

**FINAL PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION REPORT:**

***PROJECT TITLE:***

**SUPPORT TO THE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL PEACE COUNCILS**

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Ghana is hailed as an oasis of peace in a continent that has gained notoriety for violent conflicts. According to the 2017 Global Peace Index, Ghana is the 5<sup>th</sup> most peaceful nation in Sub-Saharan Africa and 2<sup>nd</sup> only to Sierra Leone in the West African Sub-region.<sup>1</sup> This characterization as a largely peaceful nation is also noted in Ghana's medium-term national development policy framework the Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (*GSGDA*) II, 2014-2017:

“The generally peaceful and stable political environment provides an opportunity to focus on developing the appropriate set of socioeconomic policies and implement them to ensure accelerated growth and development of the country.”<sup>2</sup>

Despite this international recognition as a relatively stable nation, Ghana has a myriad of perennial conflicts which have at times erupted into violent clashes. A study conducted by the National Peace Council (NPC) in a document titled **Mapping Conflicts in Ghana**, has identified over 90 violent conflicts in the country. These conflicts are often driven by chieftaincy, land and natural resources, ethnicity, religious, political and socio-cultural factors.<sup>3</sup> For instance, in June 2014 a long standing intra-gate chieftaincy succession dispute in Bimbilla erupted into violent conflict leading to the loss of lives and properties. These clashes if not addressed have the potential of destabilizing the nation, ultimately scuttling the democratic and economic gains the country has chalked.

To deal with these conflicts, the Government of Ghana through an Act of Parliament (Act 818), established the National Peace Council (NPC). The NPC is mandated to have regional and district branches and uses pacific means to prevent as well as mediate in the numerous latent and active conflicts dotted around the country.

The NPC Act provides for a 13-member Board at each of the three levels (National, Regional and District). Eminent Members are to be nominated from these groups as stipulated in the Act: One representative from each of the following religious organizations:

- i. Catholic Bishops' Conference

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<sup>1</sup> The Global Peace Index 2017: Measuring Peace in a Complex World. P.18

<sup>2</sup> Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSGDA) II Vol. I, 2014-2017. P.24

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

- ii. Christian Council
  - iii. Ghana Pentecostal Council
  - iv. National Council for Christian & Charismatic Churches
  - v. Ahamadiyya Muslim Mission
  - vi. Tijaaniya Muslim Group
  - vii. Al-Sunnah Muslims and
  - viii. Practitioners of African Traditional Religion
- Two persons nominated by the President, one of which must be a woman
  - Two persons nominated by identifiable Groups
  - One representative of the National House of Chiefs

The Governing Boards have a four-year tenure, but there is no limit to the number of times an individual can be re-nominated by their respective organization. The day to day administration of the Council is supervised by the Executive Secretary. The Council also has a gamut of officers who provide technical assistance to the Board in the prevention and mediation of conflicts.

There is currently a fully functional national office, (9) Regional and three (3) District Peace Councils (DPCs) in the 216 Districts as at the end of 2017.

## **2 DANIDA SUPPORT TO NPC**

As one of Ghana's long standing bilateral partners, DANIDA has provided support to the Government and people of Ghana in areas ranging from anti-corruption, enhancing decentralization, peaceful elections and the Constitutional Review process.

These funds were originally allocated to the UNDP Basket fund in support of the Constitutional Review Implementation Committee. However, in September 2016, the funds were repurposed to support three initiatives:

1. **STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION FOR A PEACEFUL ELECTORAL PROCESS** implemented by the Islamic Foundation for Peace and Development (IFPAD) – \$ 50,000.
2. **ELECTION 2016 INTERFAITH SENSITISATION PROGRAMME ON PEACE** jointly implemented by the Christian Council of Ghana and The Office of the National Chief Imam – \$ 159,357.41.
3. **CONSOLIDATING PEACE IN GHANA** implemented by the National Peace Council (NPC) and the Regional Peace Councils (RPCs) – \$ 299,775.57.

The support to the National and Regional Peace Council constitutes the basis for this report.

### **2.1 What was the Problem?**

Despite the successes of the National and Regional Peace Councils in conflict prevention and mediation that has earned the Council high levels of trust and credibility locally and internationally, much remains to be done, as the Council remains saddled with some operational and institutional challenges.

First, the Act establishing the NPC anticipated a 3-tiered institution constituting the National-Regional, and District Councils. The expectation was for all three levels to function as a cohesive unit with seamless information flow from National-Regional-District and vice versa. However, in practice although the three levels of institutions exist, they have hardly functioned cohesively with discontent on the lack of information sharing and inclusion as well as absence of clearly defined roles and standard operations practices.

