

The foundation of our work

Our vision

We envision a worldwide culture of peace in which conflicts within and between communities and countries are managed through nonviolent means.

Our mission

Our mission is to protect civilians in violent conflicts through unarmed strategies, build peace side by side with local communities, and advocate for the wider adoption of these approaches to safeguard human lives and dignity.

Our values

Nonviolence: Our work is grounded in the ethics and values of nonviolence. We believe that nonviolence is the powerful moral force of social change. In practice nonviolence is the physically, spiritually, mentally, and emotionally active work of courageous people.

Direct action: We prioritise practical responses to immediate threats of violence. Even as we work to interrupt systemic violence, we foster an environment in which communities can re-invent practical responses to direct physical violence.

Radical Connection: We believe that security in the 21st century will only come from transforming a system based on physical separation to one that radically centres human connection. People and relationships are the lifeblood of our work.

Process-oriented: We acknowledge the impermanence of security and view protection as a process more than as an outcome. Meaningful engagement with and between local partners, perpetrators, or victims is a key part of the outcome.

Independence: We operate in service of the people we protect. We do not promote the interests of international institutions, national governments, religious groups, or political parties. Our independence helps us to bring people together within hostile environments.

Nonpartisanship: We are at the side of people who suffer from violence and insecurity, but we don't take sides against those they define as `enemies`. We proactively engage in a conflict, work against injustice and the violations of human rights. We work for personal dignity and individual freedom, as means for establishing an enduring peace.

Redemption and Healing: We reject violence and seek to defeat injustice, not people. We are committed to working from a place of love, making generous assumptions about our fellow human beings.

Pluriversality: We embrace diversity, strive for inclusivity, and fiercely protect dignity within an interconnected world. We support individuals and communities in formulating their own responses to violent conflicts and re-imagining the nonviolent methods we share with them.

Accountability: We believe that change is possible, that systemic change is the result of cumulative individual work. We commit to holding ourselves accountable for our choices and doing our deep personal work.

Our method

We carry out our mission through the unique tool of unarmed civilian protection (UCP). UCP refers to the engagement of unarmed civilians working to reduce cycles of violence and increase the safety and security of civilians impacted by violent conflict. It prioritises direct physical protection to immediate threats of violence, even as we work to interrupt systemic violence. UCP is guided by principles of nonviolence, non-partisanship, primacy of local actors, and civilian-to-civilian action.

Our strategic framework and theory of change

Our strategic framework brings our vision, mission and method together and guides our staff in their application of UCP. Within situations of violent conflict our own application of UCP aims to *enhance the safety and security of civilians and their potential to build peace* by:

1. providing direct physical protection to populations and individuals experiencing threats of violence;
2. strengthening local infrastructures for violence prevention, self-protection, conflict management, and peacebuilding; and
3. increasing and improving the responsiveness of duty bearers, state, and non-state actors to protect civilians.

We complement our own application of UCP, by *advancing Unarmed Civilian Protection as a field of practice* through:

1. fostering an engaged community of practice;
2. increasing policy support, recognition, and funding for UCP; and
3. mainstreaming UCP methods and principles into third-party responses to conflict.

Together these two strategic aims contribute to our overarching goal of *interrupting cycles of violence and enhancing nonviolent responses to conflict* and move us closer to our vision of a worldwide culture of peace. We believe that *if* we accelerate the application and recognition of UCP *then* cycles of violence are interrupted and nonviolent responses to conflict are enhanced *because* UCP enables us to prevent violence and catalyse local actors to strengthen their own nonviolent responses to conflict.

Our core competencies

Our community-driven approach to UCP continuously generates innovation as our staff and local partners adapt it to their own context, emerging trends, and different fields of practice. By applying a UCP lens to specific fields of practice across countries, we have developed competency in the following fields:

1. Women Peace and Security
2. Protection of Children
3. Protection in Humanitarian Emergencies
4. Inclusive Ceasefires and Peace Processes
5. Social Cohesion

By interweaving UCP with these fields of practice, we provide a unique contribution to these fields and allow the practice of UCP to evolve.

Our strategic priorities for 2021-2025

Our strategic priorities for 2021-2025 are presented in three components: acceleration, innovation, and consolidation.

1. **Acceleration** of the application of UCP to reach more people threatened by violence.
2. **Innovation** of the practice of UCP to respond to emerging trends and threats; and
3. **Consolidation** of our organisational capacity to serve as the foundation for acceleration and innovation efforts.

Each of these priorities serves to maximise the impact of efforts – by ourselves and others – to interrupt cycles of violence and enhance nonviolent responses to conflict.

A new story of security

There is growing recognition that many of the existential threats the world is facing are rooted in a mechanistic worldview or paradigm. Martin Luther King called this “our thing-oriented civilization”. It is a story of separation of humans from nature; of humans from each other through divisions of class, religion, race, and gender; and of the Self from our integral, interconnected being. It has led us to extract, exterminate and push species, cultures, and communities to extinction, while dividing us as a society, and alienating us from our humanity. It separates the powerful from the consequences of their actions (Shiva, 2019). The world needs to be able to tell a different story if it is to survive – a story of interdependence, purpose, and sufficiency, a person- and planet-oriented civilisation.

