



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## BEREKUM, GHANA

### A Locally Driven Approach to Resolving a Chieftaincy Dispute in Central Ghana

The threat of violence in Berekum, a municipality in the Brong Ahafo region of Ghana, emanated from a 12-year chieftaincy dispute between two royal families. Local actors indicated that the absence of a recognized chief had led to years of failed communication and stalled education and development in the region. This dispute was further complicated by the fact that the disputing factions belong to opposing political parties, creating fear that violence would erupt during the 2012 presidential and parliamentary elections. In 2012, the Purdue Peace Project (PPP) convened a representative group of local citizens to identify strategies to resolve the dispute. From these and follow-up discussions emerged a local peace committee, the Berekum Peace Committee (BPC), that engaged in advocacy strategies to promote peace in the community and push for a speedy resolution in the courts. This report outlines the objectives, strategies, challenges, and impacts from the PPP's collaborations with local citizens in Berekum leading up to and following the Judicial Committee of the Brong Ahafo Regional House of Chief issuing its ruling and naming the new Berekum chief. The following is based on findings from longitudinal data collection at multiple time points between 2012 and 2015.

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## GOALS

The overall goals of this project were:

- To reduce the likelihood of political violence in the Berekum paramourcy, and
- To encourage peaceful resolution of the chieftaincy dispute.

## PEACE COMMITTEE

To meet these goals, the PPP convened a meeting in June 2012 of a group of local actors in Berekum, including chiefs, queen mothers, elders, youth, women, media, political parties, and opinion leaders, to strategize about the best ways to prevent violence and preserve peace.

Out of this meeting and continued conversations emerged a local peace committee whose members volunteered their time to implement the strategies they believed would help speed up the resolution of the dispute and prevent violence. This group, which name itself the Berekum Peace Committee (BPC), consisted of representatives from the actor groups involved in the original meeting.

The 8-member BPC continues to work to prevent violence and promote peace in Berekum.

*“Wherever people are gathered, [the BPC] seized the opportunity to address them on peace.”*

*– Berekum community member*



## Our Locally Driven Approach

The Purdue Peace Project (PPP) convenes groups of local citizens in fragile states where clearly identified situations threaten to lead to political violence. The PPP works to create a space for an inclusive and representative group of local citizens to engage in dialogue with one another, and in so doing, to identify strategies that will reduce the likelihood of political violence.

The PPP believes that peacebuilding efforts that originate from local citizens are the most effective ways to prevent violence. The PPP’s aim is to encourage and assist local citizens in designing, leading, and implementing strategies that will help them build lasting peace in their communities.





## Agents of Peace

### 1. BPC members have been recognized for their dedication to a peace.

- Members have been acknowledged by the new chief and others in the community for their role in maintaining peace.
- Members are regularly invited to Berekum's security council meetings.
- The Municipal Chief Executive (mayor) and the district assembly rely on members for advice and to identify early warning signs of conflict.

### 2. The BPC has established itself as an active group of peacebuilders in Berekum and beyond.

- It was instrumental in the arrest of an individual who would incite violence on the radio.
- The group also quickly mobilized to help prevent imminent bloodshed in a community within Berekum, which is also in the middle of a chieftaincy dispute.
- The group has been approached by individuals in other communities outside of the region seeking advice on resolving their conflicts.

*"If not for the advice of Berekum Peace Committee, we should have retaliated and there would be bloodshed, but we listened to them." – Queen mother from a Berekum community*

## STRATEGIES

Berekum Peace Committee (BPC) designed and implemented several strategies with the assistance and encouragement of the PPP that helped to reduce the likelihood of political violence and further peaceful resolutions for the dispute in Berekum. Some of the strategies were:

- Reaching out to key actors in the community, including personal visits with the police commander, former president and the sitting president of the judicial committee of the Regional House of Chiefs, and other influential chiefs.
- Encouraging local, regional, and national media outreach and coverage across various channels, including print, radio, TV, and social media.
- Circulating a report of findings among political, religious, judiciary, and other key local and national authorities.
- Ensuring presence of the BPC and other local citizens at judicial hearings between August 2012 and September 2013.
- Mobilizing the local community to promote peacebuilding through peace marches by the area's 18 football clubs and by women's groups, collecting signatures of community members to appeal to the parties in conflict to resolve the dispute, and outreach programs at secondary and tertiary institutions, as well as homes and churches.

## CHALLENGES

The BPC faced a few challenges in the course of their work:

- Slow judiciary; the case, which was being heard by a judicial committee of the Regional House of Chiefs, had been adjourned multiple times, delaying any kind of legal resolution to the dispute.
- Monetary issues such as expectations of sitting fees from various institutions
- Acceptance of the BPC as a neutral, bi-partisan group
- Questioning of their motives
- Unwillingness of disputing factions to dialogue

The BPC successfully overcame most of these difficulties through their active program of advocacy with government institutions, radio discussions, and other tactics discussed earlier.

## IMPACT

Despite these challenges, the efforts of the BPC and the assistance and encouragement of the PPP led to significant impacts for the community, including:

- **Bringing citizens together:** Initial meetings brought together members from the various relevant actor groups in the community to discuss the impact of the dispute and what needed to be done to encourage resolution.
- **Speeding up the resolution:** The 13-year chieftaincy dispute that had been delayed in court 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, though this part of the judgment was later appealed.
- **No post-judgment violence:** No violence has been reported following the ruling, despite the potential for political violence. The BPC members had appealed to both sides publicly and privately for peace through a variety of activities leading up to and alongside the ruling. There has been no open fighting in relation to the chieftaincy dispute since the Sept. 9, 2013, ruling.
- **Community development:** 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. 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.

*“We came in as the mouthpiece of the people. We educated the people on the need to make peace with each other because you are one family, and you know when it comes to issues like this, like when there’s a dispute between different factions, we don’t settle it with war or with any form of rowdy form of action, but you should do it in a dialogue way.”*

**-Berekum Peace Committee member**

*“When something crops up, and the peace committee goes in and they accept us and whatever advice that we give, the people accept it in good faith and they hold on with their peace and they always consult on us or count on us for further actions.”*

**-Berekum Peace Committee member**

## APPROACH TO M&E

The PPP’s approach to monitoring and evaluation is evidence-based and longitudinal. The PPP strives for methodological rigor in selecting projects. The PPP systematically collects and analyzes empirical data at multiple points in time before, during, and after a project in order to assess its work’s impact. The PPP’s locally driven approach is results-oriented and cost-effective. The PPP seeks to help local citizens reduce the likelihood of political violence and contribute new knowledge about effective peacebuilding.

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