



Spontaneous Unarmed Civilian Protection in Rumbek and Juba, South Sudan

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Unarmed civilian protection (UCP) is a nonviolent mechanism taken up by civilians to protect other civilians from harm and violent conflict. This brief outlines grassroots, community-level “spontaneous” UCP initiatives in South Sudan.
- The brief outlines three main findings from field in South Sudan:
 - **Peace committees**, formed by community actors in Rumbek, have countered communal violence by engaging in early warning monitoring activities and intercommunity dialogue. Similarly, in Juba, thirty Community Action Groups (CAGs) were set up in 2011 to mitigate crime and social violence.
 - **Protection teams**, set up by various Youth and Women’s groups in Rumbek have used dialogue, early warning, rumour control, protective accompaniment and advocacy to reduce neighbourhood and inter-communal violence.
 - **Religious leaders** and faith-based actors have played a leadership role in many of the initiatives above, but have also engaged in advocacy, education projects and dialogue to mitigate violence
- This brief outlines key challenges related to sustainability and the lack of external support for SUCP, documentation and networking that facilitates learning across UCP initiatives.
- The brief concludes with a range of recommendations, aimed at providing support (e.g. material, logistical) and training to SUCP initiatives in a way that builds trust, keeps initiatives locally owned and aids learning across practice and society.

INTRODUCTION

An estimated 383,000 people were killed and 4.5 million displaced in South Sudan's recent civil war in a country of just over 10 million people.¹ While the broader human cost on a community-level is more difficult to assess, living with exposure to a diverse set of violence forces civilians to adapt quickly and develop innovative unarmed methods aimed at creating safe spaces and protecting their communities from harm. **Unarmed civilian protection (UCP) is a nonviolent mechanism taken up by civilians to protect other civilians from harm and violent conflict** (Furnari, Julian and Schweitzer, 2016: 5),² differing from UN peacekeeping in that it involves unarmed civilians performing various protection roles traditionally conducted by armed soldiers (Janzen, 2014).³ Civilians protect their communities using a strategic range of UCP methods, such as proactive engagement (protective accompaniment, interpositioning), dialogue, peace committees, advocacy (e.g. education), capacity enhancement (e.g. supporting local protection infrastructures) and monitoring (e.g. early warning and response, rumour control and management).

In this policy brief, we explore heroic UCP initiatives conducted by civilians in South Sudan, identified from fieldwork conducted by Ms. Flora Bringi and Dr. Moses John in Juba (Central Equatoria) and Rumbek (Lakes State),⁴ as part of a broader research project funded by the *Creating Safer Space Network*.⁵ This project reveals that ordinary people, civil society and faith-based actors have long played vital roles in violence prevention and

building peace and security in fragile and violence-affected contexts of South Sudan. We refer to these community-based initiatives as “spontaneous” forms of UCP. While much of the existing knowledge is based on initiatives that are supported by specialist international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), such as Nonviolent Peaceforce, our project explored grassroots, community-level “spontaneous” unarmed civilian protection (SUCP) initiatives.

Spontaneous UCP (SUCP) initiatives are intuitive, instinctive and innovative responses and adaptations to prevent or reduce violence, without outside support from international NGOs. SUCP emerges from local knowledge, relationships and networks built with other actors and cultural practices and is tailored to specific community contexts, evolving over time within a process of trial and error. While civilian protection is a practice that is familiar and central to South Sudanese culture, the concept of UCP is not well understood or covered in local literature, with civilians engaging in community protection work without realising it falls under this concept. Several respondents referred to the “rats and the cat game,” represented in picture 1, as a practical example of children demonstrating the concept of UCP in South Sudan.⁶ Seen as part of a continuous process of nonviolent approaches to conflict transformation, social change and peacebuilding, SUCP adapts to the changing world rather than adhering to fixed timetables or goal-oriented indicators that are typical in many violence reduction and peacebuilding projects.

1 Checchi, F., A. Testa, A. Warsame, B.S. Le Quach and R. Burns. (2018). “Estimates of Crisis-attributable Mortality in South Sudan, December 2013-April 2018: A statistical Analysis.” Report by London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. <https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/south-sudan-full-report>.

