

2.4.1 Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping

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Introduction

Unarmed civilian peacekeeping (UCP), also termed unarmed civilian protection, describes activities by which unarmed civilians protect other civilians and themselves in the midst of violent political conflict without weapons or threat of force. This is the case, for example, when UCP organizations accompany human rights defenders in Colombia and deter armed actors from carrying out attacks against these activists through their presence and proactive engagement strategies. It is also the case when UCP organizations use the network of relationships they have built with all armed and unarmed parties to a conflict to negotiate safe passage of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to a camp in South Sudan, or to bring forcefully recruited youth back to their families in Myanmar. As these examples suggest, UCP's foremost focus is on the reduction or prevention of physical violence and would hence first be associated with negative peace. In this chapter we argue, however, that UCP also makes major contributions to processes that may lead to positive peace. Not only does the unarmed civilian peacekeepers' protection and prevention work open up safe(r) space for actors working towards life enhancement and peace cultures. The way UCP works—its rootedness in principles of nonviolence, the primacy of local actors, independence, and civilian-to-civilian protection, and its key methodologies of proactive engagement, monitoring, relationship-building and capacity development—also crucially contributes to processes of positive peace by means of providing role models, offering alternative conflict resolution strategies, being

inclusive, and supporting self-sustaining structures of conflict resolution and prevention at community level. At times these processes help reconnect communities that have been fractured along ethnic, religious, or other lines, which supports a deeper peace over time.

Positive peace evolves from larger social structures, cultural systems, and policies as well as from individuals engaging in peace-enhancing efforts at the individual and local community level (Galtung 1996). With the focus of its efforts primarily at the local community level, UCP can play a major role in supporting these processes in that it complements high-level initiatives at peacemaking and peacebuilding. Unlike the more common form of peacekeeping by the United Nations (UN) and regional bodies such as the African Union, which usually operates with armed uniformed personnel and uses or threatens violence in order to protect civilians, UCP works to help create sufficient safety for local individuals and efforts to promote and expand peacebuilding, conflict transformation, and other peace-related activities, *and* provides nonviolent alternatives of doing so.

In this chapter, we explore in detail how UCP contributes to processes of positive peace in the transformation of violent political conflicts. The chapter proceeds in three steps. In a first step, we explain what unarmed civilian protection is, highlighting specifically its foundation in nonviolence and its focus on the local community level. In a second step, we explain in more detail how UCP works, by describing its core strategies of relationship-building as core method, ever-present process and vehicle of protection; encouragement of respect for human rights among armed actors and deterrence of violence, which are often used together; capacity-building and capacity-enhancement as ways to support sustainable peace infrastructures and self-protection mechanisms, including processes for negotiation and mediation of community conflict, without reliance on outside ‘enforcers’; as well as the provision of a role model for nonviolent conflict resolution, and often a reminder of Indigenous/traditional nonviolent methods of conflict resolution, while including all members of a community. We discuss the differences and similarities between

protection by outsiders vs. communities' self-protection, and also engage with limitations and challenges of UCP work.

In a third step, we explore in more depth the ways in which UCP activities can contribute to positive peace. These contributions include:

- the prevention of actual violence and harm (negative peace), in order to break cycles of revenge and provide examples of nonviolent conflict resolution, which will prevent local violence from spreading and provide safe(r) space for peace initiatives (positive peace);
- the protection of specific actors who work towards peace and rights;
- the inclusion of grassroots people in peace efforts, which overcomes the predominant focus on high-level actors and instead promotes the involvement of many people in processes such as relationship-building, dialogue, and training;
- the support, enhancement and training of local people in nonviolent strategies to prevent or self-protect from violence;
- the provision of role models for addressing conflicts nonviolently, which together with a recognition of Indigenous/traditional cultural practices for nonviolent conflict resolution may result in a change of attitudes and behaviours towards positive peace;
- the purposeful involvement of groups such as women and youth who are often marginalised but whose inclusion is essential to promoting positive peace;
- and, finally, the promotion of nonviolent strategies of conflict resolution.

We provide short examples from different UCP projects around the world to illustrate these linkages between UCP and positive peace.

