

Newsletter

Creating Safer Space

August 2025



Dear All,

A lot has happened since our last Newsletter - we hope you enjoy this very rich update!

In May, *Creating Safer Space* co-organised another side event for the United Nations Protection of Civilians (POC) week, where our representative Nerve Macaspac highlighted the central but often overlooked role of self-protecting communities.

Following discussions at the regional meeting in Medellin, some *Creating Safer Space* projects in Colombia visited each other to share knowledges and experiences of nonviolent community self-protection. Their reflections have been captured in a new documentary mini-series.

Lots of *Creating Safer Space* projects have been very busy publishing their work in different formats and outlets. Take some time to explore podcasts from Indonesia, read journal articles about Papua, South Sudan, and Medellin/Colombia, and explore a new brochure and accompanying videos on participatory action research methods used by communities in Buenaventura, Colombia.

And finally, look forward to our next Newsletter – there is more to share that is just waiting to be uploaded to our website!

Creating Safer Space at United Nations Protection of Civilians (POC) Week Side Event

In May, *Creating Safer Space* co-organised a side event on “Civilian-Centred Approaches and POC in a Changing World: Moving from Policy to Practice” for the United Nations’ Protection of Civilians week 2025 in New York.

Creating Safer Space Co-Investigator Dr Nerve Macaspac joined speakers from the Permanent Mission to the UN of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Nonviolent Peaceforce, PAX, and CIVIC. Synthesising the discussion, and drawing on findings from the CSS projects, he noted that while “protection of civilians” is a frequent topic in global forums, those most directly engaged in self-protection are often excluded from the conversation. He highlighted the consistent thread across diverse contexts: civilians are already leading protection work within their communities, using creative and effective strategies grounded in trust, legitimacy and local knowledge. He therefore urged a reconceptualisation of what counts as “protection work”, recognising its multifaceted nature and the value of flexibility, community-specific tools, and ongoing engagement with CSOs. His concluding point was clear: community-led POC is not a complement to existing frameworks; it should be the standard, precisely because it works, and because it is already happening.



For a full summary of the session, see [this final report](#) by Nonviolent Peaceforce.

Saberes compartidos

Sobre autoprotección comunitaria

The new [documentary mini-series “Shared Knowledge on Community Self-Protection”](#) documents knowledge exchanges between representatives of communities involved in various *Creating Safer Space* projects in Colombia. It is an outcome of our regional meeting in Colombia in 2024, which found that Colombia has a wealth of nonviolent community self-protection experiences but that these communities often lacked opportunities to link those localised efforts and learn from each other.

News from *Creating Safer Space* Projects



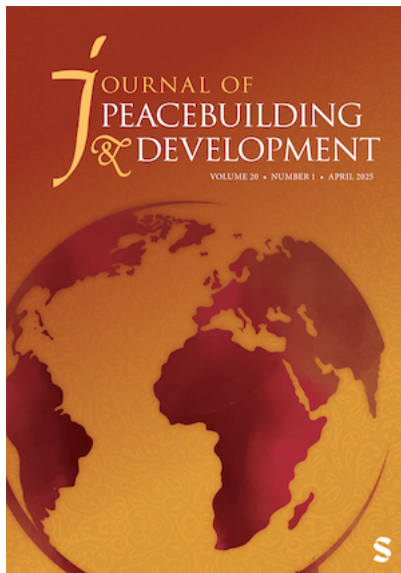
The *Creating Safer Space* project [“Civilian \(Self-\) Protection from Violent Conflict in Papua: Exploring Local Infrastructures and Initiatives”](#) has published [a series of 12 podcasts](#), focusing on unarmed civilian protection in Papua and related topics.

NB: The podcasts can be translated from Indonesian by enabling subtitles and auto-translation in YouTube.