2 Furnari, E., R. Julian and C. Schweitzer. (2016). “Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping: effectively protecting civilians without threat of violence.” Minden: Bund für Soziale Verteidigung e.V.

3 Janzen, R. (2014). “Shifting practices of peace: What is the current state of Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping?” *Peace Studies Journal* 7(3): 46-60.

4 Fieldwork in South Sudan was conducted and organised by Flora Bringi and Dr. Moses John and supported remotely by Dr. Luke Abbs and the Centre of Religion, Reconciliation and Peace (CRRP). Fieldwork in Juba involved 12 key-informant interviews and 1 focus group between 11 December 2023 and 11 January, while in Rumbek, 22 interviews and 4 Focus Groups were conducted involving various ethnic, regional, religious and local stakeholders in South Sudan.

5 Findings explored here in South Sudan are a part of a wider comparative project that also explores SUCP across Myanmar and Colombia. Find this project, “*Understanding Community-level Spontaneous Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP): A Comparative Study of Initiatives in South Sudan, Myanmar and Colombia*,” on the *Creating Safer Space Network* website: <https://creating-safer-space.com/understanding-community-level-spontaneous-unarmed-civilian-protection-ucp-a-comparative-study-of-initiatives-in-south-sudan-myanmar-and-colombia/>.

6 One female respondent in Juba said, “the concept of UCP is something we have all been practicing since we were toddlers.” She continued, “do you remember the ‘rats and the cat game’ we use to play as kids? It is a game where children playing the role of the ‘rats,’ form a circle while joining hands to protect one or two children at the middle of the circle from the cat (outside the circle) trying to chase and hunt it.” Practically, we have seen a culture where women often intervene to separate disputants and de-escalate conflicts from becoming violent. “That was UCP,” she explained.



Picture 1. The “Rat and Cat Game” – could be used as an analogy for unarmed civilian protection in South Sudan. This is a common childhood game, played throughout South Sudan, and represents the culture of nonviolent protection that exists in South Sudanese society. Children playing the role of the rats form a circle by joining hands, in order to protect children in the middle of the circle. Using this formed circle, they attempt to prevent the child playing the role of the cat from getting into the circle. Note, this is not to be confused with ongoing campaigns in South Sudan that have depicted the rat as a symbol of corruption. Picture by South Sudanese artist Tom Dai.

The next section outlines SUCP from this fieldwork, before exploring strengths and challenges of SUCP in South Sudan. These insights provide us with vital knowledge

and learning for policy, which we summarise by offering recommendations to the South Sudanese state, civil society and SUCP actors, and the international community.

BACKGROUND TO VIOLENCE IN SOUTH SUDAN

The nature of violence that necessitates the use of SUCP in South Sudan ranges from armed political resistance to communal violence and criminal activities. Since the pausing of South Sudan's civil war, which started in December 2013 and continued until a ceasefire deal in late 2017, armed political violence is often characterised by defections and re-defections to and from the government forces, as armed groups attempt to manoeuvre their ways into political or high military office. Communal violence is characterised by ethnic revenge killings, 'tit for tat' communal violence, cattle-raiding and violence towards children and women. Towns and cities are also plagued with ongoing social violence in the form of criminal and gang violence often perpetrated by disgruntled youth.

Both locations chosen for the fieldwork have a long history of violence, perceptions of impunity and various ongoing problems despite the pause in the civil war. The capital Juba was at the epicentre of the outbreak of civil war between the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF) and what became known as the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition (SPLA IO). Juba, which is relatively calm at the time of writing, still faces multiple

challenges of economic hardship, ethnic and social mistrust, gang violence attributed to high unemployment, gender-based violence (GBV), social violence (including armed robbery among other criminal activities) and food insecurity coupled with its hosting of many internally displaced persons and refugees from Sudan. Given this fragile context that exists in these locations and across the country, many respondents were concerned about the feasibility of conducting general elections in December 2024 as per the Roadmap of the 2018 Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS). In Rumbek, once a leading conflict hotspot for intra and inter-communal violence, the security situation has greatly improved, but locals refer to issues around general disarmament, youth violence around cattle camps, problems with gangs that operate just outside of town, silence over GBV and concerns over environmental protection.

