

## Summary of Global Protection Forum Session 5

*Speakers: Overseas Development Institute, Nonviolent Peaceforce, Norwegian Refugee Council, SIDA.*

How do affected civilians engage with armed actors to protect themselves? This session considered different forms of proactive engagement with armed actors to enhance their responsiveness to community protection needs, reduce violence within their ranks, or support unarmed civilian protection efforts. It demystified the engagement with armed actors as an impossible feat or a compromise to one's security. Discussions reflected on the implications for protection and peace actors, and opportunities to strengthen complementarity between humanitarian and peace action.

Speakers from South Sudan highlighted the risks faced by youth, including forced involvement in criminal activities and lack of access to education, as well as the distrust between the community and the police. However, positive developments were also noted, such as the successful application of a strategy for dialogue and trust-building, and the formation of a community leadership for peace and stability, including Nonviolent Peaceforce's efforts to engage with the youth, build trust, promote peacebuilding activities, and train the police on unarmed civilian protection.

NRC shared experience with humanitarian mediation efforts in CAR, emphasizing the importance of sustained efforts in strengthening community capacities in mediation and conflict resolution. A [new ODI case study report](#) finds that communities in CAR often exercise considerable influence over armed groups. The report highlights that too often external interventions, including those from humanitarian protection actors, undermine and frustrate these community-level efforts. This calls for approaches that aim to reduce and prevent violence to build on existing community action and agency. To do this effectively, the report recommends the humanitarian protection actors work more in complementarity with peace actors and learn from their practice.

The importance of creativity, experimentation, and learning from each other in addressing complex issues related to violence was emphasised. Overall, speakers highlighted the need for continued learning from the practitioners in the field, highlighting the importance of community-based protection, prevention of violence, and multi-year financing for effective humanitarian response. There is a need for a more coordinated effort between humanitarian, peacebuilding, and human rights actors to achieve common protection outcomes.