

# The Purdue Peace Project Post

*The mission of the Purdue Peace Project is to convene groups of local citizens in fragile states where clearly identified situations threaten to lead to political violence, and encourage and assist these citizens in their efforts to bring about peaceful solutions. In promoting locally-driven and inclusive approaches to peace-building, we seek to reduce the likelihood of political violence and contribute to lasting peace. In doing so, we also seek to add to the body of knowledge in this field by documenting and disseminating our work to practitioners and scholars alike.*



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# The PPPN launches an 18-month campaign to promote peaceful 2017 presidential elections in Liberia



The Pen-Pen Peace Network (PPPN), a local Liberian peace committee encouraged and supported by the Purdue Peace Project, began an 18-month initiative called the "Bridging Election Tension and Conflict - 2017 Election Campaign". In November 2015, the PPPN successfully completed their first phase of activities aimed at promoting peaceful presidential elections in Liberia in 2017.

In the first phase of this locally driven campaign, the PPPN worked together with the Liberian National Police, pen-pen riders, and community members to encourage dialogue on how to ensure peaceful elections and foster peace before and during the 2017 election period. One of the major activities that took place in November 2015 was the "Confidence Building Week", a three-day event that included a peace march, soccer matches, and other activities designed to promote harmonious relationships among pen-pen riders, the Liberian National Police, and community members. In addition, the PPPN members organized and engaged in radio talk shows, a town hall meeting, and the distribution of flyers, all designed to promote peace during the 2017 elections.

The PPPN, which was formed as a result of the Purdue Peace Project's previous collaboration with Liberian pen-pen riders and WOMSUD-Liberia, is actively working on creating and implementing other strategies and tactics leading up to the 2017 election. In addition to helping to foster peaceful elections, the PPPN hopes that this campaign will help strengthen the relationship between pen-pen drivers and the Liberian National Police through their joint effort to help ensure that the 2017 presidential elections in Liberia are peaceful.



Liberia

# NYPAD Continues to Cultivate Peace in Nandom



The Nandom Youth for Peace and Development (NYPAD), a local peace committee of volunteers interested in establishing and maintaining peace in Nandom and the surrounding area, continue to be productive in their work. The NYPAD originated in 2014, with support and encouragement from PPP, and facilitated local football tournaments between 16 communities in the upper northwestern region of Ghana. Their intent was to use sport (football) to bring disputing communities together and promote peaceful coexistence. While NYPAD continues with these efforts, more recently they have organized meetings within and between the Nandom and Lambussie communities – two communities which have a history of conflict. Strategies for peace that developed as a result of these actor meetings were then passed around, along with peace messages, by the NYPAD volunteers at the local Kakube Festival, an annual festival of culture and gratitude for a good harvest during farming season in late November. This was followed by a similar effort during the Mifele Festival in late December. In a positive step toward peaceful coexistence, members of the Nandom and Lambussie communities, including the traditional chiefs, participated together in both festivals. NYPAD’s efforts continue to be received positively by local community members, and many of the NYPAD members feel encouraged by their work. One NYPAD member articulated his feelings about their efforts this way: “I will call it the grace of God.”



Martin, NYPAD

“The PPP was happy to take part in celebrating the wedding of a NYPAD member during a visit to Nandom in early November. Following a meeting of the NYPAD and PPP, two PPP members participated in a small celebration and toast for Martin. We share in his joy for a happy marriage!”

Ghana



# Building Peace Among the Lambussie and Nandom Communities



In November 2015, the PPP assisted the Nandom Youth for Peace and Development (NYPAD) committee in conducting meetings in the upper northwestern Ghanaian communities of Nandom and Lambussie. In hopes of working toward a resolution of a long-standing land dispute complicated by an interethnic divide and land dispute, a day-long interactive meeting was held in both Nandom and Lambussie. The meeting included chiefs, queen mothers, elders, assembly men, youth, land owners, and women, and focused discussion on the nature and history of the land conflict, as well as time spent brainstorming ideas for how to improve relations between the communities. During each meeting, participants broke into smaller groups in order to have productive conversation around the causes of the conflict, effects of the conflict, and possible solutions. The breakout groups then reported back to the larger group and strategies for progress were noted. The community members themselves articulated and seek to implement strategies for building peace between their communities. As a result of this productive dialogue, plans were set to bring the two communities together for a future joint meeting and work toward lasting peace.



# Local Peacebuilder: Fr. Alexander Bedekuru

Most people in Nandom, Ghana, know Fr. Alexander Bedekuru as the amiable, approachable parish priest of Hamile whose radio talks on peace they look forward to every Sunday. In addition to being a dedicated priest, Fr. Alex is also an untiring peacebuilder, a prolific writer, and one with a thirst for knowledge. He has this to say about his involvement with the PPP:

"You see, I do research in order to go and do the presentations so personally it [working with the PPP] is making me to be well informed. And it is changing my own perspective, attitude, and it is more fulfilling, that's one. It touches people and people appreciate. And some didn't know me but because of the program people want to see me, they want me to come and give talks here and there. So it has added more value to me. Yes it's so it has brought a change in my life. And it's my passion, I love to do it."

In his work with the Nandom Youth for Peace and Development (NYPAD), a local peace committee encouraged and supported by PPP, Fr. Alex frequently draws upon the training in conflict prevention and peacebuilding that he received during his time at the Vatican, and his knowledge of Nandom and its history to help engage people of different Nandom communities in dialogue on peace. Fr. Alex is a wealth of knowledge on conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and a tireless crusader in the pursuit of peace.





# Research Assistant Spotlight

Arunima joined the Purdue Peace Project in Spring 2014, when she became actively involved in projects in Ghana. Arunima has traveled multiple times to Ghana to engage in data collection and peacebuilding work in PPP's projects throughout the country. She is currently in her final year of her doctoral program in Public Relations at the Brian Lamb School of Communication, where she also earned her Master's degree. Informed by her professional experience in marketing, Arunima's research examines public behavior, and more specifically, publics' communicative actions and the consequences of such behaviors on organizations and other publics. She has received several honors and awards, including the Alan H. Monroe Scholar Award, the Inez Kaiser Award, and a highly competitive Purdue Research Foundation fellowship to support her dissertation work. Arunima has co-authored several academic papers about PPP's work, two of which have received top paper honors. She has been instrumental in introducing PPP's locally driven peacebuilding approach to Public Relations scholars. Arunima is currently working with Drs. Stacey Connaughton and Torsten Reimer on a meta-analysis, the first phase of an initiative that seeks to build a predictive model of the likelihood of political violence prior to, during, and after a (locally driven) peacebuilding initiative such as PPP. With Dr. Connaughton, Arunima will also be mentoring a Purdue student on her undergraduate Honors Thesis which will examine the relationship between public relations and peacebuilding. Arunima recently accepted a tenure-track faculty position at Boston University and will begin her role there in July 2016.



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Comments, Questions, or Suggestions about the Newsletter?

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