In our conclusions, we summarize the main argument this chapter makes about the supporting role that UCP can play not only in setting the conditions for, but also contributing

directly to, processes of positive peace. The very principles and strategies upon which UCP relies, most importantly the principle of nonviolence and the strategies of relationship-building and the primacy of local actors, nurture a context that not only helps to ensure negative peace but is directly conducive to positive peace. It is this affinity between UCP and positive peace, which should make UCP the preferred choice whenever possible, when planning peacekeeping interventions to support peace processes in areas of political violence.

What is unarmed civilian peacekeeping?

UCP has been defined as

“[...] the practice of deploying unarmed civilians before, during, and after violent conflict, to prevent or reduce violence, to provide direct physical protection to other civilians, and to strengthen or build resilient local peace infrastructures. The purpose of UCP is to create a safer environment, or a ‘safer space’, for civilians to address their own needs, solve their own conflicts, and protect vulnerable individuals and populations in their midst. This ‘safer space’ is created through a strategic mix of key non-violent engagement methods, principles, values and skills” (Oldenhuis et al., 2015, p. 30).

This approach to peacekeeping by civilians for civilians seeks both to influence perpetrators of violence to change their behaviour as well as create the space for unarmed actors to work towards peace.

Modern UCP¹ has a track record of over thirty-five years of activities by a range of organizations, beginning with the activities of Peace Brigade International (PBI²; cf. Mahony and

¹ For a broader account of non-violent methods of interrupting violence, see e.g. Moser-Puangsuwan and Weber (2000); Gorur (2013).

² See PBI website, retrieved from <https://www.peacebrigades.org>

Eguren, 1997) to protect activists in Central America in the 1980s and subsequently spreading around the world through the work of a number of national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR),³ Witness for Peace (WFP⁴; cf. Griffin-Nolan, 2000) and Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP)⁵ (Julian and Schweitzer 2015; Weber, 1993). According to the Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping Database, the transnational UCP community of practice has grown from seven UCP organizations working in five countries and regions in conflict around the world in 1990 to 42 organizations doing unarmed civilian peacekeeping work in 42 political conflicts worldwide in 2017 (Selkirk College, 2018; cf. Janzen, 2014). There are also a number of national and local NGOs and initiatives in conflict regions engaging in some form of UCP work in addition to other organizational foci, which have not been accounted for in this database. In addition, the United Nations (UN) has increasingly recognised not only the protection of civilians as a major focus of its work, but also unarmed civilian strategies as means of working used by some of its agencies such as the OHCHR in Nepal (Mahony & Nash, 2012, p. 20). It is thus fair to say that UCP has steadily grown into a field of practice that is increasingly challenging armed approaches to peacekeeping and protection.

Amongst the NGOs that specialize in UCP there is significant variation in implementation of UCP work in terms of underlying theories, preferred methods, and organizational practices (Wallis, 2009; Furnari, 2014, 2016; Mahony, 2006; Schweitzer, 2010; Oldenhuis et al., 2015). Some organizations engage only in specific types of UCP strategies (e.g., protective accompaniment/presence), while others make use of the wider spectrum of the UCP ‘toolbox’. Some organizations are professionalized INGOs who deploy paid staff for longer stints in a conflict region, while others work on the basis of volunteers sent out for a few weeks or months only. Some organizations, for

³ See IFOR website, retrieved from <http://www.ifor.org/#mission>

⁴ See WFP website, retrieved from <http://witnessforpeace.org>

⁵ See NP website, retrieved from <https://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org>

instance EAPPI,⁶ emphasize the role of volunteers when they return home, providing education and bringing pressure on their own governments to work more effectively for peace. Professionals as well as volunteers may work at the frontlines in the midst of violent conflict or be involved in international advocacy. Organizations also differ in how they choose to fund their work, that is, whether they accept official donors such as governments and intergovernmental bodies, or whether they rely exclusively on private donations or membership. This difference is rooted in a more fundamental controversy about the role of nonpartisanship and impartiality in UCP work: while for some organizations nonpartisanship and impartiality are core principles which translate into relationship-building with all armed and unarmed parties to a conflict, for other organizations, especially those working in contexts of extreme power differentials between the conflict parties such as in the conflict between Israel and Palestine, nonpartisanship is seen as unworkable and being ‘on the side of the oppressed’ as an imperative (for a discussion of different organizations’ core principles, see in detail Coy, 2012; Schweitzer, 2018a, 2018b, 2019). These differences aside, what unites all UCP organizations is their rootedness in the core principles of nonviolence and the primacy of the local.