Secondly, though the N/R/DPCs have had their capacities enhanced in mediation<sup>4</sup> and conflict prevention, they have lacked the needed financial resources to mediate in actual conflicts. The main challenge has been inadequate financial resources to bring the conflicting parties together for a mediation, or in some instance, for Members of the Council to travel to conflict affected area. To overcome this challenge, Members of the Council in some instances have had to resort to using their personal financial resources to facilitate their work. This challenge has therefore greatly hampered the efficiency of the peace councils in preventing and mediating conflict.

Lastly, was the challenge of post-election violence. Following the unsuccessful attempt of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) in 2013 to overturn the results of the 2012 election at the Supreme Court, there was increased rhetoric of both parties not willing to go to Court if the election did not go their way. Similarly, there was the unending dispute over the credibility of the voters' register, the primary document upon which the election was to be conducted. There were series of demonstrations about the credibility of the register, some of which turned violent. What further heightened the stakes was the real possibility that for the first time in Ghana's 4<sup>th</sup> Republic, a sitting President might not get a second term, or the main opposition party might not get in power for three consecutive terms.<sup>5</sup> The atmosphere was thus tensed. This led to the emergence of many hotspots/flashpoints as the parties campaigned for votes. Indeed, the Police identified over 5000 hotspots<sup>6</sup> with the Electoral Commission also characterizing 81 out of 275 Constituencies as flashpoints<sup>7</sup> ahead of the 2016 general elections. One unique feature about these hotspots/flashpoints was that, it included areas with latent or active conflicts. The NPC in its programming therefore, dedicated some attention to these conflicts affected areas. Contrary to the

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<sup>4</sup> For instance, with USAID and UNDP support, a mediation strategy manual was developed titled **Doing Mediation**. All staff and Governing Board members were subsequently trained using this manual. Again, with support from the EU Insider Mediators Project, capacity building was organized for Female Board Members of the N/RPC as well as for selected Staff.

<sup>5</sup> Since Ghana returned to democratic rule in 1992, Jerry John Rawlings and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) served two terms (1992-2001). The opposition NPP won the 2000 general election led by John Kufour. After 8 years (2001-2009), the NDC with John Evans Atta-Mills wrestled power back from the NPP. Mills died some six months to election and was succeeded by John Mahama his vice President. Mahama then won the 2012 election. Though the NDC is serving 8 years (2009-2017), John Mahama is serving his first term as President. If he wins, the NDC will be in power whilst the NPP in opposition for 12 consecutive years, unprecedented in Ghana's 4<sup>th</sup> republic. Should Mahama lose, he becomes the first sitting President in Ghana's history to have lost a second term bid. If Nana Akufo-Addo of the NPP loses, there is the likelihood the party might not reconsider him for the 2020 elections.

<sup>6</sup> <http://citifmonline.com/2016/09/08/police-identifies-5000-hotspots-for-violence-ahead-of-polls/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.pulse.com.gh/news/politics/election-2016-ec-identifies-81-hotspots-ahead-of-december-polls-id5524144.html>

fears, the elections came off successfully and peacefully, without these conflicts affected areas registering violence. Why therefore did these conflicts affected areas remain peaceful before, during and after the elections? To what extent has the NPC's intervention contributed to the conflict affected areas remaining peaceful?

## **2.2 Intervention/Objective:**

It is against this background that, DANIDA partnered UNDP with financial assistance of **One Hundred and Seventy-Nine Thousand, One Hundred and Forty-Four US Dollars** (\$179,144.00) to provide support to the National and Regional Peace Councils to achieve the following objectives by the end of 2017;

1. Strengthen the internal cohesion of the National, Regional and District Peace Councils.
2. Support mediation efforts of the National Peace Council.
3. Conduct a research to ascertain what the NPC did right in conflict affected communities to keep them peaceful during the 2016 general election.

The intervention was divided into three (3) components to facilitate the achievement of 3 key results. The components and results are listed below;

**Component 1:** Strengthened Internal capacity and cohesion of the National, Regional and District Peace Council.

**Component 2:** Number of Conflicts mediated upon.

**Component 3:** Research on NPCs support to peaceful election conducted.

### 3 REPORT ON PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION:

#### 3.1 SUPPORTING THE INTERNAL COHESION OF THE NPC:

The overarching aim of this component was to support the National, Regional and District Peace Councils to build internal cohesion to achieve the purpose for which it was established. This component is relevant because the NPC is a relatively nascent institution that has been going through some teething challenges on how to manage relationship (programme, logistics and finance) between the National and decentralized offices.

