

Pen-Pen Drivers Project Fact Sheet

Context

After the Liberian Civil War (1989-2003), some combatants who fought in this war became pen-pen drivers/riders, i.e. motorcycle taxi drivers. Although they provide a much needed service throughout Liberia, many pen-pen riders have engaged in aggressive behaviors in their driving practices, and had a tense relationship with the police and community members.

Indicators of Potentially Violent Conflict

Particularly during election periods, political parties and politicians oftentimes used pen-pen drivers to mobilize protests and instigate political violence.

Locally Defined Strategies and/or Activities

With the assistance of the Purdue Peace Project, the Pen-Pen Peace Network (PPPN), a local peace committee that the PPP helped convene, designed and launched a multi-media campaign in February 2014. The goal of the campaign was to prevent political violence in relation to pen-pen drivers by promoting changes in public perceptions about pen-pen drivers and to change the pen-pen drivers' behaviors. The multi-media campaign delivered violence prevention messages on billboards, messages broadcast on local radio stations, and text messages sent to citizens. The PPPN also organized outreach activities in Monrovia. During these activities, the PPPN formed teams that talked to pen-pen drivers and community members about pen-pen driver hygiene, safe driving, and lawful behavior.

Impact

In the summer of 2014, the Ebola outbreak in Liberia interrupted the multi-media campaign. To respond to the crisis, the PPPN reoriented its activities to violence prevention in relation to Ebola. The PPPN's Ebola initiative highlighted the positive outcomes of PPPN's multi-media campaign efforts from early 2014. Pen-pen riders not only supported the PPPN's initiative against Ebola, but exhibited the practices promoted by the 2014 campaign, such as proper hygiene and peaceful behavior. Data collected between September 2014 and January 2015 indicate that Liberians started holding positive perceptions about pen-pen riders.