

The Purdue Peace Project Post

The mission of the Purdue Peace Project is to convene groups of local citizens in fragile states where clearly identified situations threaten to lead to political violence, and encourage and assist these citizens in their efforts to bring about peaceful solutions. In promoting locally-driven and inclusive approaches to peace-building, we seek to reduce the likelihood of political violence and contribute to lasting peace. In doing so, we also seek to add to the body of knowledge in this field by documenting and disseminating our work to practitioners and scholars alike.



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Members of DASIPeC with PPP West Africa Program Manager, Ms. Rosaline B. Obeng-Ofori, May 2015.

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OOPC Wraps Peace Rally, Set to Embark Upon Boundary Demarcation

Following the successful completion of a peace rally in its communities, the Obi Ogadi and Ogboli Peace Committee (OOPC) is set to embark upon a boundary demarcation exercise aimed at resolving the over ten-year land dispute between the two small communities in Oshimini north local council in Delta, Nigeria. OOPC was formed in December 2013, following an actor forum convened by the Purdue Peace Project (PPP) to dialogue about strategies to resolve the land dispute between the communities. The group is comprised of members from both communities, and has led activities aimed at resolving the dispute that was threatening to degenerate into violence before PPP's engagement.

Co-coordinator of OOPC, Mr. Sebastine Oba said, "the OOPC has already visited the Ministry of Lands and Survey, the Boundary Adjustment Commission, and the police headquarters to discuss the modalities to demarcate the boundary. We are asking God to help PPP & HMI to help us, because without them I don't think there is any headway."

Reiterating Oba's point on the effort toward the boundary demarcation, Co-coordinator of the group, Mr. Sylvester Oduh, said, "Since we started this project in December, 2013, we have been meeting with the Ibusa group, and have been discussing on how to facilitate the boundary demarcation."

According to the duo, the Peace rally was aimed at cultivating relationships necessary for the boundary demarcation. "We called members of our communities to inform them about the progress, and after the town hall meeting we carried the message of peace to the community," Oba said.



Nigeria

PPP has Brought Us Together-We Are No More Enemies



Asked to share his experience as co-coordinator of Obi Ogadi and Ogboli Peace Committee (OOPC), and what this means to his community in Delta, Nigeria, Mr. Sylvester Oduch responded: “We have succeeded in knowing ourselves, we are no more enemies. All we are doing now is to see how we can resolve our problems.” He recalled, “If it were in those days, you know we cannot sit with them (Ibusa), we can’t discuss with them, but with the formation of OOPC we can interact with ourselves, we can visit ourselves. If there is anything happening over there we go there, if there is any event happening there we attend it. If we have anything here they come here and join us. It has been a very good thing.”

Asaba and Ibusa are neighboring communities in Oshimini north Council area in Delta, Nigeria. Both communities have long standing dispute over a parcel of land called Ani Udo, a disagreement that soiled their relationship, and threatening to degenerate into violent conflict before PPP’s engagement. Through our Nigerian Partner, Health Matters Incorporated (HMI), the Purdue Peace Project convened a meeting with all the stakeholders, and following that, the OOPC, comprised of local citizens emerged and have been driving the peace effort in their communities. Oduch recalls the origin of OOPC, “You know they (PPP & HMI) called a peace forum, and since then we have been trying to sort our problem out. Since we started this project in Dec 2013, we have been meeting with the Ibusa group.”

According to Oduch, the considerable peace achieved through the collective effort of the local peace committee mean much to his community, especially given the bitterness that characterized their relationship. He articulates the implications for his community this way,

“Like I said earlier, before the peace forum, there was no room for us to come together and discuss our differences, but PPP & HMI brought us together, so now we can sit together, eat together. Before now such things does not exist at all. With the introduction of OOPC, things are moving better than it was before. OOPC has improved the relationship between us and Ibusa, and I hope that it will continue until the boundary demarcation is conducted.”

Oduch describes his role in OOPC, “I am one of the coordinators of the peacebuilding effort between Asaba and Ibusa. I am one of the people that make sure that things move very well. We make sure that the contacts are well made and enlighten people about what we are doing and what we have achieved so far through the PPP supported peacebuilding initiative.”

Now We Are All Speaking the Same Language: Peace, Peace, and Peace

Clad in white traditional attire and befitting black cap, Mr. Sebastine Oba is delighted to share the achievements of the local Peace Committee formed in December 2013, after the Purdue Peace Project convened a meeting of stakeholders to dialogue about solutions to the land dispute between two communities in Delta, Nigeria. He began his testimonial this way, "When we started this project we did not believe we will achieve success to this extent." The group, Obi Ogadi and Ogboli Peace Committee (OOPC) emerged after the meeting convened by PPP and its Nigerian counterpart, Health Matters Incorporated (HMI).