Below we outline three key types of community-level SUCP initiatives that have emerged within these contexts and were identified in the fieldwork: rural and urban peace committees, women and youth-led protection teams and initiatives by religious leaders.

THREE KEY FINDINGS ON SUCP FROM SOUTH SUDAN

(1) PEACE COMMITTEES – engaging in monitoring, conflict early warning and dialogue.

Local community actors have come together in response to prevent violence and criminal activities by forming peace committees, both in the urban setting of Juba (Central Equatoria) and rural settings of Mundri, Mvolo (Western Equatoria), Yei (Central Equatoria), Yirol and Rumbek (Lakes State). The urban-rural distinction is important when considering how these committees are structured, operate and emerge over time.

Rural peace committees emerged from spontaneous community-driven peace dialogues between farmers and pastoralists to address violent clashes between the communities in the Greater Mundri counties (Western Equatoria State) and the neighbouring communities of Yirol West County (Lakes State). At the centre of this tension and violence is the movement of cattle. In Lakes States, 90% of the population are pastoralists and 10% are agriculturalists, whereas in Mundri the population instead are predominantly farmers. In 2012, building upon these dialogues, two South Sudanese NGOs, the Organisation for

Nonviolence and Development (ONAD) and the Mundri Relief and Development Association (MRDA), helped these communities form peace committees across the impacted region.⁷ These committees have a specific UCP function as an early-warning mechanism: to monitor; share information; hold monthly meetings with committee members; and provide early warning about tensions and triggers, cattle movements and cattle-raiding issues.

These committees are not hierarchical, but are structured as informal networks of protection, involving volunteer local actors that at times have expanded their respective networks of protection. In 2012 ONAD and MRDA invited INGO Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) to observe the committee's work and have drawn on logistical support from the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), which provided helicopters to facilitate travels between delegates from the two communities. These committees have also worked with various development NGOs on attempting to deal with underlying issues that drive GBV, such as the remoteness of waterpoints and toilet facilities, which increase the risk of women and girls of being attacked.

These committees have expanded further by working closely with the local government authorities and South Sudan Police Service, reporting information and documenting early warning indicators. Local government in turn invites peace committee teams to investigate incidents when they occur. Since 2012, chiefs have carried out monthly meetings known as the Community Security Dialogue, leading dialogue and consultations between members of the committee and the local government to develop.⁸ This practice, among others, has informed the drafting and adoption of the Lakes State Customary and Public Order Act in 2022 by the state government, widely cited by our respondents as contributing to improved security and enhancing local nonviolent

protection initiatives. This promotes freedom to travel without fear of attack and is aimed at curbing three key forms of violence in Lakes State: forced marriages and sexual related crimes, gang and youth violence and cattle theft and associated revenge killings.

In Juba, ONAD set up 30 urban-based community peace committees known as Community Action Groups (CAGs) in 2011,⁹ in specific response to crime, social violence and GBV in city suburbs such as Gudele, Munuki, Nyakuron and Kator. ONAD worked with various local quarter councils to develop CAGs, whose role includes community monitoring, providing early warning, crime mapping, and engaging in advocacy against social violence. Quarter councils are local administrative government units set up by Juba City Council and include representatives from local elders, religious leaders, women's groups and youth groups.

Over time, CAGs have worked more closely with local government authorities to support community-based policing and response to prevent crimes. Stakeholders now hold meetings every month and have improved relations between the community, police and the policymakers. CAGs' mapping and reporting of criminal hotspots areas to the Police has resulted in increased police deployment in these areas which have improved security and safety for civilians in Munuki, Gudele and Nyakuron Quarter Council Areas of Juba. CAGs have also worked with development partners to overcome challenges of poor infrastructure that undermines security, such as a lack of streetlights and poor conditions of feeder roads. For instance, the CAG in Gudele block 9 have lobbied development partners for infrastructure projects and were successful in funding the construction of the culvert bridge in Gudele, which facilitates safer movement of people and quicker Police response. The CAGs in Munuki and Gudele have gained community funding for security lights.¹⁰

7 In Mundri, Mvolo, Mapourdit, Yirol and Rumbek.

8 Chiefs and spear masters (traditional Dinka leaders) have a history of engaging in monitoring and documenting of cattle related disputes between Warrap, Lakes and Unity States, working with local government and civil society organisations to organise and monitor the movement of cattle between states, approving authentic documentation, reporting violation to peace committees and overseeing compensation mechanisms through local Customary Court, to prevent violence.

