

PURDUE PEACE PROJECT

A Locally Driven Approach to Promoting Peaceful Elections and Building Relationships between Pen-Pen Drivers and the Liberia National Police in Margibi County, Liberia: Summary of Project Impact and Indicators of Impact

Project Overview

The focus of the Purdue Peace Project's (PPP's) work in Liberia involves decreasing and preventing violence between pen-pen drivers/riders (motorcycle taxi drivers) and both their customers and police. The original PPP initiative in Montserrado County in 2013 spread to include three other counties – Margibi, Nimba, and Bong. With the help of the Pen-Pen Peace Network (PPPN) in Montserrado, relevant stakeholders such as representatives from the Liberia National Police, pen-pen driver unions, and the community participated in a local actor meeting in Margibi County in early 2016. As a result of this meeting, a local peace committee called the Margibi Pen-Pen Peace Network (Margibi PPPN) was formed.

The Margibi PPPN began activities in summer 2016 to work toward preventing violence among pen-pen drivers and the police and community, specifically surrounding the upcoming October 2017 elections. The election time is of particular concern as Liberia has historically faced election violence. Some of the activities led by the Margibi PPPN have included radio talk shows, peace marches, town hall meetings, football tournaments, and community outreach. This report summarizes the impacts of these activities implemented by the Margibi PPPN.

Indicators of Impact

The following are indicators of impact that the PPP project in Margibi has contributed to reducing the likelihood of political violence in the context of the 2017 presidential elections and to improving relationships between pen-pen drivers and the police. Indicators are given based on comparative data over the last year since this project began in Margibi County as well as specific critical incidents that have occurred during the project.

Comparative

- The Margibi PPPN peaceful elections project has helped to improve the relationships between pen-pen drivers and the police over time. These two groups have historically had tensions between them, but they now interact more peacefully together. In fact, the police commander has noticed such an impact that he called upon the leadership of the PPPN to advise on how to maintain this project and move it forward.
- The work of the Margibi PPPN has also brought the pen-pen drivers themselves together. In Margibi there are three pen-pen driver unions, and they have a history of issues between them, such as legal cases that needed to be settled in court. The Liberia Country Director has noted that before the peaceful elections project, these three unions have not come together like this and the PPPN helped them to build strength and move toward peace together.
- The Margibi PPPN's work has even helped to cut down on crime and improved the work of the police officers. Liberia National Police officials have reported that the peaceful

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elections project is making their job easier because now pen-pen drivers and community members are behaving more peacefully, allowing the police to focus their energy and strength on other important issues.

Critical Incidents

- There have been some incidents that indicate the effectiveness of the Margibi PPPN's work. For example, during a local actor meeting, one person was selected as a representative of the three pen-pen drivers' unions, which is significant because this would not have been acceptable before. A member of the group noted that the three groups would not have previously agreed on one person to represent all of them but because the PPPN brought them together, these groups now are peaceful enough to agree upon electing one representative.
- Another incident that speaks to the positive impact the Margibi PPPN has made toward building peace has been the presence of the police commander during their activities. The Margibi PPPN asked the police commander to speak at an event and he eagerly came; in fact, the police have participated in every event organized by the PPPN in Margibi County. Members of the Liberia National Police have noted that they rely on the peaceful elections project to enhance their relationships with the community and pen-pen drivers and they use these events as entry points to engage the community as part of the community policing program.

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