Oba is also eager to share what volunteering as co-coordinator of OOPC means to him and his community. He narrates the experience and impact this way, "Since PPP & HMI [Health Matters, Inc.] intervened in this land dispute, we started having mutual understanding, interaction, and agreement with them [the Ogboli Ibusa people]. What interests us the most is that since this project started in December 2013, what Ogboli Ibusa is saying is the same thing Asaba people are talking about – how to achieve peace. They are all saying that they want peace, they want peace, and they want peace. So I thank God that their minds are like ours, we are all speaking the same language, peace, peace."

The formation of a local peace committee that derives its name from both communities is a sign of peace, he believes. "The name Obi Ogadi and Ogboli peace committee was coined from the two communities involved in land dispute, and this is a good sign. Both families, the Obi Ogadi in Asaba and Ogboli in Ibusa are located in Oshimini north local government of Delta state. The dispute over this parcel of land has been long, however through your intervention the two communities came together. We don't sit like that before. We never have a cause to sit together. With your help, we were able to sit together. You assigned us into different groups to discuss the way for-

ward and every group came out with reasonable resolution and if this could be done, we believe there will be peace between the two communities. Based on that meeting, our group emerged and has been growing."

According to Oba, another significant change is the considerable effort toward the demarcation of the boundary that is the cause of the dispute. He says, "We pray to God that PPP & HMI will help us to facilitate a lasting demarcation. The OOPC has already visited the Ministry of Lands and Survey, the Boundary Adjustment Commission, and the police headquarters to discuss the modalities to demarcate the boundary. If not for the PPP & HMI that intervened, I don't think all these

things would be achieved.

Still we are asking God to help PPP & HMI to help us, because without them I don't think there is any headway, may be today somebody would have been killed in the bush because of the dispute."

Oba also shares stories of the calmness in the hitherto volatile bush: "So far we have achieved some level of peace. We can now go to Asaba, visit them and they can as well visit us. We exchanged phone numbers, we call each other and discuss heart to heart without fear anymore.

With the intervention of PPP we are able to leave our women go to farm without men escorting them."

He recalls the threat that characterized the dispute before PPP's engagement. Oba said, "Many women have been killed in Ibusa bush may be you have heard this in the newspapers or television, and if you ask around the community they will confirm this to you. We have lost about 11-12 women whom were killed in the bush for that, men escort them to the farm, but since the intervention of PPP & HMI that sad news has stopped, so we give thanks to PPP & HMI for intervening."



COPEDI Concludes Live Radio Program, Soon to Become a Non-Profit

The Community Peace Development Initiative (COPEDI), which started as a local committee will soon become a peacebuilding nonprofit organization. This development follows the conclusion of its weekly live peace campaign on a popular local radio station, Nigeria Info. Through its weekly radio live program, COPEDI championed peace during Nigeria's recently concluded national election. COPEDI emerged from a group convened by the Purdue Peace Project (PPP) in 2013 to dialogue and strengthen university host community relationship, following the killing of four undergraduates of university of Port Harcourt over allegations of theft by a local vigilante. The group is comprised of students, community representatives and women's groups from Aluu, a small community in Rivers state.

While the radio campaign lasted, COPEDI assembled necessary documentation for acquiring nonprofit status in Nigeria. COPEDI's Secretary, Mr. Handsome Kinikanwo said, "In accordance with the stipulations of Nigeria's Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC), the agency responsible for the registration of corporate entity's in Nigeria, we have submitted our application to be registered as a non-profit."

Echoing COPEDI's excitement about the development, Publicity Secretary, Mr. Suzy Ikeagwu, said, "We are excited about the registration because it will further present us [as] credible agents of peace in the state." According to Suzy, the group is optimistic that its registration shall be completed before August, 2015, adding, "To fast track the process, we are proceeding with the publication of our intent in three national dailies as required by CAC. We plan to formally unveil our new status to the community in August, 2015 and look forward to the official ceremony."

To learn more about the PPP's approach to its work and evaluation, please visit

<https://www.cla.purdue.edu/ppp/Our%20Locally-Driven%20Approach.html>



Nigeria

Peace Committee Formed in Kato



Representatives of the local peace committee in Kato, Ghana, with Ms. Rosaline B. Obeng-Ofori, PPP's West Africa Program Manager (far left) and PPP research assistant, Jasmine Linabary (far right).

A new local peace committee emerged in Kato in May, marking an important peacebuilding outcome in the context of an ongoing chieftaincy dispute between the two royal families.

