NP Core Competencies

Protection in Humanitarian Emergencies
Summary

2020

Nonviolent Peaceforce
The alarming number of conflicts and associated civilian casualties worldwide emphasizes the need to find resolution through peaceful means. The many methods of unarmed civilian protection (UCP) often prove successful in solving or calming conflicts with the long-term benefit of strengthening communities, infrastructure and ongoing dialogue that are needed to sustain hard-earned peace. Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) is a global civilian protection agency, working in some of the world’s most troubled zones to promote peace through civilian protection, reduction of community violence, and self-protection, conflict prevention, conflict management capacity development. Currently, NP has approximately 300 protection officers deployed in our programs in Iraq, Myanmar, Philippines, and South Sudan and we are collaborating with more than 50 implementing community organizations in 24 countries. To interrupt cycles of violence and facilitate sustainable peace, we work through five avenues, one of which is protection in humanitarian emergencies.

* * *

This summary is based on the full version of the NP core competency program document “Protection in Humanitarian Emergencies” that contains additional examples of interventions, methods, and guidance as the basis of work in this field by NP, partners, and other collaborating bodies.

Head Office
Rue de Lausanne 82
1202 Geneva, Switzerland
Tel: +41 (0)22 552 66 10
headoffice@nonviolentpeaceforce.org

U.S. Office
2610 University Ave. W. Ste. 550
St. Paul, MN 55114
USA
Tel: +1 612 871 0005
info@nonviolentpeaceforce.org
3. Protection in Humanitarian Emergencies

In working to provide protection in humanitarian emergencies, a main focus for NP is on the issue of displacement, with growing concern given increasing natural disasters and climate-related events. By the end of 2019, at least 79.5 million people around the world had been forced to flee their homes.

A humanitarian emergency threatens the health, safety, security, or wellbeing of a community or groups of people other large group of people. A holistic approach to humanitarian actions aims to not only save lives and ease suffering but to safeguard human dignity in the process and to build resilience of those affected to withstand future shock. Core humanitarian principles include humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence.

Humanitarian crises create a breeding ground for violence fueled by scarcity of basic resources such as food, clothing, lodging and income; the insecurity of being uprooted from one's home; threat to physical safety, and medical emergencies. With the current global record of crises, several discussion topics among the international community, as highlighted by the International Office for Migration, the International Displacement Monitoring Centre and others, provide a sobering backdrop of the challenges faced, for example:

- **Protracted displacement**: Affected populations are often deprived of basic rights while host communities and states struggle with increased competition over access to basic services, labor markets and accommodation.

- **Insecurity that drives ongoing displacement**: Patterns of violence and conflict are repeated, challenging efforts to procure lasting political solutions and peaceful outcomes.

- **Trafficking and smuggling**: Persons trafficked or smuggled risk often remain stateless and are inadequately reflected in existing legal or assistance frameworks.

- **Investment in resilience**: To date, this is insufficient yet critical to lasting, sustainable change.

**NP’s niche in the humanitarian sphere**

There are many forms of protection and definitions to describe humanitarian actions. NP has identified five areas that reflect its tenets in this sphere, captured as:
1. Humanitarian aid is protection whereby lifesaving intervention helps an afflicted person survive harm.

2. Protection mainstreaming aims to promote access, safety and dignity in humanitarian aid, for example, ensuring food safety and helping people avoid long queues in difficult or dangerous conditions.

3. Centrality of protection in humanitarian action is about helping people stay safe and often draws on specialized protection programs to address psychosocial support, assist victims of gender-based violence (GBV), and facilitate access to justice procedures and other services.

4. Direct physical protection (Unarmed Civilian Protection - UCP) sets NP apart in its approach. How? Humanitarian actors in the field assist survivors of attacks or seek to improve conditions that in turn help avert further attacks; in the event of imminent attacks, they rely on security forces or UN peacekeepers to intervene. Under its UCP model, however, NP provides direct physical protection as part of its humanitarian support.

5. Protection of human rights is sometimes a de facto outcome, for example, via the documenting of abuses or human rights violations in the course of protection work, as opposed to the primary line of work by judicial or advocacy bodies.

Response to 2018 Marawi Crisis in the Philippines
The above five areas defined by NP are a common thread among its three main categories of interventions:

- **Responding to immediate needs** ("direct protection") through physical intervention for civilians in harm's way is one of the first remedial actions in a conflict. Examples include:
  - Providing shuttle diplomacy between armed actors and communities to prevent retaliatory attacks based on rumors and coordinate troop movements, training exercises and drills with communities.
  - Providing protective accompaniment and active encouragement for local civil society activists, and accompaniment to recently displaced people on their way to a refugee camp, to and from aid distribution points, or to returnees moving through insecure areas or fearful of re-settling in hostile communities.
  - Providing physical accompaniment to women who face sexual harassment or abuse at water points or while collecting firewood, and facilitating dialogue between women leaders and security actors.
  - Negotiating humanitarian corridors for displaced people caught in crossfires or travelling through areas of armed conflict.
  - Negotiating permission for the provision of life-saving aid to displaced people who reside in areas that are off-limits for humanitarian aid operations and have severe and urgent needs.

- **Supporting parallel needs** ("protection sector programming") aims to provide timely and safe assistance to survivors and help vulnerable individuals stay safe or recover from harm. Examples include:
  - Assessing risk of vulnerable areas or developing recommendations for reducing GBV or violence against children and supporting the implementation of those recommendations.
  - Training and supporting women among displaced or host communities to monitor and report instances of GBV.
  - Tracing and reunifying separated, unaccompanied, and abducted children with their families or primary caretakers. NP has done this in South Sudan, and reunited families in Iraq.
  - Supporting the establishment of committees for child protection, food distribution or dispute resolution in displacement sites. NP’s participatory model and focus on self-protection strategies could provide a unique contribution to establishing protection infrastructure especially when these committees are mobilized to apply UCP.
  - Providing access to legal services and court monitoring for detained internally displaced persons (IDPs) or refugees. In Iraq, NP was able to gain access to key courts.
and prisons to conduct family tracing and court monitoring; NP has been the sole international actor to have conducted court monitoring activities in the Mosul and Erbil anti-terrorism courts.

- Widening peer engagement ("protection mainstreaming") aims to assist humanitarian agencies in ensuring the safety and dignity of civilians, and often takes the form of capacity-building. Examples include:

  ▶ Airing protection considerations in joint meetings with humanitarians, community leaders and/or local authorities when humanitarian operations are launched and encouraging them to voice irregularities that may emerge.

  ▶ Conducting joint security assessments with humanitarian agencies to identify safe locations for aid distributions.

  ▶ Trouble-shooting and resolving issues if humanitarian agencies act unprofessionally, ignore protection mainstreaming, are unaware of the complexities of a particular situation, or fail to communicate properly with communities.

Community Partners Respond to COVID-19 in Myanmar