

Liberia Newsletter Update, April 2018

Understanding the Impact of Peaceful Elections Work in Liberia

As Liberians celebrated a peaceful transition in inaugurating their new president in January, local peacebuilders who are part of [Pen-Pen Peace Network \(PPPN\) working groups](#) supported by the Purdue Peace Project (PPP) also reveled in their successful [efforts to prevent violence](#) throughout the 2017 elections. To evaluate the impact of the hard work the PPPNs have put in leading up to and during the elections, PPP team members, including Liberia Country Director Grace Yeanay and graduate research assistants Jen Ptacek and Meghana Rawat, visited Bong, Margibi, Montserrado, and Nimba counties in January and spoke with each of the working groups as well as members of two communities within each of the four counties.



Members of the Nimba Pen-Pen Peace Network pose for a photo with PPP graduate research assistants Jen Ptacek and Meghana Rawat during a January 2018 visit to Nimba to discuss the outcomes of the group's peaceful elections initiatives.

Liberians spoke about the recent presidential and legislative elections in October and the runoff election, which took place in December, and their fears of potential violence erupting based on previous election trends. Although some polling areas experienced issues such as delays or registration confusion, the elections remained overall peaceful. Liberians also spoke of their hopes for the new presidency and their country, and working toward sustaining the peace they have been experiencing [thanks in part to the work of the PPPNs](#).

Community members who participated in activities led by the PPPNs discussed the impact of the PPP's work toward peace in their country. For example, many people watched the soccer tournaments that took place between police officers and pen-pen motorcycle taxi drivers. The

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police and pen-pen riders told us about how this event brought them closer together as they were able to interact and enjoy time together when they otherwise would not. Because of the soccer tournaments, they can now joke with each other when they see each other in town.

Other community members mentioned times when the PPPN members shared messages of peace through community outreach and on radio talk shows. Each of the PPPN groups traveled to communities within their counties, reaching over 100 different communities in total. During community outreach events, they played music, danced, and spoke with Liberians about the importance of peace. During the radio talk show programs, Liberians were able to call in and speak with PPPN members directly about the elections and how to remain peaceful before, during and after elections. PPPN members even said that Liberians from other counties called in and asked them to visit their communities to conduct their peaceful elections work.

As for what comes next, Liberians in each of the counties visited are all looking forward sustaining peace into the future. With the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) leaving the country at the end of March, there have been concerns over the state of peace and security into the future. The PPPNs are now diligently working to plan their next steps toward maintaining peace.

Learn more: To find out more about PPP-supported efforts to prevent violence related to elections in Liberia, visit <https://cla.purdue.edu/ppp/projects/liberiaelections.html>