The Odo Na 3y3 Committee (translated from Akan as the “Love is Good” Committee; they plan to call themselves LIGC for short) is a nine-member committee that includes representatives from both royal families, youth, market women, and the local assemblyman. The committee aims to serve as a “neutral” body that will build and maintain peace in the Kato area in light of the chieftaincy dispute.



Members of the newly constituted local peace committee in Kato, Ghana, shake hands in recognition of their commitment to working together. .

Following the actor meeting convened by the PPP in March, representatives of the royal families and other stakeholders came together in May to review strategies for peacebuilding discussed there. After deliberating, those in attendance at the second meeting decided to form a peace committee. The assemblyman was elected chair of the committee.

That representatives from both royal families agreed to participate in the committee is notable, and a testament of Kato citizens' commitment to peace. One participant noted, “As the committee works and both royal families are part of it, it will encourage other people to do the same.”

Committee members also reported that since the March meeting they have observed changes in Kato.

“With regards to relationships I have seen that people have started changing. People have started greeting each other,” one participant said. “I have seen that things are changing due to the relationship.”

The committee is now working on more specific action plans to move forward on peacebuilding strategies ranging from radio programs to community outreach.



Ghana

DASIPEC Hosts Town Hall on Land Laws

The Dagara/Sissala Peace Committee (DASIPEC) hosted a town hall meeting in Nandom in May, receiving an overwhelming response from the area communities.

With invitations extended to representatives of eight disputing communities, approximately 50 people were expected to attend this forum intended to build shared knowledge on traditional practices and government laws on land. Instead, more than 115 attended the meeting, including elders, chiefs, queen mothers, traditional land custodians, women, and youth. The meeting was also live broadcast on a local radio station.

At the meeting, remarks were given by the DASIPEC chair, by a PPP team member who attended the meeting, and by the Catholic priest who facilitated the meeting. Participants heard presentations from an area chief about the customary land practices and from a representative of the lands commission. Presenters fielded questions, and participants also engaged in small and large group discussions about how to stop existing land disputes and avoid land disputes in the future.

In particular, the presentation from the representative of the lands commission was considered enlightening as some participants reported not being aware of the national laws or that those laws may supersede customary or traditional land practices.

“I believe as the land commission man let us to know that the Ghanaian law, the constitution, is higher than our traditional laws. If we will adhere to that, I think it will really resolve the problem,” a peace committee member said in an interview after the meeting. “It will really resolve the problem, because...I didn’t know that such a law is there that is governing over everything. So if we all, if we all, our opponents and us will agree together to adhere to what we heard to really see to it that we let bygones be bygones, then we try to at least do what is expected of us, I think there will be peace.”

The lands commission representative also emphasized the need to demarcate land.

“We have never taken documentation to be very important and that is bringing about this land dispute,” he said. “So whenever land is given to anybody it should be documented such that one day people should not fight because of that land.”

Those in attendance committed to sharing what they learned with others.

“The laws that we have heard from this meeting we should send it back to our community

When we leave here we should go and tell the truth of what we have heard here concerning land dispute,” said the speaker on behalf of the women’s discussion group at the meeting. “All of us who have attended this meeting when we leave here we should try to be united and let others know about the problem that exists that is land dispute and how it can be resolved. All that we have learned here we should try to educate other people on it.”

Another female participant stated, “I think we should mobilize people and tell them. Since I wasn’t the only one there I want the other women who were there from this community to meet with their community members and talk to them about what we heard yesterday.”

DASIPEC members plan to take the messages from the meeting and share them through additional radio broadcasts and community outreach in an effort to resolve the land conflicts.



Community members gather at a town hall meeting to learn more about land demarcation laws in the Nandom Traditional Area.

Future Project: El Salvador



Location of El Salvador. Picture taken from
www.emapsworld.com

In April, Stacey Connaughton (PPP Director) and Jessica Berns (Consultant to the PPP Donor) traveled to San Salvador, El Salvador. This was the second scouting trip that the two had made to the Central American nation. PPP met with members of various international non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations doing work around water administration and management. PPP is interested in continuing to explore possibilities of working with local actors in El Salvador, and other Central American nations, around water and other issues related to peacebuilding and political violence prevention.