9 ONAD also set up CAGs in the town of Yei (Central Equatoria), but this falls outside the scope of the fieldwork conducted in this project.

10 For more details on CAGs, see: John, M.M. (2023). "Unarmed Civilian Protection and Nonviolence With Attention to Sub-Saharan Africa." In Ellen Furnari, E., Janzen, R. and Kabaki, R. (Eds.). *Unarmed Civilian Protection: A New Paradigm for Protection and Human Security*. Bristol: Bristol University Press.

(2) PROTECTION TEAMS – engaging in dialogue, early warning, rumour control, protective accompaniment and advocacy.

Protection teams in rural regions are another key type of initiative that explored in the fieldwork, which emerged in response to armed, social and gender-based violence. Two key actors formed the basis for protection teams: women groups and youth groups.

Interviews with various women in Rumbek revealed that women groups have been present and have spontaneously engaged in protection work and promotion of women's rights for decades in Lakes State. Some of the women leaders interviewed have previously volunteered for the NP protection team, which first entered the country in 2007 on

invitation of ONAD (at the time SONAD),¹¹ and have channelled these skills and knowledge into later work. These women groups are represented in the peace committees above but have gone on to form their own protection teams, including a group of women of faith, known as Cicoumat operating in Rumbek under the Catholic Diocese of Rumbek and Women Aid Vision (WAV). These teams have responded to community issues by deploying UCP workers and volunteers in the form of early warning, dialogue, and advocacy against GBV and for child protection, and they have provided education on protection against abuse.

To facilitate early-warning, WAV goes door-to-door in the community to understand women issues and tensions in the community, to raise awareness and control rumours and gossip, then relaying information back

¹¹ SONAD stands for Organisation for Nonviolence and Development. The name was later in 2011 changed to ONAD by dropping "Sudanese" to align with the new Country, the Republic of South Sudan.



Picture 2. Women and Youth Protection Teams in and around Rumbek. These volunteer protection teams have provided early warning and rumour control and used dialogue, protective accompaniment and advocacy to reduce and prevent a range of violence. This includes gender-based violence, cattle-related disputes and inter and intra-community conflicts. Picture by South Sudanese artist Tom Dai.

to local authorities, peace committees and traditional and religious leaders to support a whole-community approach to violence prevention. In more recent years, WAV has worked on violence prevention initiatives, such as supporting women in setting up their own businesses, as a way to alleviate economic hardships, poverty and isolation – key factors of domestic violence in Rumbek.

Another key role of women protection teams in Rumbek, developed over time, is the intervention in community disputes. Women groups use the commonly known Dinka practice of “kon-koc” (first listen), in which women describe using their tongues to protect community members. Women focusing on key flashpoints, such as waterpoints, the market and football field, have intervened in various types of community disputes in Rumbek using dialogue and advocating for peace. These range from calming gang quarrels in Malakia, neighbourhood arguments, issues with Boda boda riders (motorcycle taxis), school fights and disagreements over cattle. For example, in 2019 in Rumbek East, women intervened in fighting over cattle-raiding, following up this dialogue by forming a committee to facilitate meetings between cattle groups, and provided advocacy about peace and the problem of alcohol (a key trigger of violence). These early interventions are fundamental as they stop escalation to wider violence. In 2023, women intervened in a school fight which threatened to escalate into a school vs. school and community clashes, bringing in parents and teachers in preventative dialogue.

Across Rumbek, a final method of UCP is protective accompaniment, with women groups accompanying girls and women to waterpoints, nearby forests to collect firewood and monitoring such locations. This method is also common practice within the Odhoh ethnic group in Eastern Equatoria State, who see spontaneous protection as the natural role of women. Elderly Odhoh women engage in voluntary protective presence and accompaniment of girls and women during morning and evening hours to ensure their safe passage to fetch water, collect firewood, seek dialogue to prevent violence and refer incidents to customary elders groups or courts. Odhoh women also engage in interpositioning, hugging, shielding, hiding and sheltering potential victims to protect them from violence, being harmed or even killed. These initiatives display the important cultural protection role of women.

