 2012 in regards to the peace process and ceasefire agreement between the GPH and MILF. Very notably the evaluation states, “Perhaps a more intangible and indirect, but in our view significant, impact is the innovation in international third party peace process support that the IMT-CPC represents, and to which NP has contributed” [1].

Finally, the evaluators find NP to be over-modest in claiming impacts and state a need to scale up national and global development, promotion, and implementation of unarmed civilian peacekeeping. While NP has plans to move into supporting new areas of peace building processes in the Philippines, the evaluation’s conclusion is that the NP Philippines program needs to lay out a strategy to support the transition to a new Bangsamoro state in 2016 [1].

[1]. Gündüz, Canan and Raul Torralba. 2014. *Evaluation of the Nonviolent Peaceforce Project with the Civilian Protection Component of the International Monitoring Team in Mindanao, Philippines*. MediatEUR and Initiatives for International Dialogue: <http://www.themediateur.eu/resources/publications/item/373-np-philippines-report>



Evaluator Canan Gunduz (left) and Dhatx Ampilan (center) from Magungaya Mindanao Inc, a Nonviolent Peaceforce partner organization, during a field visit in Maguindanao.

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Meet Our Donors

Nonviolent Peaceforce is a global community of people who believe in nonviolent solutions to the world's conflicts. Our supporters come from countries all around the world and have a genuine concern for the flourishing of all of humanity. To help you get to know each other, in each Field Notes we will feature one of our supporters whose personal commitment to peace and protecting others inspires us and we hope you will be inspired too.

Ken and Barbara Ford first learned of Nonviolent Peaceforce from an article in the magazine "Turning Wheel" in 2003. "This, we thought, is exactly what somebody needs to be doing in the world," they recall, and they contacted the San Francisco office mentioned in the article. A return communication invited them to a meeting of an "affinity group." It gave a street address but

no city or state. Realizing that the street had a namesake in their home town of St. Paul, Ken checked it out and found the office just blocks from their home (*Peace begins at home!*). Ken has been doing graphic design, layout and editing work (Field Notes, brochures, and several years of annual reports) for NP as a volunteer ever since.

They comment: *Two characteristics of NP's work particularly attracted us and remain uppermost in our commitment to NP. First, the focus on building relationships and nurturing trust within local communities. How can peace have healthy roots otherwise? Second, the broadly international nature of the NP team. We must be in this together. And along the way a third critical characteristic has become evident: the systematic development of skill at peacebuilding.*