Skyline of San Salvador. Photo taken from: www.junloayza.com

Ebola Prevention Campaign Research Receives Top Paper Award at the International Communication Association's Annual Convention

In May 2015, the Purdue Peace Project (PPP) team attended the International Communication Association (ICA) 65th Annual Convention in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Members of the PPP team presented two research projects based on PPP's work in Liberia and Nigeria. One of the two papers titled "Unwavering Resilience: A Structural Analysis of Local Liberians' Organizing Efforts to Prevent the Spread of Ebola" was recognized as a top four paper by ICA's Organizational Communication Interest Group. At a well-attended research panel of communication scholars from around the world, PPP Director, Dr. Stacey Connaughton, and research assistant, Liliya Yakova, presented PPP's locally-led Ebola prevention work in Liberia. Specifically, the presentation described the locally-driven dialogic approach of the PPP and highlighted research findings about the Ebola Prevention Campaign (August 2014-January 2015) organized by a local peace committee - the Pen-Pen Peace Network - and local Liberian volunteers in collaboration with the Women Movement for Sustainable Development-Liberia (WOMSUD-Liberia) and the PPP. Connaughton and Yakova reported on the kinds of structures (e.g., the Liberian government, community-based organizations, local media) that enabled and constrained the successful organizing against Ebola. The presenters also discussed findings related to the ways in which local citizens interacted with such structures to achieve positive results and successfully prevent the further spread of Ebola.

In addition, Dr. Connaughton and doctoral student, Jasmine Linabary, presented one of PPP's Nigeria projects in a presentation titled "From Dialogue to Action: The Role of Communication in a Peacebuilding Initiative in the Niger Delta, Nigeria." The presentation focused on the peace efforts of the Community Peace Development Initiative (COPEDI), a local peace committee which emerged as part of PPP's collaborations with local citizens in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, and how COPEDI led locally meaningful actions to prevent political violence in its community, prior to and during Nigeria's national elections, through its communicative strategies.





Dr. Stacey Connaughton and Research Assistant Jasmine Linabary presenting PPP's Nigeria project at the ICA Conference in San Juan, Puerto Rico

To the left: The PPP team received Top Paper recognition at the International Communication Association's Annual Convention in San Juan, Puerto Rico, May 2015. Dr. Stacey Connaughton (fourth from the left), Liliya Yakova (fifth from the left), Arunima Krishna (sixth from the left), and Kai Kuang (seventh from the left) accepted the award.

Liberia

Sharing the PPP Approach

PPP Director, Stacey Connaughton, was invited to give the C. Jack Gravlee Memorial Lecture at Colorado State University, which she delivered on March 5, 2015. Her talk was entitled “Organizing to Survive: The Unwavering Resilience of Everyday Liberian Citizens in Combating Ebola.” She discussed the leadership and impact of local Liberian citizens who, in collaboration with the Purdue Peace Project, had initially been working to reduce the likelihood of political violence in their communities and then transitioned to designing and implementing a citizen-to-citizen Ebola Prevention Campaign that ran from late August, 2014 through the end of January 2015.

Dr. Connaughton was also invited to give the Bernard Brock Distinguished Lecture at Wayne State University on March 11, 2015. The title of her presentation was “Preventing Political Violence and Combating Ebola: A Locally-Led, Dialogic Approach to Peacebuilding and Beyond.” The lecture discussed the locally-driven political violence prevention approach of the Purdue Peace Project, its collaborations with local citizens from multiple sectors in Ghana, Nigeria, and Liberia, and the impact those collaborations have had. Local citizens helped expedite the ruling on a 12 ½ year chieftancy dispute in Ghana; they brought disputing communities together for the first time in decades to work toward resolving a land dispute in Nigeria; and they worked toward violence prevention and Ebola prevention in Liberia.



PPP Director, Stacey Connaughton, receives the inaugural humanitarian award from the local chapter of the Association for Women in Communications (AWC) in recognition of PPP's and the Pen-Pen Peace Network's locally-driven efforts to help combat Ebola in Liberia. Chapter President Angela Roberts presents Dr. Connaughton with the award.

Research Assistant Spotlight

Third-year PhD student Jasmine Linabary had not known of the Purdue Peace Project's work until she came to visit Purdue as part of a recruitment weekend in February 2013. Very quickly, however, the PPP became one of the main reasons that Jasmine decided to pursue her PhD at the BLSC. She has been a part of the PPP research team since January 2014, working primarily with the projects in Ghana. The former journalist brings to the PPP her research interests in organizing, new media, and social change and contributes to the PPP's methodological rigor through her work on participatory methodologies. Jasmine's work and experiences in Ghana have given her first-hand knowledge of how the Project, and engaged scholarship as a whole, has the potential to contribute to effect change in individuals' lives and communities.



“Being part of the PPP has been an invaluable opportunity. I have met and collaborated with some incredible people both here and in West Africa. I have had the honor to bear witness to and have been inspired by both the successes and struggles of those working on the ground to build peace in their communities. I am constantly learning and growing along with the team, gaining insights and skills that I will carry with me beyond this project. I am very grateful for the opportunity to be a part of the PPP.”

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