Pioneers across the world are working to bring this new story to life. The shift from retributive justice to restorative justice, or from industrial agriculture to agroecology is in essence a shift from separation to interdependence. We believe it is time for a similar shift in the field of security; a field that relies so heavily on walls and technology, designed to isolate, or eliminate threats, and allow the privileged few to enjoy their safety in separation from a dehumanised other. We believe that UCP can contribute to such a shift. UCP presents a new story of security, a story in which security can be experienced through greater connectivity with the ‘enemy other’. Over the next 5 years and beyond, we will work to bring this story to life. And we will not stop there. We will reach out to pioneers in other fields of practice who tell a similar story, so that these separate stories can be woven together into a roadmap that can guide the global community in meeting its existential threats with courageous compassion.

Acceleration

Over the past two decades we have transformed existing civil society practices of protective accompaniment and nonviolent self-protection into the multi-dimensional practice of UCP. We have tested its applicability and proved its effectiveness in a variety of places from the Philippines to South Sudan and Iraq. Through persistent advocacy and sustained protection work, there is now greater acceptance of UCP both within the UN security Council and among communities at the front lines of civil wars. In the face of wide-spread violence against civilians, the impending threat of climate chaos, and the rise of authoritarian rulers, we feel called upon to accelerate our efforts by bringing UCP into the public domain and integrating it into a global nonviolent movement for change.

What is our goal for 2025?

In the next 5 years we will accelerate the application of UCP, so that more communities caught in cycles of violence and militarisation can be reached. The most effective way for us to do that is by

making the practice of UCP more widely available and accessible to others. Therefore, our goal for 2025 is the development of UCP as a recognised field of practice.

How will we realise this goal?

We envision that by 2025 we will have:

- **Established a functioning and inclusive network of UCP pioneers** that catalyse the process of developing the field of practice, identified common goals, and piloted avenues for collaborative effort and shared advocacy.
- **Created a shared UCP knowledge base in different languages**, collected credible evidence, mapped accredited courses on UCP, facilitated dialogue and critical analysis, formulated common sets of ideas for research, and shaped shared beliefs.
- **Developed standards of practice**, exemplary models, innovative approaches, codification of key terms and values, and training on core UCP as well as UCP-inspired protection that UCP actors and humanitarians, peacebuilders and peacemakers have integrated into their work.
- **Enabled a conducive funding and policy environment** that supports broader application of UCP, and organised funding streams that distributes funds across the field of practice, including community networks at the front lines of emerging conflicts.
- **Mainstreamed UCP methods and principles into third-party responses to conflict** (national and international), trained humanitarian agencies or peace actors, contributed to the centrality of protection in humanitarian action, and enhanced recognition of unarmed approaches to protection of civilians.
- **Connected UCP to a global movement aimed at triggering a paradigm shift**, a different way of viewing security, humanity, and the world around us.

While the development of UCP as a field of practice, may maximise our impact in the long term, the protection of men, women, and children at the frontlines of wars cannot be put on hold. Besides, it is our work on the ground that provides us the expertise we need to ensure that the field of practice remains grounded in the reality of the people most affected by violence. Therefore, we will simultaneously accelerate our own efforts in the next 5 years to respond to the protection needs of people in situations of violent conflict. We envision that by 2025 we will have:

- **Expanded our own operations** in at least two additional countries.
- **Accelerated training and crisis response support** to communities in countries or areas where we do not have a long-term presence and drawn these groups into the global community of UCP practice.
- **Enhanced regional and trans-national programming** in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

Innovation

In the past decade we have adapted the practice of UCP to global and local trends in various ways. We have enhanced community ownership of direct protection efforts and strengthened the leadership of staff from the Global South. We have connected our immediate protection responses more firmly to longer-term efforts to counter systemic violence. We have pushed back at risk-aversion among humanitarian actors and developed an innovative approach to ceasefire monitoring that provides counterweight to military-driven peace processes. We have demonstrated the synergy between protection and participation in Women Peace and Security through the mobilisation of women as protectors of their own communities. As new trends and developments are emerging, it is important

for us to keep our own work and the broader UCP field of practice in step with the most urgent protection challenges that conflict-affected communities face. Three areas that we will pay particular attention to in the next 5 years are: power and privilege, climate disruption, and digital technologies.

Climate disruption: Wars and the military-industrial complex put a tremendous strain on the planet, accelerating climate disruption. At the same time, societies already in conflict – the places we work - are particularly exposed and ill-equipped to meet the impacts of climate disruption. This means that violence prevention and climate protection are two sides of the same coin. While our teams have provided protection to communities coping with the effects of climate change for years, combatting climate disruption has not yet been central to the design of our projects. Moreover, the emerging field of UCP has yet to align its civilian protection efforts with the climate protection efforts of others and connect its model of ‘security *with* people and planet’ to the global climate movement. Amid climate chaos, the old story of ‘security *from* people and planet’ is no longer a viable option.