Nonviolence has been shown to be an effective strategy in relation to a range of political activities including resistance (Stephan & Chenoweth, 2011) and communities’ self-protection from violence (Kaplan, 2016). In UCP work, nonviolence is used to reduce the level of violence towards civilians by changing the behaviour of armed actors. The US-American feminist and advocate of nonviolent social change, Barbara Deming (1971), has explained the effects of nonviolence through the metaphor of the ‘two hands.’ The first hand is raised to signal ‘stop,’ indicating that nonviolence demands a halt to violent and offensive behaviour. In the case of UCP, this often quite literally means engaging with armed actors and saying ‘Stop the threats, attacks, retaliation and kidnap of civilians.’ The other hand of nonviolence is outstretched, offering the possibility of listening and

⁶ Ecumenical Accompaniment Project Palestine and Israel is a project of the World Council of Churches.

dialogue as the most radical component of nonviolence. The outstretched hand recognises that people are more than their behaviour, and that all life has value. In UCP work, the approach of ‘proactive engagement’ with a wide and extensive network of as many actors as possible, both armed and civilian, builds on this possibility of listening and dialogue. UCP relies on both ‘hands’: it uses strategies of deterrence of violence against civilians as well as strategies of encouragement of respectful behaviour towards civilians amidst violent political conflict for which dialogue is essential.

UCP’s activities take place at the grassroots level of communities in conflicted-affected areas and are sustained over longer periods of time. Unlike their armed counterparts who often live in bunkerized compounds apart from the population they are to protect (Duffield, 2010; Fisher, 2017), unarmed civilian peacekeepers usually live in the communities they work with, which allows them to be attuned to the dynamics at the local level and to seek the involvement of local actors in their work, thus taking the principle of the primacy of the local seriously in their situational and conflict analyses and their programme planning. Living and working in the community contributes directly to accurate situational analysis and relationship-building. While living in local communities may not always be possible for all staff members, e.g., due to travel restrictions for international staff by the host government (as is the case in Myanmar) or due to violence being directed specifically at UCP personnel (as was the case in Mindanao, Philippines, during a period of time), UCP organizations will seek for ways to work directly with grassroots communities, e.g. by deploying national staff to whom travel restrictions do not apply or by training communities to self-protect where outside presence is impossible. In some cases, UCP work may not be possible at all (Venturi 2014); since it relies on armed actors’ acceptance, overt hostility/violence directed at the UCP organization will cause it to withdraw at least temporarily until the situation has changed (e.g., a Christian Peacemaker Team withdrew from Baghdad after members had been kidnapped and one killed). That said, UCP organizations have successfully worked in a range of violent political

conflicts of different types and intensities on all continents and encompassing countries and regions such as the Balkans, Bougainville, Colombia, Georgia, Guatemala, Iraq, Mexico, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, South Sudan, and the United States, to name but a few, testifying to UCPs versatility to adapt to very different contexts and types of political violence (e.g., Beckman & Solberg, 2013; Coy, 2001; Easthom, 2013, 2015; Engelbrecht & Kaushik, 2015; Furnari, 2016; Gehrmann et al., 2015; Gunduz & Torralba, 2014; Lindsay-Poland, 2016; McCarthy & Pickney, 2016; Moser-Puangsuwan, 1996; Peace Brigades International [PBI], 2004, 2009, 2011, n.d.; Reiman, 2010; Schweitzer, 2012, 2018a, 2018b, 2019; Schweitzer & Clark, 2002). So how does UCP work in practice?

How does UCP work to protect people?

UCP builds on a range of key methodologies around relationship-building, proactive engagement using strategies of deterrence and encouragement, capacity development among local communities to protect and work towards peace themselves, and providing a role model based on nonviolent engagement.

Relationship building is a core method, process, and vehicle of peacekeeping in general and UCP in particular. Furnari's research has shown how in many different interventions peacekeepers viewed creating good relationships with others as essential to their work (Furnari, 2014, 2015, 2018; Oldenhuis et al., 2015). For UCP organizations, building good working relationships usually means engaging with most parties to a conflict. Being perceived as nonpartisan, independent, and unarmed (i.e., non-threatening) is seen by most organizations as conducive to this, although not all UCP subscribe to the principle of nonpartisanship, as mentioned above. With regard to the armed actors, good working relationships thus ideally include groups on all sides (state military, insurgent groups, militias etc.) and at all levels (from commanders to rank and file members) though this is not always possible. With regard to unarmed actors, relationship building takes place with and

within the local communities who are to be protected as well as with stakeholders at regional and national levels.