The second key type of protection team is organised by youth. Key groups identified were the Rumbek Youth Union (RYU), the Youth Peace Forum (YPF) and Kuei and Rup Global Forum (KRGF).

The RYU represents youth across four counties in Lakes State: Rumbek East, Rumbek Center, Rumbek North and Wulu county. They visit cattle camps to provide early warning and report rumours and tensions, have formed inter-community youth committees to facilitate dialogue and engaged in violence prevention through peace advocacy and sports initiatives (e.g. wrestling and football).

The YPF, set up in 2023 with the support of women groups, have teams in Rumbek East, Tonj East and Cueibet Counties and have expanded the advocacy work of the women’s groups. The YPF have also provided protective accompaniment to vulnerable civilians during periods of fighting, for example when the Luacjang community of Tonj East burned down houses in Maper area of Rumbek North.

Women’s groups also supported the formation of the KRGF in 2021, comprising of youth from both the Kuei and Rup communities in Lakes State, as an intuitive response to escalating violence between both communities. Similar to the RYU, KRGF visit communities to engage in dialogue, provide early warning on tensions over resources and cattle and engage in advocacy on countering revenge killings. Violence between these communities dates back to 2007 when clashes erupted over the ownership of a riverbank that borders Amonhom of Kuei and Panyon of Rup, leading to deaths and injured civilians. Between 2012 and 2020 clashes have continued over grazing land, water and cattle. In 2012 a trivial dispute at the Luak cattle camp over mosquito sticks for a marriage event (costing the equivalent of \$5), escalated to armed communal clashes that left nearly 100 civilians dead according to a respondent. Protection teams also worked with the NGO Peace Canal, to bring communities together in Mvolo and Aluak Luak, using dialogue and co-existence activities, such as fishing and gardening to prevent violence.

A final youth-based SUCP initiative identified from the data collection is the protective accompaniment of food and essential non-food items in the market town of Torit, Eastern Equatoria. Unarmed traditional youth groups from the Monyomiji Othoho ethnic group developed this initiative to ensure safe passage of goods to nearby villages, patrolling the main roads from the Ugandan border to Torit.



Picture 3. UCP initiatives of faith-based leaders and Peace Committees in Rumbek. Rural Peace Committees emerged from spontaneous community peace dialogues to address farmer—pastoralist violence between communities in Greater Mundri counties (Western Equatoria State) and Yirol West County (Lakes State), now functioning as an early-warning mechanism to monitor and share information on tensions and cattle-related issues. In Juba’s suburbs, urban-based community peace committees, known as Community Action Groups (CAGs) were set up in 2011 in response to crime, social violence and GBV. Faith-based leaders have played an important leadership role, working with peace committees and protection teams and using their own dialogue, education and interpositioning initiatives to protect civilians. Picture by South Sudanese artist Tom Dai.

(3) Religious and Faith-based Initiatives – engaging in advocacy, education and dialogue.

Our findings also reveal a third type of initiatives by led by faith-based leaders in Rumbek, Juba and Keji-Kajo. These leaders play an important leadership role, working within the peace committees and working closely with the protection teams explored above, or playing a central lobbying and networking role of disseminating information

between local actors and local government. However, religious leaders also engage in their own SUCP initiatives in response to various forms of violence.

First, in response to ongoing GBV, the Education Department of the Catholic Diocese of Rumbek initiated an education project in primary and secondary schools aimed at advocacy and violence prevention. This project developed a child protection and safeguarding policy to counter child abuse, rape and early and forced

marriages. Teachers sign the policy as part of their employment contract and are trained on child protection and handling reported abuse cases, while pupils receive education on their rights and how to report violations. The initiative also provides guidance on wider protection, for instance advising women and girls on best practice when collecting water and firewood.