##### 3.1.1 Project Intervention;

###### 3.1.1.1 Organization of A Teambuilding Exercise:

A three-day teambuilding exercise was organized for members of the National, Regional and District offices of the Peace Council. This featured the 13 Member Governing Board of the NPC,



*Figure 1: Group Photograph of Members of the National and Regional Peace Council at the opening of the Teambuilding exercise. Minister of the Interior seated 5<sup>th</sup> from right.*

the Chairpersons and a female representative from each of the 9 RPCs, senior level officers at the NPC Secretariat and all the Regional and District Executive Secretaries. With the support of an experienced facilitator, members reflected on the following:

1. *Team building*: members undertook team building activities that were aimed at helping the participants to know each other better. Indeed, that was the first time since the formation of the N/R/DPCs that members were brought together on the same platform to deliberate on how to build a Council that was fit for purpose. Activities were undertaken with the view to improving communication, raise self-awareness, foster team spirit.
2. *Strategic Orientation*: participants also took time to reflect on their mission, vision and values. Appreciating how the various ways of working could contribute to the overarching goals and reflecting on enablers for collaboration and improved peace building delivery.



3. *Removing constraints*: Identifying and addressing issues that enable and inspire the team to achieve its set results and goals. This intervention helped the team identify helpful mechanisms, propose solutions and developed plans to improve how the team works, connects and relates.
4. *Lubricating communication*: The Council also used the opportunity to fashion out means by which communication can be improved, roles and responsibilities can be clarified to improve morale, team spirit, appreciation, fellow-feeling and goal congruence while reducing stress and strain.
5. *Solution development*: The participants also took stock of their activities, identifying blockages and enablers. The meeting sought to improve the team's ability to identify and solve problems and tap into the hidden and latent potential of all members.



**Figure 2: Participants engaging in a group activity during the teambuilding exercise**

6. *Building cohesion*: Reducing unhealthy conflict and improving support and trust levels among members to ensure harmony and productivity. The intervention would help members embrace diversity and increase levels of alignment, co-operation, leadership, communication patterns and tap into the team development dynamics.

### **3.1.1.2 Review Meeting:**

As a follow, up to the first successful teambuilding meeting and to address some of the issues that came up for discussion, the Board agreed to reconvene another meeting to discuss the reports and set out concrete road map to tackle issues identified. Finding sustainable solutions will ultimately lead to building a strong institution which is fit for purpose.

This follow-up meeting was subsequently organized with the Governing Board, National and Regional Executive Secretaries as well as senior staff of the National office UNDP was also in attendance. Members were divided into groups to take various thematic areas, discuss it exhaustively, highlighting areas that required improvement, categorizing them into short, long and medium-term goals (the targets are attached in the appendix).

A five-member committee was also constituted at the meeting to coordinate the implementation of the matrix.

### **3.1.2 Results:**

There are some positive dividends arising out of this teambuilding exercise, albeit, the vision of making the NPC a robust institution which can withstand internal and external shocks is work in progress.

1. There has been an improvement in communication between the National-Regional and District offices. Regional Executive Secretaries acknowledged that, there is frequent communication between them and the National Office and their emails and request are attended to in a much better manner than previous. The Council is also rolling out plans for the creation of Public Relations Desk that will interface with the public, to take the burden away from the Chairman who acts as the de facto spokesperson of the Council.
2. Meetings in the National office has been streamlined as a result of this intervention. For instance, there are regular management meetings, a clear departure from the pre-teambuilding engagement, where meetings were ad hoc, and no reason adduced for why they were not held frequently.
3. Low Gender representation was one of the issues that came up during the engagement. To this effect, the Council has concluded plans for the creation of an interim Gender Desk to ensure that the actions and activities of the Council are gender sensitive.
4. Improved working relationship between National-Regional-District offices. For instance, during the first quarter of 2018, all Regional and District Peace Council submitted their quarterly reports, an unprecedented feat. This is because of the decision to designate an officer at the national office purposely for this task. This only highlights the fact that, members have been assigned clear roles, thereby taking responsibility, something largely absent before the teambuilding exercise.

### **3.2 SUPPORTING MEDIATION EFFORTS OF THE NPC:**

The aim of this component was to provide the needed impetus to the National and Regional Peace Councils to enable them to mediate in ongoing conflicts. As previously captured, despite the depth of knowledge that Members of the Council possessed, they often could not deploy this because of their inability to bring the parties to the conflict together largely because of inadequate resources. Rather than spread thin the resource to mediate in the numerous conflicts, the NPC decided to commit enough resources into the Bimbilla chieftaincy conflict which was then raging accompanied with the loss of lives and property. It therefore undertook steps aimed at mediating in the conflict.