Good relationships with as broad a spectrum of actors as possible—i.e., ideally with all state and non-state armed groups, authorities at different levels, other relevant local stakeholders as well as the violence-affected communities and different groups within them—will enable UCP organizations to carry out their work, or to carry it out more easily. For example, in places as different as Indonesia and Colombia, PBI volunteers have found that developing good relationships with soldiers at various check points makes it possible to move more smoothly through the check points with those they are accompanying. In Kachin state, Myanmar, local civilian monitors used their network of established relationships with the Burmese army, the Kachin rebel group and politicians to negotiate the safe passage of internally displaced persons, who had fled from aerial bombings to the forest, into the nearest city, and to reclaim youth that had been forcefully recruited into the armed groups. Relationship-building also educates armed actors about the legal basis for the protection of civilians (such as International Humanitarian Law, Human Rights Law, UN Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security and Children in Armed Conflict, etc.), raising their awareness and showing how the protection of civilians in armed conflict can work. Talking about relationships developed in Mindanao, an NP staff member noted that as relationships were built with government officials, the army, and other armed groups, the persons they interacted with became interested in NP's analysis and were influenced towards preventing harm to civilians.

Due to the time-consuming task of networking and relationship-building, Furnari and Julian (2013) have estimated that it takes a new UCP project about a year to start being effective; however, where a UCP organization works with local staff who can use already established contacts with armed groups and other stakeholders to the conflict, project implementation may be quicker. In addition to good relationships enabling UCP organizations to engage in direct protection tasks, they can also mobilize these networks to connect different groups of society, facilitate communication

and dialogue, and contribute to multi-track processes of mediation and negotiation by linking local communities to higher levels of politics or other international intervening organizations. If dialogue is the most radical component of nonviolence, then building good relationships with all sectors of society is the foundation that enables dialogue to happen. In this way, as Furnari et al. (2015, p. 8) have argued, “the work of UCP contributes at times to both peacemaking and peacebuilding.”

UCP work involves both strategies of deterrence, which are mostly conducive to negative peace as the reduction of levels of violence which provides safer space for peacebuilding activities, as well as strategies of encouragement, which aim at changing violent actors’ behaviour, thus contributing more directly to structures and institutions of positive peace such as alternative conflict resolution mechanisms or a culture of respect for civilians’ rights. Proactive engagement through strategies of interpositioning, protective presence and protective accompaniment builds on the logic of deterrence of violence through the provision of presence (see e.g. Mahony & Eguren, 1997; Mahony, 2006; Coy, 2001; Schirch, 2006). Generally speaking, protective accompaniment of human rights defenders is probably the most classic example of strategies of deterrence of violence by UCP organizations, employed in many countries around the world. By watching (including monitoring, investigating and reporting) both those who are threatened by violence and those who threaten and perpetrate violence and being visible in this watchful presence, UCP raises the stakes for violent actors to harm civilians. In this way the behaviour of perpetrators is changed at checkpoints, along paths women take to collect water, when people are farming, and at meetings. Protective presence can work through interpositioning, that is when UCP staff stand between armed groups or armed actors and their civilian targets, as well as through dissuasion, when UCP staff are seen to be by the side of the armed actors, dissuading potential violations before they can happen. In this sense, strategies of encouragement also play a role in protective presence, and UCP organizations usually stress that relationship-building enhances the prospects of protective presence. For example, in Columbia, when a human rights activist was being threatened, perhaps by someone

in the police, the international UCP staff called on the police Chief, praising him for his good work in protecting people and stating they were sure he would protect this person. The threats stopped, due to the intervention that both encouraged good behaviour and let the police know they were being watched.

Strategies of encouragement build hugely on good working relationships and are enhanced by strategies such as monitoring of ceasefires or peace agreements, multitrack dialogue and confidence-building between groups. A large part of the work of local UCP staff in Kachin state, Myanmar, for example, consisted in building relationships with armed actors to inform them about the work of UCP and about the bilateral agreement to protect civilians in the violent conflict, which the army and the non-state armed group have signed and on the basis of which civilian agreement monitors carry out their work. Making the terms of the agreement, and their international legal basis more widely known among the armed actors opened up the space for UCP to work and helped raise awareness of and encouraged compliance with the protection of civilians on all sides.