The initiative was led by a lawyer, in his role as a Protection Officer at the Catholic Diocese of Rumbek Education Department, who also has prior UCP experience with NP. He worked closely with women's group and with teachers to develop the policy and later expanded the initiative to include the support of the Ministry of Education.

Second, faith-based leaders have undertaken direct intervention in communal conflicts, using dialogue to interrupt cycles of violence and protect civilians from revenge attacks. For instance, the Episcopal Archbishop intervened in communal violence in Kajo Keji county in 2023, where clashes and revenge killings between cattle herders and farmers led to dozens of deaths. The Archbishop visited the area to engage in dialogue between the communities and using prayer, meditation and fasting as a

spiritual call to end the violence and to advocate for nonviolence. This increased media attention of the conflict and led to the Governor of Central Equatoria State to temporarily relocate the seat of state capital to the area, all of which helped prevent further violence.

These interventions are common around Rumbek, with information being disseminated through peace committees, in a region which used to be a conflict hotspot. Faith based groups such as the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC) and other Church denominations have on several occasions responded to deter violence and de-escalate communal tensions and revenge killings and called for protection of women, children, IDPs and refugees.

Finally, faith leaders have also engaged in interpositioning, by providing safe havens for people at risk of violence. When Rumbek was a hotspot for violence, pastors noted many incidents of hiding civilians from armed attackers from rival communities in their homes and churches. This form of SUCP is also used in community and family disputes, with one respondent allowing a man to take refuge in the Church, from two women who threatened the man with knives after a domestic dispute.

STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

Despite relative peace in Juba, Rumbek and other parts of South Sudan, economic hardships due to hyperinflation and food insecurity, with most food items being imported from neighbouring countries, remain key potential conflict triggers and challenges to community volunteers engaging in UCP. In the public sector, youth and women have gone without pay for 9 months adding to the hardship. Nevertheless, **youth, women and faith-based organisations remain the key actors using UCP to support peacebuilding and long-term development activities in South Sudan.** The negative cultural practice and manifestation of domestic violence, gender-based violence and violence against children are still considered as challenges to sustainable peace. **Poverty, language and cultural barriers remain key factors influencing recurrent cycles of political and communal violence in the country.** In the absence of peace and UCP practices among the communities, young people and women

are likely to resort to being negative forces rather than being the positive influential and inspirational actors found in our study.

Our findings, while only providing a snapshot of SUCP in South Sudan, highlight the importance of local civilian agency in violent contexts. These **initiatives are locally owned, carried out by actors responding intuitively and autonomously without reliance on external actors.**

However, **one of the key challenges is sustainability.** Cultures of violence are inter-generational and require long-term solutions. SUCP involves largely voluntary work, so consolidating and sustaining these initiatives over the long-term requires more consistent economic and logistical resources and the expansion of networks of protection to other domestic and international actors. Some respondents in Rumbek expressed concerns

that collaborations between local communities and international INGOs working on protection and violence prevention are not sustainable and often overlap, with no clear transition from conflict to peacebuilding and sustainable development. **Financial and logistical support by INGOs, UNMISS, and local government represents a distinct opportunity to expand local capacity and networks of protection.** However, such support currently remains and historically has been very limited. Our findings show that the involvement of national NGOs is a real strength as such NGOs connect local actors with local authorities and international actors. **Another key barrier to collaboration in SUCP is that there can be a trust deficit between civilians and local authorities and also external actors with concerns over continued local ownership.**

While **our findings are a testimony to the wide scope of protection initiatives** and the resilience and innovation of local communities, respondents confirmed that the concept of UCP is not well understood at community-level and even among academics. For example, a

respondent who is a lecturer at the University of Juba acknowledged that there are no academic studies conducted on UCP and its roles and contribution to peacebuilding in South Sudan. **Lack of scientific research and documentation of UCP in South Sudan has further undermined its potential in violence prevention** and peacebuilding. There are hardly any publications about UCP experiences initiated and led by community actors and civil society organisations, and **without documentation, there is a lack of learning across initiatives in other localities across South Sudan.** As such, local communities that are engaging in SUCP initiatives are not always aware of the concept used by INGOs. With the exception of a few groups in Rumbek that have previously worked with NP, local actors see this as a form of community peacebuilding work, despite efforts being focused specifically on reducing violence. **Education, research and coherent collaboration could be a way to formalise and disseminate local approaches, but this must be carefully balanced with keeping initiatives locally owned.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) South Sudanese government authorities at different levels should:

