Women, Peace and Security

Summary

2020
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 women, peace and security.

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This summary is based on the full version of the NP core competency program document “Women, Peace and Security” 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
1. Women, Peace and Security

Our work around *women, peace and security* (WPS) is a mechanism to not only promote peace by protecting women and girls who are heavily impacted by conflict, but also to balance power relations. Women must be able to participate in efforts to break the cycle and to rebuild, and particularly, be encouraged and empowered to lead such efforts. Working with women to bring about peace and security also entails working with youth – the girls who are women of tomorrow – and the men and boys as stewards of change. While the WPS framework focuses on women, NP recognizes that gender is not binary and that different gender identities have their own vulnerabilities and offer unique capabilities in conflict and peace.

WPS is modelled on a series of UN Security Council resolutions, based on four pillars: participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery. Peace and security efforts are more sustainable when women are equal partners in the prevention of violent conflict, the delivery of relief and recovery efforts, and in the forging of lasting peace. Using peaceful means, WPS views conflict through the lens of power relations, gender norms and institutions that foster violence and militarism. It calls on all actors and stakeholders to address the gender inequality that is often at the root of conflict or occurs as part of it.

“*It’s not just society that does not favor women, it is also the women themselves who think they only deserve to be the supporters, but not the main characters… training can make women realize that they are not inferior to men and they are equally capable to be monitors.*”

(Peace observer in Shan State, Myanmar)

**Tools for change**

Achieving peace requires strengthening women’s role as they are major stakeholders and a frequent target in conflict. From political dialogue in which women represent women’s interests to diverse women’s alliances represented at the decision-making table, NP is committed to promoting gender equality in unarmed civilian protection (UCP). Key strategies, among the more than 30 that have been identified, include developing gender-equal ceasefire provisions, resolutions and policy documents, establishing women protection teams (WPTs) as well as gender-equal implementation commissions to oversee peace agreements. A snapshot of additional strategies include:

- Supportive infrastructure and logistics to enable participation of women in peace and
decision-making processes (child-care, transportation, security, convenient timings).

- Training for decision-makers, policymakers, peacekeepers or peace negotiators about WPS, sometimes through gender advisors.

- Training or outreach to prosecutors, judges, investigators, and social workers on SGBV to strengthen effective response and prosecution of cases.

- Training for women candidates and delegates in the gender-specific aspects of political settlements, ceasefire monitoring, and security plans.

- Ensuring protection and technical or financial support to human rights’ defenders, women activists, or activists who support the rights of women or sexual and gender minorities.

- Facilitating dialogue, speaking tours, and organizing exchange visits among women or sexual and gender minorities and decision-makers.

Four pillars to uphold WPS

Incorporating the above strategies and others, unarmed civilian protection (UCP) in the WPS agenda prioritizes the pillars of participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery and recognizes the role of men and masculinities, and sexual and gender minorities. Pillar by pillar, NP draws on its deep understanding of local contexts in conflict zones:

- **Participation** entails the “increased and meaningful participation of all women at all levels of decision-making.”

  NP supported the establishment of Women Protection Teams (WPTs) in South Sudan to deliver community-based protection, peacekeeping and peacemaking efforts. In
March 2020, we convened the Third Annual National Women’s Conference in Juba, South Sudan, attended by more than 85 women peacebuilders and leaders country-wide.

▷ **We built the capacity of women’s organizations in ceasefire monitoring in the Philippines, Myanmar and Thailand, and helped establish community-based networks that support ceasefire processes.** Of the 740 local ceasefire monitors trained by NP in Myanmar between 2014 and 2018, 34% were women.

"**In the past, women didn't play any role in the community and didn't have a voice in their own home. Now they play an important role, even in the government.**"

( Charity, participant at the Annual Women’s conference in South Sudan)

- **Protection** entails both the “protection and promotion of women and girls’ rights in conflict-affected situations or other humanitarian crises, including protection from sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).” From **1992-2018**, 19% of peace agreements referenced women and 5% referenced SGBV. Protection is about ensuring that basic things -- so often taken for granted yet often hard to secure in conflict – reach women and girls. This includes food and water, medical care, legal rights, and economic security with attention to refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

▷ **NP has led safety walks and participatory security mapping exercises.** Conducted at different times throughout the day, these exercises offer a grasp of the security risks with the potential to develop into community patrols, if needed.

▷ **Where GBV risk is high, we have engaged women in patrols and protective presence.** This helps act as a deterrent, allows women to go about their daily work and activities, and demonstrates nonviolent alternatives. Through resulting information gathered, there is an opportunity for input into discussions to develop additional safety plans.

- **Prevention** entails the “prevention of conflict and all forms of violence against women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations.” This includes both short-term efforts and sustained social change to address the conditions that produce violent conflict in the first place. It calls for involving women and their specific needs in early warning systems, strengthening women’s rights under national law, increasing prosecutions for perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence and working with men and boys who can act as agents of change.

▷ **Jointly with WPTs in South Sudan, NP is designing educational strategies for men and boys on gender equality and violence prevention.**

▷ **In many conflict areas, law enforcement and judiciary personnel might be untrained or unsupported, and unable to properly handle GBV cases; NP is conducting capacity-building of law enforcement and judiciary personnel, as well as traditional and local**
leaders on GBV so that institutions become more responsive to survivors’ needs.

- **Relief and Recovery** entails the “provision of equal access to relief and recovery after conflict with attention to women’s gender-specific needs and the capacity of women to act as agents in relief and recovery processes in conflict and post-conflict situations.” Women are particularly affected in conflict situations as they often shoulder the responsibility of providing for their families while having to make basic supplies stretch to last. In places such as South Sudan, displaced women face repeated rape in their attempts to collect firewood, food and water.

▷ Where GBV survivors may be afraid or lack the resources to seek help, NP offers accompaniment to access medical facilities, police stations, local NGOs, and courts, and to approach community leaders. Accompaniment can also help build the community’s trust in post-incident services.

▷ We assist GBV survivors in reporting incidents, identifying and accessing relevant services or safehouses and helping them to engage with family workers, social workers or perpetrators.

“We learned how peace could be made. Now, if there are any issues in our community or a community nearby, we know how to respond. Everyone, the community members and the soldiers, respect us when we are in the Women’s Protection Team uniforms, because they know that we were trained to bring peace. Through our training with Nonviolent Peaceforce, we learn how the cycle of violence starts, and how it must be stopped before it builds.”

(Grace, participant at the Annual Women’s conference in South Sudan)