UCP works at the grassroots level of local communities and is based on the primacy of local actors in their programming and implementation work. A large part of this is networking, listening, and dialogue, as discussed above. Yet UCP organizations also put a major emphasis on building and/or enhancing local capacities to enable or strengthen communities to protect themselves and to work towards peaceful mechanisms of addressing conflict. This can include: strategies of early warning - early response (EWER), which help communities to plan ahead to avoid violent attacks or displacement; mechanisms of rumour control to assess actual threats and keep misinformation from escalating into violence; skills in mediation and negotiation; and building local UCP infrastructures for self-protection. For example, in Myanmar a network of community-based peace observers has been developed. In some cases, when these observers have learned of a violation of a peace agreement or local laws carried out by an armed group or the army, they have been able to discuss the violation with the group and get the group to change behaviours. This is only possible

because they are a network of observers, working together and pooling and training their capacity for engagement with armed actors. Capacity building and capacity-enhancement ensure the sustainability of UCP work, as empowered communities do not need to rely on the constant presence of ‘enforcers,’ be they unarmed or armed peacekeepers, for their own safety.

By using nonviolent methods, UCP organizations also provide a role model of unarmed conflict resolution. They show that unarmed strategies can be highly effective in protecting civilian lives, by involving people in their own protection and using different methods of deterrence and encouragement to change armed actors’ behaviour in order to create safer space for people’s daily activities as well as for peace initiatives and human rights work. The many cases of successful nonviolent protection of civilians by civilians in different contexts have thrown into sharp relief the widely held assumption that peacekeeping necessarily involves the deployment of armed military personnel, i.e., that (the threat of) violence is necessary to change the behaviour of armed actors. In their comparative analysis of tasks carried out by traditional armed peacekeepers and unarmed civilian peacekeepers respectively, Julian and Gasser (2018) found that, with the exception of rebuilding security institutions, all tasks of armed peacekeepers have also, at times, been carried out successfully by unarmed civilians. In addition, unarmed civilian peacekeepers were able to create and support ‘weapons free zones’ or ‘peace zones.’ Existing UCP practice thus challenges the dominant mode of delivery of peacekeeping as requiring armed military personnel. The authors warn that by using armed military to keep the peace, the “cycle of violence” is reinforced through the message that violence is necessary to stop violence, thereby often sidelining the impact and role of civilians and civilian leadership in building peace (Julian & Gasser, 2018, p. 36). UCP offers the alternative vision that unarmed civilians can reduce violence and also contribute to longer-term peace by using nonviolence as a mechanism for peacekeeping.

UCP often also acts as a reminder for local communities of Indigenous/traditional nonviolent methods of conflict resolution, which sometimes have been subdued by the recent

dominance of violence but may be reinvigorated as alternative ways to conflict resolution, which often include larger parts of a community. For instance in South Sudan, cattle raiding between different ethnic groups has gone on for generations. The recent civil war with Sudan and now within South Sudan, has flooded the area with guns. Thus these conflicts have become much more deadly, lead to larger levels of violence and are less likely to be resolved. One UCP project brought traditional leaders together to discuss what to do, for several days, several times, thus reviving an Indigenous mechanism for dialogue. This use of a traditional method led to agreements to end the ongoing retaliations and to use these traditional meetings in future to settle any disagreements, thereby avoiding further bloodshed.

UCP organizations also work to create new possibilities for community-wide participation in protection and peacebuilding processes, e.g. by working directly with groups such as women or youth, who are often marginalised as proactive actors in protection efforts. The Women Peacekeeper Teams (WPT) in South Sudan are an example of how the work with women, and their collaboration with men, empowered these women as protection actors engaged in the safety of their own communities (Nonviolent Peaceforce [NP], 2017).