Digital technologies have made the chains of both violence and nonviolence longer, wider, and easier to access. For those affected by or actively resisting human rights violations, they present tremendous opportunities but also unforeseen threats. The use of social media to incite genocide or weaponize pandemic narratives against marginalised groups show that cyber space is a new warzone. Incidents of digital tracking of refugees and data leaks show a protection sector that struggles to keep up. The need for direct physical presence on the ground has not decreased because of increased virtual connectivity. Early warning data may be boosted by new technology, early response still requires direct action on the ground by trusted actors. At the same time, technology is changing the way our teams control rumours or conduct patrols. It is also changing the way communities respond to violence, often ill-equipped to deal with the threats that digital technologies present.

Power and privilege stand at the heart of every cycle of violence that we work to interrupt. The global #MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements have exposed racism and misogyny in all sectors of society, including the humanitarian sector. Calls for decolonising the humanitarian aid sector and the ‘peace industry’ are increasing. Whilst UCP can be described as a feminist and anti-racist approach to security, it is subject to the same structural challenges as most humanitarian work, including racism and power imbalances and the privileging of certain types of white, western masculinities and femininities. We believe that a more deliberate focus on decolonisation, gender equity and anti-racism will allow us to wield our own power and privilege more responsibly and strengthen our efforts to transform power imbalances. It will also sharpen our focus on challenging the power at the heart of the world’s many cycles of violence and foster a global community of UCP practice that embodies the change it wishes to see in the world.

What is our goal for 2025?

Our goal for 2025 is increased impact of UCP in interrupting cycles of violence fuelled by climate disruption, digital technologies and power and privilege, and in catalysing innovative applications of nonviolence in the face of these cycles.

How will we realise this goal?

We see an internal organisation and external programming component to all three areas of innovation. The *internal organisation component* focuses on enhancing our organisational capacity that will guide us in embodying the change we wish to see and minimising harm to the communities we work with and to ourselves.

- **Halved our carbon emissions by 2030** and influenced our ecosystems in all countries we operate in as active participants of a global community of practice.
- **Accelerated digital transformation** of our operations to increase efficiency, implemented and maintained minimum standards of digital hygiene, and capitalised on innovative technologies that enhance communication, learning, and crisis response.
- **Advanced organisational decolonisation** and strengthened the role of knowledge holders in the global community of UCP practice that embody emancipatory values and principles and transcend institutional hierarchies.
- **Mainstreamed the application of a climate disruption, digital technology, and intersectionality lens** in operations, fundraising, HR, and project development.

The *external programming component* focuses on innovative programming that is designed around climate disruption, digital technologies and/or power & privilege or use their lens as a force multiplier to maximise the impact of our current work.

- **Developed and tested a community-driven model for action** that maximises the apparent synergy between climate protection or disruption mitigation and UCP.
- **Redefined UCP practice in a digital age**, adapting UCP methods to meet the threats of cyber violence and cyber insecurity and understanding the impact of digital technologies on the notions of relationship, presence, and space.
- **Mainstreamed digital security in community (self-) protection** efforts.
- **Strengthened our role as a pioneer in meaningful localisation** within the global discourse and supported national or community peace infrastructures in addressing issues of power and privilege.
- **Refined and promoted UCP as a model of security that interrupts systems of oppression**, including racism, misogyny, and colonialism.

Consolidation

In the past decade Nonviolent Peaceforce has grown into a professional non-profit organisation with a unique civilian protection model and an annual budget of 20 million Euro. Driven by our values, we have moved closer to the world's hotbeds of violence and challenged ourselves to reach more people in need. We call this our *values-driven social entrepreneurship*. Driven by our principles, we have enhanced the quality of our work and our capacity to be responsible stewards of the resources we have been given. We call this our *responsible stewardship*. In the next 5 years we plan to take bold steps to bring the practice of UCP into the public domain and connect our work to a global nonviolent movement of change. We can only do this if we continue to consolidate the foundation of our organisation and foster a community of care among our staff, volunteers, partners, and supporters.

What is our goal for 2025?

Our goal for 2025 is an organisational environment that holds responsible stewardship and social entrepreneurship in a dynamic embrace and unifies the broader movement of UCP that our founders envisioned with the organisation we have become.

How will we achieve this goal?

Main priorities for strengthening our ability to be responsible stewards include the following:

- **Fostered a community of care** among staff, board and volunteers and an organisational culture grounded in a spirit of service, dignity, respect, and diversity.
- **Enhanced monitoring evaluation and learning** as well as our collective ability to apply our core competencies and consolidate our knowledge on emerging competencies.
- **Maintained financial viability and resilience**, ensuring highest standard and ethics in stewardship as well as deployment of resources for their intended purpose.
- **Accelerated and diversified our funding base** while ensuring that the acceptance of resources does not compromise our independence, values, and policies.
- **Maintained quality** in all aspects of our work, including responsible use of power, integration of global best practice and standards, and **accountability** to all stakeholders and above all the communities we serve.