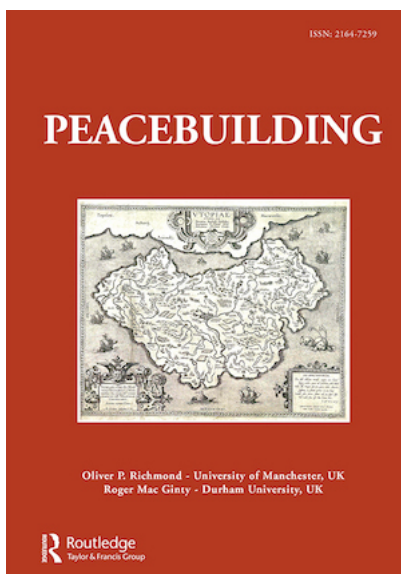
The *Creating Safer Space* project [“https://creating-safer-space.com/using-multimedia-approaches-to-increase-visibility-of-and-preference-for-unarmed-civilian-protection-approaches/”](https://creating-safer-space.com/using-multimedia-approaches-to-increase-visibility-of-and-preference-for-unarmed-civilian-protection-approaches/) has published a report, [UCP in Action: Using peaceful and unarmed responses to conflict management](#).

It contains six short articles that show how people in different parts of Kenya are using unarmed civilian protection to protect themselves and others in different contexts of violence.



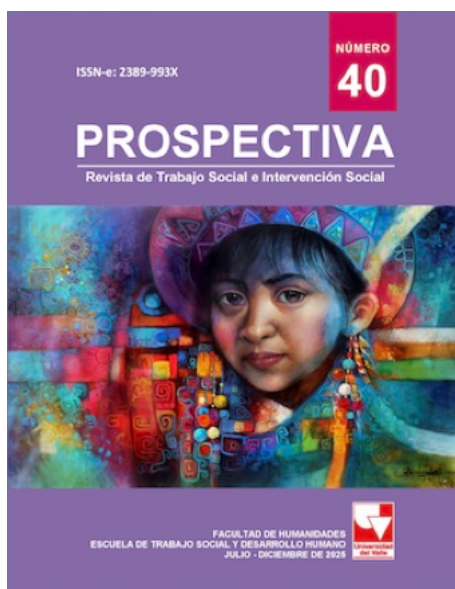
The *Creating Safer Space* project “[Civilian \(Self-\) Protection from Violent Conflict in Papua](#)” has published the article “[Violence and Civilian Strategy for Protection in West Papua, Indonesia](#)” in the *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*. It is authored by Arfiansyah.

The article discusses findings of the project’s research in Jayapura, Sorong, and Wamena. Building on the concept of agency and J. Barter’s classification of strategy for civilian protection, it finds that violence and strategies for civilian protection in West Papua are contextualized by local development, geopolitics, and demographic composition between transmigrants and indigenous Papuans, which also determine the agents’ capacity to respond to violence and to build protection strategies. The research contributes the concept of nonpartisan peace voice as a protection strategy. It highlights that a common feature of the protection strategy that the Papuans in the research locations share is the mobilization of both international and local networks.



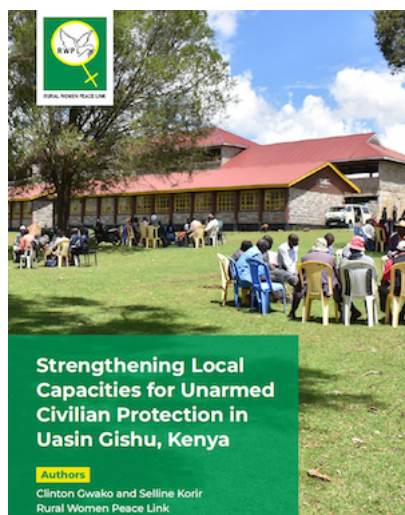
The team of the project “[Visualising early warning and preparedness in civilian protection](#)”, Chas Morrisson, Haji Elias Hillary, and Diria Vicky Thomas, have published a new article titled “[Cultures and practices of local civilian self-protection in South Sudan](#)” in the journal *Peacebuilding*.