All these key methodologies - relationship-building, proactive engagement using strategies of deterrence and encouragement, capacity development among local communities to protect and work towards peace themselves, and providing a role model based on nonviolent engagement - can be implemented by international UCP staff or 'outsiders' to a violent conflict as well as by 'insiders' such as local staff or the communities themselves. In discussions over whether international, national or local UCP staff were best suited to provide protection to civilians, representatives of different UCP organizations agreed that there was no clear universal advantage of one type of staff over the other; rather, whether international, national or local unarmed civilian peacekeepers were most effective depended highly on the context of UCP work and that often a mixture playing to the strengths of each group was best (Schweitzer, 2018a). In this sense, visible international presence

can be a plus in protective accompaniment, for example, as it raises the stakes for armed actors such as the military or the police, making it harder to get away with violations without risking reporting. When engaging with armed groups who do not care about their international reputation or build on an image of indiscriminate violence against foreigners, however, international presence can have detrimental effects on protection prospects. Careful situational conflict analysis building on established networks and involving the knowledge of local staff and beneficiaries will help UCP organizations decide which course to take. Working closely with local staff, or enhancing the self-protection of communities, will also make civilian protection more sustainable, as skills, methods and knowledge remain available if and when an international UCP organization exits a region or country. For example, in a project oriented toward work in Syria, activists in community networks participated in trainings outside the country, and then returned to their communities to develop UCP type protection and social cohesion projects. It would have been impossible for foreigners, or even people from other parts of Syria, to do this work.

While the previous paragraphs have argued that UCP works to protect civilians in the midst of violence and outlined the main methodologies by which it works, it needs to be mentioned that UCP is not without limitations and challenges, of course (see in more detail Schweitzer, 2018a, 2018b, 2019). The foremost limitation is UCP's dependence on the general acceptance by the armed actors of its presence and work; where violent actors directly target unarmed civilian peacekeepers and their strategies of deterrence and encouragement have no leverage, e.g. due to the violent group's ideology, or where governments refuse to work with UCP organizations, UCP work cannot be forced upon these actors. UCP projects have also been rather small in scope so far, and the question of whether they can be scaled up to provide an alternative to large UN missions is still debated. Nonviolent Peaceforce's South Sudan project (NPSS) has grown from around 10 staff in 2010 when it was established to nearly 200 staff in 2018, constituting NP's largest UCP project so far. While this is still relatively small as compared to large contingents of armed peacekeepers in the

country, NPSS has been effective in protecting thousands of civilians from violence. At the same time, however, NPSS's growth has also shown the challenges that scaling up of UCP work brings with it, not least the challenge to recruit, train and retain a large pool of staff with the right skill set and attitude to carry out UCP work. Funding has been another challenge for UCP organizations who, unlike their armed UN counterparts, have to engage in continuous fund-raising in order to carry out their work and who often face ethical questions around funding, e.g. whether to accept funding from Northern governments who are involved in military activities in the conflicted region (like the US or the UK in the Middle East, for instance). Fundraising is closely linked to project evaluation and documentation, which may also prove difficult to carry out, especially in volatile situations of violence which causes ongoing displacement, where tracking and monitoring of beneficiaries can be difficult, such as during the urban warfare situations in Iraq and Syria, thus making it challenging to provide funders with the evidence base of UCP effectiveness.

It is challenges such as these that have prompted UCP organizations' calls for the recognition of UCP as an established field of practice with proven effectiveness that should, if at all possible, be considered as a credible alternative to armed peacekeeping in contexts of civilians' protection from political violence and peacekeeping interventions. It should also be considered, we argue, as a form of peacekeeping that goes beyond the provision of negative peace and directly contributes to processes that may result in lasting positive peace.

How can UCP contribute to enhancing, promoting and maintaining peace?

UCP intersects with many of the key areas of change that are required for positive peace. By reducing levels of violence and increasing opportunities for (re)building networks, relationships and trust, successful UCP provides the space for local people to create peaceful structures and institutions, which are essential for long term sustainable peace. And although UCP's focus is on reducing levels of violence, we argue that the UCP approach - precisely because it fundamentally

differs both from traditional UN military peacekeeping protection through its principle of nonviolence and also from the high-level peace processes and development plans of international interventions through its principle of the primacy of the local - can have a transformative effect in moving from a state of violence to a state of sustainable peace. In the following, we explore six ways in which successful UCP may contribute to building positive peace in communities living in the midst of violent political conflict.

