

Berekum Chieftaincy Dispute Fact Sheet

Context

The threat of violence in Berekum, Ghana, stemmed from a dispute between royal families about how the successor to the deceased paramount chief had been, and should be, determined. The conflict had simmered for 12 ½ years and a decision on the dispute had been delayed in court.

Indicators of Potentially Violent Conflict

At the time the PPP became involved, the chief 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 11 years of failed communication and stalled educational and development in the region. It also led to destruction of property, the threat of violence during political elections, and tension within the community and neighboring communities.

Locally Defined Strategies and/or Activities

A local, inclusive peace committee – the Berekum Peace Committee – emerged through the support of the PPP with the goal of encouraging a peaceful resolution to the chieftaincy dispute. The BPC used several strategies to achieve this goal including direct advocacy with key figures, media messages, attendance of the hearings, peace marches, and community outreach at schools, churches and homes, among others.

Impact

After months of discussion, advocacy, and action by the local citizens on the BPC and other community members, the Judicial Committee of the Brong Ahafo Regional House of Chiefs finally issued its ruling and named the new Berekum chief in September 2013. Both before and after the decision, the local peace committee, with assistance and encouragement from the PPP, promoted acceptance of the ruling. No post-judgment violence has been reported. Although data collected in the community indicates a majority of citizens accept and recognize the new chief (who has now taken up that role), the BPC and the PPP have continued to monitor the potential for conflict in Berekum, following appeals from both sides.