- a. Allocate financial resources for UCP education, integrating SUCP into nonviolence and peace education in education curricula to build a peaceful and safe country for all. This policy brief outlines an example of this above, led by the Education Department of the Catholic Diocese of Rumbek to educate and advocate for protection.
- b. Formally recognise and annually celebrate SUCP initiatives and raise awareness of SUCP as part of broader strategies for peace, through the Ministry of Peacebuilding at national and state-levels.
- c. Promote a national awareness campaign about SUCP, using analogies such as the nationally known Rat and Cat Game, which gently introduces the notion of protection. To note, this awareness campaign should be very carefully separated from other ongoing campaigns that have depicted the rat as a symbol of corruption, in order to avoid any misconceptions.
- d. Introduce legislation to enshrine protection initiatives against all forms of violence and disarm civilians, in which SUCP strategies can be a key mechanism in monitoring following such legislation. Lessons can be learned from the 2022 Lakes State Customary and Public Order Act, which involved local communities and aided the enhancement of local protection initiatives.
- e. Support and encourage local research on SUCP in Public and Private Universities to unveil experiences of local protection actors as affordable and sustainable way of peacekeeping.
- f. Broaden, support and sustain networks of civilians such as peace committees and CAGs to continue engaging civilians, local government actors, the police, civil society, and grassroots, traditional, and religious leaders in various cities in South Sudan.

- g. Transform peace dialogues from merely generating recommendations to identifying actionable goals to engage conflicting groups in concrete protection and peacebuilding activities.
- h. National and local government should support national NGOs, which could play a bridging role in connecting local communities, government institutions and international actors, while ensuring SUCP remains locally owned.

(2) Civil Society Organisations and UCP Actors in South Sudan should:

- a. Develop and help sustain local and national networks between UCP organisations and between UCP and other civil society organisations, to promote the expansion of existing SUCP and creation of new SUCP initiatives.
- b. Support capacity building initiatives, workshops and dialogue programmes for the nonviolent protection of civilians, facilitating capacity building through the exchange of skills, knowledge and ideas on best practice.
- c. Support and develop whole-systems approaches for issues that overlap with SUCP, peacebuilding, development and humanitarian initiatives, to facilitate integrative solutions. For instance, this could mean combining SUCP with development initiatives (e.g. calls from SUCP actors for safer access to water sources, building of toilets in residential areas and need for street lighting).
- d. Diversify funding between the local community, local and national government, national and international NGOs and foreign donors to broaden SUCP projects while maintaining local ownership.
- e. Engage in monitoring and evaluation of initiatives, to better understand what works and best practice.
- f. Gain support from specialist NGOs such as NP, to support SUCP initiatives.

(3) International Community and International Organisations should:

- a. Provide funding, vocational training and administrative, material and logistic support to national South Sudanese NGOs and civil society organisations involved in promoting SUCP and nonviolence for long-term sustainability. It is important that any support should allow local actors to retain ownership.
- b. Provide a rapid response fund to support communities to use SUCP and to be able to react quickly to crises and engage in preventative action.
- c. Support the creation of a network of actors, both horizontally between South Sudanese actors and vertically between grassroots and international organisations, to facilitate knowledge exchange and to provide a forum of access to external actors.
- d. In line with monitoring and early warning projects in other typically remote and rural contexts, support the development and use of new technology in conflict zones, including the creation of crowdmapping/ crowdsourcing platforms to allow people to anonymously report incidents.
- e. Fund further international research on SUCP, to continue to document and disseminate experiences of ordinary people, women, girls and youths who employ UCP in creating safer spaces in South Sudan.
- f. Support whole-systems approaches and integrative solutions, combining SUCP work with peacebuilding, development and humanitarian projects.



UNIVERSITY OF
WINCHESTER
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**CREATING
SAFER SPACE**
STRENGTHENING CIVILIAN PROTECTION
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