Firstly and most basically, UCP activities contribute to safer space, by preventing actual violence and harm against civilians and sometimes by reducing overall levels of violence, for example when UCP interventions are successful in breaking cycles of revenge, or when proactive engagement at the local level prevents localised—sometimes even domestic—forms of violence from escalating into community or regional violence. Safer space enables people to carry out everyday activities around livelihoods, education and community life, which usually suffer or even grind to a halt during times of violence. Safer space is also the precondition for peacebuilding activities to emerge and be implemented (Anderson and Olson 2003; Eguren 2015; Giffen 2013). While the reduction or prevention of physical violence is usually rather associated with negative peace, UCP's methodologies of halting or preventing violence—the relationship-building, proactive strategies of deterrence and encouragement, capacity development among local communities, and provision of a role model—implement this protection work in a specific way that goes way beyond the mere deterrence of violent actors. By focusing on changes in armed actors' behaviour, methodologies of relationship-building and dialogue, and capacities and strategies of self-protection among violence-affected communities, the unarmed civilian version of peacekeeping often lays some of the foundations for long-term peacebuilding processes. For instance, as mentioned above, NP has supported the development of women's peace teams in South Sudan. These groups of women are taking on new roles in their communities and developing new relationships while they work for peace (NP, 2017). This will last long after the present civil war and related violence has

ceased. Women play an important role in developing positive peace in all manner of forms in their communities. In another example, Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) in Palestine work to protect communities and people, while modelling nonviolence, so that communities will still exist when the fighting finally stops while also reminding people of nonviolent options (McCarthy & Pickney, 2016; Schweitzer, 2018b; on CPT see Kern, 2009).

Secondly and more specifically, UCP makes a contribution to positive peace by protecting specific people and organizations and thus enable them to continue and expand their work in the midst of and after violent political conflict. Defenders of human rights, labour rights, women's rights, or Indigenous people's rights, religious leaders working for peace, social leaders working for land rights, and many more, can all be threatened with violence because of their work. State and/or non-state armed actors may try to stop these activists because they fear that their violent or violating behaviour could be exposed, or because they fear a curtailment of their privileges such as land use or access to natural resources. Such rights and peace activists often also hold the parties to a political conflict accountable in the implementation of peace agreements. Colombia is a case in point, where violence against social leaders and activists has continued at high levels even after a peace agreement was negotiated and signed by the Colombian government and the guerrilla group FARC in 2016, with one activist or social leader being injured or killed roughly every four days. By protecting rights and peace activists, UCP organizations ensure that these important actors, who are key to achieving and maintaining the legal, economic, social and political conditions for peace over time, are able to carry on with their work. Peace Brigade International (PBI), for example, has carried out protection work for and with human rights defenders in countries including Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico and Nepal, adapting its approach to the respective local context of carrying out this work (e.g., PBI, 2004, 2009, 2011, n.d.)⁷. It is a specific characteristic of UCP that, by virtue of its unarmed and nonviolent approach, it is a method of

⁷ See also the PBI website: <https://www.peacebrigades.org> (accessed 15 December 2018).

protection which is suitable for those who campaign for peace because it matches their values and work approaches. Additionally, due to the basic principle of the primacy of the local, UCP does not try to influence activists' work programmes or choices in activities. This has made UCP organizations specialising in protective presence/accompaniment a valued partner for local actors working towards positive peace (Eguren, 2015; Mahony & Eguren, 1997; Mahony, 2006; Coy, 2001; Schirch, 2006).

Thirdly, UCP contributes to a broader participation in peacebuilding processes because it includes local grassroots people and communities in the peace efforts and does not privilege or focus exclusively on armed actors, high profile politicians or other powerful actors/institutions in its approach. By involving many people from different sides and backgrounds in their activities, UCP organizations support connections across divides, which are conducive to peacebuilding processes and social cohesion beyond urgent protection needs (Lederach, 1997; Wallis, 2015). This is achieved through UCP's methodologies outlined above. UCP is based on building relationships and connections with and, importantly, between local people and communities, which is a basis for further interaction, communication, dialogue, negotiation and the like. This helps to (re)build social capital so essential for positive peace. Relationship-building with many different people sometimes opens up hitherto unrecognised ways of communication or influencing, and can unveil the skills and capacities of hitherto ignored actors. Through their principle of the primacy of the local, which guides UCP organizations' planning and programming, they also demonstrate that civilian leadership can have a significant role and voice in processes that halt or prevent violence and build positive peace. And UCP's methodology of capacity-building or enhancement through trainings can enhance these local actors' ability to contribute to local peace processes. Since violent political conflicts often manifest in locally specific forms, and local conflicts may escalate into regional or national conflicts (Autesserre, 2014; Kalyvas, 2003), the participatory work UCP does at local community level is essential to prospects of sustainable, positive peace. For example, in Guatemala

peace and rights activists protected by PBI eventually were elected to parliament and civil society leadership positions.

