

PURDUE PEACE PROJECT

A Locally Led Approach to Resolving a Chieftaincy Dispute in Berekum, Ghana: Summary of Project Impact and Indicators of Impact

Project Overview

PPP's work focused on preventing political violence between two political parties and ensuring the resolution of a 13-year-old chieftaincy dispute. The dispute erupted after a very popular chief passed away. The two factions in the dispute each believed a different person should have been named his successor. Because the Berekum chief at the time PPP became involved was not recognized by the majority of the citizenry, he was unable to perform certain functions necessary to this role, which local actors indicated led to years of failed communication and stalled education and development in the region.

Indicators of Impact

The following are considered indicators that the Berekum chieftaincy dispute project has contributed to a reduction in the likelihood of political violence. Indicators are given based on comparative data over time as well as specific critical incidents that have occurred.

Comparative

- According to the data collected prior to the two-day actor meeting, the original site visit, data collection, and actor meeting brought together, for the first time in 12 years, 25 members from the various actor groups in the community to discuss the impact of the dispute and what needed to be done to encourage resolution.
- In 2012, the Berekum Peace Committee (BPC) was established for the purpose seeing that the Judicial Committee of the Regional House of Chiefs would hear the case and provide a verdict in the name of peace. The 8-member committee of local citizens actively worked to prevent violence and promote the speedy resolution of the dispute engaging in a variety of activities including community outreach, meeting with key stakeholders to advocate peace, media coverage, attending judicial hearings, and peace marches, among other activities.
- The opposing factions of the youth unified to put an end to violence surrounding the two political parties, announcing that both groups would accept the chosen chief.
- The BPC's efforts contributed to speeding up the resolution of the chieftaincy dispute. A 13-year chieftaincy dispute that had been delayed in court prior to PPP's involvement was resolved approximately 14 months after PPP and the BPC became involved. The Berekum court voted on the chieftaincy dispute on September 9, 2013, and the verdict was in favor of Dasebre Amankuna Diawuo 11 (aka Dr. Leo Ofori) the Paramount Chief of Berekum. The court also ruled on a process to be used to determine future Berekum chiefs.
- Since the court ruling, significant changes in the community include peacefully inaugurating a community statue, initiating an educational and health fund that community members contributed to, a clean-up campaign in Berekum, and naming of local streets, among others.

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- BPC members have become recognized as peacebuilders in their community and remain vigilant about potential triggers of violence, mobilizing as needed to take action.

Critical Incidents

- The Judiciary issued the ruling without any violence breaking out. The BPC members had appealed both publicly and privately for peace to both sides through a variety of activities and media leading up to and alongside the ruling.
- After the court ruling, the blessing of the community statue was meaningful because this particular statue had been damaged as a result of the conflict among the two groups. These activities are significant in that they presented opportunities where violence could have occurred had one or both sides fully rejected the ruling. In particular, previous attempts to inaugurate the community statue had been blocked, sabotaged, and threatened.
- The BPC were instrumental in the reporting and arrest of an individual who would have gone on the radio to incite the people of Berekum to violence, calling the chief a thief and a liar.
- The BPC has developed a good reputation in Berekum and the surrounding communities. Neighboring communities have called upon the BPC to consult with them on chieftaincy and other issues that threaten peace, including a sub-chief dispute in Kato. The Kato Queen Mother herself acknowledged the role that the BPC had played in helping prevent violence in Kato. They also travelled to communities outside the Berekum paramountcy involved in a land dispute and advocated for peace on radio and at religious institutions.

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