

PURDUE PEACE PROJECT

A Locally Led Approach to Preventing Violence Related to a Chieftaincy Dispute in Tuobodom, Ghana: Summary of Project Impact and Indicators of Impact

Project Overview

A deep-seated chieftaincy dispute in Tuobodom, Ghana, affecting both perceptions of land ownership and local politics caught the attention of the Purdue Peace Project (PPP) in August 2016. This chasm, resulting in many deaths and injuries, as well as contributing to a general state of fear in the community and a lack of development in the town, has literally divided Tuobodom in half between two chiefs. To aid in the resolution of this crisis, the PPP in collaboration with the Concern Youth of Tuobodom (CYT), a self-organized group of youth engaged in promoting peace in the area, brought the two factions together in August 2016. Following this actor meeting where local citizens took an active part in discussing the causes and effects of this conflict as well as strategizing ways in which they can bring peace to Tuobodom, a local peace committee named the Tuobodom Peacemakers Committee (TPMC) emerged. Since then, TPMC, working alongside CYT, has implemented strategies for peace identified at the meeting, including meetings with the royal families and opinion leaders, town halls, peace games, a peace walk and concert, peace advocacy through the information centers and radio, and community outreach broadly as well as at churches, mosques, and schools.

Indicators of Impact

The following are indicators that the Tuobodom chieftaincy project has contributed to a reduction in the likelihood of political violence. Indicators are based on comparative data over time as well as specific critical incidents that have occurred.

Comparative

- Prior to the start of the project, community members reported that they lived in a state of fear to the extent that if a loud noise was heard, people would flee, fearing war was breaking out. During site visits in April 2017, community members reported that these fears had significantly dissipated and that since the actor meeting the town has been at peace. One community member described the change as now being able to “sleep with both eyes closed.”
- Significantly, community members report being able to move freely across the road dividing the two sides, attending funerals and weddings across town. They also expressed just generally having a freedom of mobility now throughout the town regardless of the time of day.
- Community members from both factions are now participating in shared activities. For instance, community members report that members of the two sides share rides to their farms and meals together.
- Community members report increased interest from business investors in the town, which they see is a hallmark of peace.
- During baseline data collection, community members reported a stigma associated with being from Tuobodom because of the violence to the extent that those who travel out

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often do not share where they are from. In April 2017 focus groups, community members reported that people are now more likely to say they come from or work in Tuobodom.

- Since forming, TPMC, which includes members of both factions, has met almost weekly to plan and engage in a variety of outreach efforts. Over time, members of TPMC have become recognized peacebuilders in their community to the point that local citizens are now requesting their assistance in resolving local matters.

Critical Incidents

- Members of the two factions, in addition to other community members, both attended the August 2016 actor meeting, greeting each other and agreeing to work together toward peace. This was especially significant because our baseline interviews and focus groups indicated it is nearly impossible to get representatives of both sides to meet or attend an event together. CYT had been trying for months to arrange a meeting with representatives from both sides. Some participants even indicated they did not expect the meeting to go well since bringing the two sides together had always been difficult but were pleasantly surprised by the outcome. Participants in the actor meeting mentioned in post-meeting interviews that the most important outcome of the actor meeting and the biggest indicator of the possibility of peace was that both factions attended.
- At the end of the actor meeting, all community members held lit candles and participated in a peace pledge committing to be a 'light' within the community. Religious leaders led prayers and made statements to affirm the pledge on behalf of the community.
- From the actor meeting, an 11-member peace committee, TPMC, emerged and committed to working together for peace. The committee members collectively agreed to make an elder of one faction the chair and of the other the vice chair and committed to working together under their shared leadership.
- When TPMC first visited the palace of one faction, a young man started throwing stones. This could have sparked a violent clash between the two groups. However, a peace committee representative from that faction went to speak with him, discouraged him from engaging in such behaviors, and assured him of all committee members intentions toward peace. No further incidents were reported.
- A peace march through Tuobodom in November 2016 involved community members walking the length of the town and across the street that historically divides the two sides. This event included more than 1,500 participants marching for peace.
- Local sporting activities were held in December 2016 to unite the community and allow the two sides to join together in the spirit of sport.
- The election in Ghana in December 2016 was considered to be a potential flashpoint for Tuobodom. The election was held without any reports of violence. Community members reported they were able to vote peacefully.
- On several occasions, rumors circulated or incidents occurred that threatened to spill over into violence. These incidents were quickly reported to TPMC and CYT, and community members continued their daily activities, which would not have been the case in the past.

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- In April 2017 it was announced that the new district chief executive (DCE) for the Techiman North District, of which Tuobodom is the capital, would come from Tuobodom for the first time. This announcement was significant, as residents considered it a sign that people recognized Tuobodom was no longer a place of violence.
- At the appointment of the new DCE in May 2017, the two chiefs were present for the event and embraced each other publically, as a clear sign of peace for the community. In the past, they would not appear in public together but would instead send representatives on their behalf.

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