Fourthly, through its inclusive and broad approach to protection, UCP supports, enhances and trains local people in their strategies to halt, prevent and transform violence. This training can be directed at local communities to enhance their self-protection strategies, for example strategies that they can use to predict new threats of violence (early warning) and prepare responses for when they erupt (early response). It can aim at training local people in UCP methodologies so that they can protect others. For instance, in Syria, activists trained in UCP have developed programs and outreach in their communities and schools addressing not just violence prevention and self-protection, but also tolerance for and connections across differences. It can also mean training the armed groups about UCP and civilians' rights so they understand their role in making sure civilians are not targeted as a result of their actions. In both the Philippines and Myanmar, UCP teams have trained military personnel in international human rights law and international agreements about child soldiers, women, etc. that their governments have signed. In many cases this has been well received and appreciated, sharing information the soldiers did not have. All these actions and responses build up knowledge that makes it more likely that potentially violent behaviours are noticed early and that threats can be reduced. Being based entirely on the principle of nonviolence, this approach may challenge fundamental attitudes about what is possible in terms of civilian-to-civilian protection, especially in areas with a long conflict history where violence has become a normal modus operandi, and thus provide a role model for nonviolent protection and conflict resolution. UCP thereby also works towards a culture of peace, as it demonstrates that protection and conflict resolution are achievable through the work of civilians. And, as discussed at above, sometimes those civilians are reminded of and activate traditional cultural practices of nonviolent conflict resolution that can contribute to context-sensitive approaches to building lasting peace.

Fifthly, UCP purposefully draws groups often excluded from peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding processes, such as women and youth, into the protection activities and recognises and enhances their own existing protection strategies and leverage for protection work. It thereby widens the scope of protection activities that are necessary and available to use in building a safer and more peaceful environment and lays the foundations of inclusion necessary for positive peace to emerge. In Sri Lanka, a local NGO developed youth-led *shanti sena*⁸—peace army teams to work in their communities to help bridge divides between different ethnic groups. In South Sudan, as already mentioned, women’s peace teams are making a big contribution now and change expectations of women’s work (NP 2017). In Myanmar and in South Sudan, UCP projects have developed specific programs to include youth in peace work.

Last not least, UCP operates in an environment where conflicts need to be addressed and resolved, and although UCP itself is not a conflict resolution mechanism, it nonetheless promotes dealing with violent conflict in its immediacy, and it does so by entirely nonviolent means (cf. Lederach 2005). These nonviolent protection strategies and methods demonstrate that violence is not the only option for resolving conflict and they provide the tools to address future conflict nonviolently as well. The ability for conflict to be resolved nonviolently is essential for positive peace. For example, UCP teams in Mindanao have supported and become involved in mediating *rido* – violent conflicts between family clans. This both decreases immediate violence and its potential to expand to regional conflict, but also helps to develop the practice of using mediation to resolve *rido* (Furnari, 2016, pp. 136-174).

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that unarmed civilian peacekeeping (UCP), while primarily focused on the reduction and prevention of violence, can make a major contribution to processes that work

⁸ On the origins of *shanti sena* in India, see Weber (1996).

towards positive peace by virtue of its basic principles and core methodologies, which differ substantially from traditional peacekeeping interventions. UCP is sustainable and long-lasting in that it not only provides protection to civilians in the midst of violent political conflict, but also works with local communities in this task. Its methodologies and core strategies, based on non-negotiable principles such as nonviolence and the primacy of local actors, do much more than just reduce levels of violence; they have the potential to nurture the context for positive peace by creating safer space for peace activities, protecting peace and rights activists, broadening the ownership base for peace processes by working with a broad range of people at the local level, providing a role model and strategies of nonviolent protection and conflict resolution, and including those groups that are otherwise often marginalized from peace processes. Its core methodology of relationship-building, connecting actors from many sides and levels, makes UCP more comprehensive than high-level attempts at protecting civilians and resolving conflicts, and is more attuned to the context-dependence and logics of political violence in its local manifestations and dynamics. Given its proven effectiveness in violent conflicts of different types and intensity around the world, future research could aim to address some of the challenges of UCP work, especially its potential to be scaled up to become not only a credible, but also a serious alternative to violence-based peacekeeping and peacebuilding interventions (Carriere, 2011; Furnari et al., 2015; Rossi, 2015; Venturi, 2015).

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