

PURDUE PEACE PROJECT

A Locally Led Approach to Resolving Land Disputes in Nandom, Ghana: Summary of Project Impact and Indicators of Impact

Project Overview

The Purdue Peace Project's (PPP's) work focuses on preventing violent conflict and resolving disputes over land ownership and rights between communities in the Nandom Traditional Area. The project currently focuses primarily on land disputes between various communities: (1) Dabagteng and Ketuo with Naimwin and Naapaal; (2) Tokuu with Vaarpuo; and (3) Betalgo with Goziir. The ongoing land disputes have an impact on political representation and food security in the region. These disputes have resulted in the destruction of crops and property as well as injury and, in some cases, death.

The PPP first learned of this problem in early 2013. In November 2013, the Purdue Peace Project facilitated a three-day community dialogue in Nandom to discuss land disputes as well as strategies to promote and sustain peace. Roughly 30 local citizens attended, ranging from chiefs and elders to youth representatives and women and representing at least four different community-level disputes. Out of this forum, the 11-member Dagara-Sisaala Peace Committee (DASIPEC) emerged to enact the strategies discussed. Following this initial meeting and a subsequent Strategizing for Peace Workshop in March 2014, the local peace committee met regularly and developed action plans aimed to prevent violence and property destruction, particularly during upcoming farming and election seasons, and to advocate for the quick and amicable resolution of the disputes. As of late 2015, members of DASIPEC joined up with a group of youth who had helped organize an inter-community football tournament, one of the committee's key strategies for peace, and came to call themselves the Nandom Youth for Peace and Development (NYPAD), through which they have continued to work to build peace in the Nandom area.

Indicators of Impact

The following are indicators that the Nandom land dispute 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

- According to reports from DASIPEC and survey data collected in Nandom in September and October 2014, the farming seasons of 2014 went off peacefully, with significantly fewer incidents of violence than in previous years. In many situations with the potential of violence, members of the DASIPEC intervened to help resolve the situation by appealing for peace, and advising disputing parties to stay calm and dialogue instead of resorting to violence. Similarly, in 2015, DASIPEC members indicated there were no incidents of violence during the farming season, despite early indications that there might be. Interventions by peace committee members and youth leaders helped head off one of the land conflicts from boiling over early in the 2015 farming season.

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- DASIPEC members also reported attitudinal changes, both for themselves and others, including being willing to consult with each other and discuss issues peacefully rather than fighting.
- Changes in attitudes toward those they are in conflict with has manifested in behaviors, such as increased inter-community relations. There is evidence that, unlike in the past, members of disputing communities are now greeting each other, attending funerals and weddings in the other's communities, and associating freely.
- Specifically, in the conflict between Betaglo and Goziir, the communities report that they were able to meet together to resolve their dispute. As of May 2016, they continue to report that their conflict is resolved.
- DASIPEC organized a football (soccer) tournament among youth in the Nandom Traditional area. The football matches have become a space where members of various communities come together and watch the matches in an environment of healthy competition, promoting camaraderie between the youth of different communities.
- An unexpected impact of the football tournament reported by the DASIPEC is that the youth are drinking less because (a) they need to be fit to play and (b) those who are not playing have something to do every Sunday afternoon besides just drinking. Data reveal that there is greater peace in Nandom households because the men are choosing to attend the football matches rather than drink.
- DASIPEC members report that the students of the high schools they visited have expressed interest in establishing peace clubs in the schools, and the DASIPEC is facilitating the process.
- There are few to no NGOs or civil society organizations working in the Nandom area, making the work of the PPP one of the very few instances of outside attention received by the area.

Critical Incidents

- DASIPEC members have become leaders in their communities. Several members have reported having intervened in disputes within their communities which otherwise might have become violent. For instance, one member stated, "A youth in Naapaal stabbed a young man from Dabagteng. Initially, the people of Dabagteng wanted the youth to be beaten up but I intervened and the matter was resolved amicably."
- In early May 2015, DASIPEC hosted a town hall meeting with speakers on traditional land laws and Ghanaian land laws. While 50 people were invited, approximately 120 attended. The town hall was also broadcast live on a regional radio station. The town hall clarified laws around land ownership and the need to demarcate land boundaries. Some participants indicated they had come to the meeting with the intention of airing out their grievances. However, instead the meeting focused on land laws and how to achieve peace. In post-meeting evaluation, participants indicated they intended to speak with their communities and pass on the information they learned. Others indicated they would register or encourage registering land owned by individuals. Participants also said old policies would be amended to conform with Ghanaian land laws.

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- As the football tournament progressed, a group of youth leaders emerged which eventually became the body responsible for the day-to-day management of the tournament. Initially the DASIPEC and a few members of the youth volunteered to manage the tournament, but eventually, a council consisting of two members of each team emerged to take up this mantle. Reports from the West Africa Program Manager discuss how this youth leadership helped resolve a dispute between two teams, which had the potential to escalate into violence.
- In late May 2015, renewed land conflict between Dabagteng and Ketuo with Naimwin and Naapaal threatened to lead to violence. However, the youth leaders from the football tournament mobilized a second town hall to speak to their elders in those communities as well as met with the Nandom chief. Following these efforts, the youth leaders, who originally organized around the football tournament, renamed themselves Nandom Youth for Peace and Development (NYPAD). They, in concert with some of the original DASIPEC members, have continued to actively engage in peacebuilding efforts in the Nandom area.
- Given the presence of longstanding land disputes, NYPAD mobilized around the 2016 election to prevent violence. (For more details, see the **Nandom Violence-Free Elections Campaign**.)
- Since the election in December 2016, NYPAD has initiated community outreach in Dabagteng, Naimwin and Naapaal in an effort to find a lasting resolution to the land conflict and ensure peace in the Nandom area.

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