The article explores South Sudanese cultural practices used for civilian self-protection, early warning and conflict preparedness, and their psychological implications. The authors find that cultural practices to avoid, postpone, or negotiate conflict show some ethnic distinctions, tend to be traditional and rely on spiritual or customary authority. While there are secular dimensions, a key aspect of these practices relates to esoteric protection, using defensive curses and sanctifying objects and places. The article argues that community self-protection practices emerge as a core aspect of cultural life and group identity, with resonance beyond immediate protection and responding to insecurity.



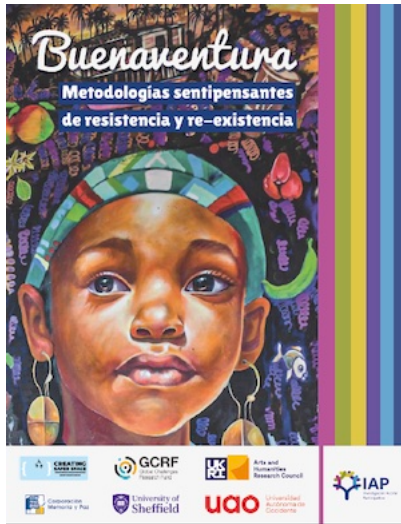
Team members of the project “[Art that Protects, phase 2: Networks as strategies for self-protection in the context of urban conflict in the city of Medellín, 2023](#)” have published a new article (in Spanish), under the title “[El papel del arte en el conflicto armado urbano en Medellín. David contra Goliat: redes vivas y autoprotección](#)”. It is authored by Beatriz E. Arias López, Laura Jiménez Ospina, and Sandra Benítez Diosa.

The article analyses the scope and dynamics of networking among artistic and cultural initiatives for self-protection in the city of Medellín. It finds that the organisations participating in the research form a non-hierarchical network structure based on political and aesthetic affinities, oriented towards an alternative popular artistic movement. Links between them are strengthened through the exchange of knowledge between established and emerging organisations, intergenerational relationships, and collective activities. The authors conclude that these ‘networks of joy’ represent a living movement and symbolise the metaphor of David against Goliath, in which nearly sixty collectives face 380 criminal groups in territories with little state presence. In adverse conditions, these organisations seek to create a cultural, ethical and political alternative for community protection and a cultural counter-offer, especially for the city’s youth.



Team members Clinton Gwako and Selline Korir, of the project [Strengthening Local Capacities for Unarmed Civilian Protection in Uasin Gishu, Kenya](#) have published a new [Project Report](#) on key findings, learnings, and recommendations.

The report summarises the research approach as well as the project’s most important findings regarding civilian protection mechanisms and related challenges in Uasin Gishu, and reflects on the contributions to knowledge the project has been able to make.



The team of the project “Community strategies for Unarmed Civilian Protection in South-West Colombia: local experiences and lessons learned” has published a Volume 2 of its Participatory Action Research Semillero (Seedbed) titled, “**Buena Ventura: Metodologías sentipensantes de resistencia y re-existencia**” (in Spanish; English version to follow soon).

The brochure discusses four PAR methodologies that build on the cultural richness of the Colombian Pacific region and are an expression of the collective cultural, spiritual and artistic values of the Afro-Pacific region, where the production of knowledge bears the emotional and intellectual imprint of knowledge produced through dialogue.

It is accompanied by **four videos about the community-based methodologies** discussed – the *comadreo* (informal chat), the *tertulia poética* (poetic gathering), the *sociodrama* (sociodrama), and the *teatro por la vida* (theatre for life) – in which community members talk about their experiences and learnings.

External News

The Global South Unit for Mediation at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio) has published a new report, which features its engagement with *Creating Safer Space* in 2024 on pages 8-9. [Download the report here](#).

The Center for Peace and Conflict Studies of the University of Rijeka (Croatia) is organising the hybrid conference “[The Power of the Local: Learning from Local Communities Pursuing Alternatives to Inter-Ethnic Violence](#)”, which will take place on Monday, 22nd September 2025, 10:00 – 16:00 hours CET. Visit their website for more information on how to join online.

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