

A Locally Led Approach to Preventing Inter-Ethnic Religious Violence in Nandom, Ghana: Summary of Project Impact and Indicators of Impact

Project Overview

The Purdue Peace Project (PPP) has also been involved in helping to prevent violence between different Islamic ethnic groups over the appointment of a vice-Imam in Nandom, Ghana. In early July 2015 PPP's West Africa Program Manager received word about the threat of bloody conflict between the Moshi, the dominant Islamic ethnic group, and the seven other ethnic groups due to the Moshi Chief Imam's appointment of his own son as the vice-Imam. The tensions between the ethnic groups heightened to the extent that police protection was required at the mosque for Friday prayers. Within days of receiving such reports, PPP's West Africa Program Manager organized an actor meeting of all the ethnic groups to identify ways forward with the help of Nandom Youth for Peace and Development (NYPAD), a group of local youth engaged in peacebuilding efforts that emerged from another PPP initiative in the Nandom area (see **Nandom Land Disputes**).

Indicators of Impact

The following are indicators that the inter-ethnic religious violence project has contributed to a reduction in the likelihood of political violence. Indicators are based on comparative data over time as well as specific critical incidents that have occurred.

Comparative

- Approximately 45 representatives of various Islamic ethnic groups attended the actor meeting held in July 2015.
- During the actor meeting, one of the ethnic groups suggested that the vice-Imam be someone outside of Nandom altogether.
- Since the actor meeting, there has been relative calm among the ethnic groups. No incidents of violence have been reported.
- Soon after the actor meeting, the Nandom paramount chief intervened in the conflicts and appointed a man from the regional capital, Wa, as the vice-Imam.
- In a focus group of actor meeting participants conducted in September 2015 by PPP researchers, the respondents noted that this appointment was accepted by the ethnic groups primarily because of the actor meeting where they had discussed the need for peace.
- Although the ethnic groups are not completely satisfied with the Nandom chief's decision, their expression of their displeasure is by non-violent means, such as limiting their contributions to the mosque.

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Critical Incidents

- A peace committee emerged from this actor meeting, comprised of members of various ethnic groups. This peace committee led delegations to visit the Chief Imam, and the individual whom the seven minority ethnic groups wanted as vice-Imam.
- In their meeting with the man from the Wangara ethnic group who the minority ethnic groups want as vice-Imam, he agreed to meet with the Chief Imam to apologize for any perceived transgressions.
- The Wangara man himself called on PPP's West Africa Program Manager after the actor meeting to thank her for helping convene the actor meeting. He said that the actor meeting had provided a space for the community members to voice their opinions and frustrations, and had an almost cathartic effect on the people.
- In summer and fall 2016, tensions arose again, particularly in times when the acting vice-imam was absent. Although there has been the threat of potential violence, no incident has been reported. The PPP and NYPAD monitored the situation, including meeting with various stakeholders to identify possible strategies for a peaceful resolution.
- In fall 2016, the Chief Imam passed away. NYPAD has continued to watch the situation closely, as the Islamic community in Nandom determines new leadership.

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