



Courtesy of Nonviolent Peaceforce

## Creating Safe Spaces for Conflict-Affected Children

Insecurity and displacement increase needs for all conflict-affected populations; however, children are uniquely impacted by violence and protection concerns.

In January 2017, USAID Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) partner Nonviolent Peaceforce began efforts to support vulnerable conflict-displaced populations sheltering in Unity State's Leer town. With few secure spaces in the temporary displacement sites, significant child protection concerns arose, including movement restrictions, insufficient food, lack of a safe space to play, and a lack of post-trauma support.

In response to these needs, Nonviolent Peaceforce provided mentoring and capacity-building support to Women in

Action (WiA), a local community-based organization, to develop child-friendly spaces (CFS) and engage with traumatized children.\*

Nonviolent Peaceforce introduced WiA staff to six new games that address issues including community protection, identification of vulnerable people, mine risk education, and sequential learning for young children. Nonviolent Peaceforce also demonstrated how life skills trainings can be incorporated into CFS activities and how debriefing activities with children can increase learning.

“Please, we want to serve these children better, and to do that we need support like what you have given to us. These games give some better ideas about how to engage with the children, because they have nothing else to do. There is no school, no football matches, and no safe place for them to play to forget what they have seen,” said Gatluak, a WiA volunteer.

“These activities will help the children learn by playing,” Gatluak continued. “We don't always need to be talking to them to teach; sometimes they learn by doing.”

Nonviolent Peaceforce will continue to support safe spaces for conflict-affected children in South Sudan through both direct support and capacity-building assistance to community groups.

*\*WiA received operational support, but no funding, from Nonviolent Peaceforce for this program.*