#### **3.2.1 What is the Bimbilla conflict?**

The ongoing chieftaincy dispute in Bimbilla, in Northern Ghana, is between two princes (Andani Dasana Abdulai and Salifu Dawuni) from the same gate, each claiming to have been enskinned by the appropriate authority, as a Bimbilla Naa, overlord of the Nanumba people. This dispute is unique in two ways; it is an intra-gate dispute, and, reveals an inherent power struggle between two powerful kingmakers in the making of the Bimbilla chief. There have been several attempts to settle this conflict. The two factions agreed to submit the dispute to the Judicial Committee of the Northern Regional House of Chiefs. In March 2012, the Judicial Committee unanimously ruled in favour of Andani Dasana Abdulai as the legitimate occupant of the Bimbilla skin. This was followed immediately by a writ in the High Court in Tamale, filed by Salifu Dawuni, seeking to quash the ruling of the Judicial Committee for procedural breaches. As the appeal was being heard in the High Court, Salifu Dawuni died in March 2014. His people who regarded him as the paramount chief of Bimbilla were bent on burying him in accordance with the traditions of a paramount chief. Predictably, this move was fiercely opposed by the Andani Dassana gate, with the argument that Alhaji Salifu was never king, not least from the ruling of the Judicial Committee of the Regional House of Chiefs. Again, his appeal filed at the High Court ostensibly to quash the ruling of the Regional House of Chiefs was not concluded when he died (though he later lost the appeal at the High Court). The District and Regional Security Councils stepped in to stop Alhaji Salifu's gate from going ahead with their intended burial. It was in the heat of this tension that Andani Dawuni in June 2014 was assassinated together with three of his elders leading to

widespread violence in the Bimbilla township. Though the two-main protagonist in this conflict are both deceased, their children have taken up the mantle. One of the regents attempted to install the warrior chief and this is what served as the trigger for the renewed violence in 2017. The Alhaji Salifu gate lost a subsequent appeal at the National House of Chiefs and have since filed another case at the Supreme Court. The Court is however yet to determine the matter, which should bring finality to the litigation process.

### 3.2.2 Project Intervention:

#### 3.2.2.1 Stakeholder Engagement:<sup>8</sup>

As a starting point to understanding the conflict, the National Peace Council (NPC) organized a multi-stakeholder engagement. The *raison d'être* was to bring as many stakeholders as possible with a view to understanding the causes and dynamics of the conflict from the perspective of these stakeholders rather than from what they get from the media and other sources. It was also to ascertain what has been done by other actors and the gaps and challenges that remain, in order to fashion out an appropriate mediation action plan.



*Figure 3: Engagement with the feuding parties.*

Pursuant to this, the NPC engaged Members from the National and Northern Regional House of Chiefs, since the conflict was largely bordering on chieftaincy to understand the steps they were taking to deal with the impasse. It also engaged the District and Regional Security Council, which



was directly in charge of providing security and safety for Bimbilla and its environs. The NPC also engaged Civil Society, Community and Faith Based

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/politics/npc-to-engage-stakeholders-to-end-bimbilla-dispute.html>

Organizations working in and around the conflict with a view to synchronising the mediation effort. The media (print and electronic) both in Tamale and Bimbilla were also engaged largely on conflict sensitive reporting. The feuding parties were also engaged.

The dialogue/mediation was led by the NPC Governing Board with support from Eminent Council Members and Regional Executive Secretary of the Northern Regional Peace Council (NRPC). The

mediation committee was led by Most Rev. Vincent-Sowa Boi-Na, Catholic Bishop of Yendi, with the assistance of Maulvi Mohammed Bin Salih The Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission, Alhaji Mohammed Awal, Chief Imam of Takoradi, (all from NPC Governing Board) and Most Rev.



*Figure 5: Members of the NPC Engaging the Regional Security Council*

Philip Naameh, Metropolitan Archbishop of Tamale among other Eminent Members from the NRPC.

During the meetings, several recommendations were made. One of such recommendation was the need to set up a **Bimbilla Intra-Gate Peace Committee**. The Committee was to bring together seven members each (five men, two women) to identify, investigate, and dispel rumours. The committee was to provide a platform for cross-fertilization ideas, towards a peaceful transformation of the conflict. The committee was also expected to identify, analyse early warning signals, and report to the council for early response. It was expected to provide the NPC/NRPC mediation committee with guidelines during future mediation. Participants resolved at the meeting to use the committee to bridge gap between ordinary citizens of Bimbilla and security agencies.

### **3.2.2.2 Engagement with Citizens Living Outside Bimbilla:**

From the stakeholder engagement in Tamale, it became apparent that more attention needed to be given to the indigenes of Bimbilla who lived outside the town and its environs. This was because, though they were not directly involved in the conflict (as in firing the shots and engaging in arson),

they were those who contributed significantly in the purchase of arms and ammunitions. Also, most of these people wield considerable authority in their communities, and in most cases exerted some level of influence over the combatants in Bimbilla and its environs. This engagement was therefore to get their buy-in into the mediation process, so that no actor feels left out. In this direction therefore, the NPC/NRPC liaised with representatives from the two gates and identified influential indigenes outside Bimbilla who were invited for a two-day engagement in Dodowa. Here, there was a fruitful engagement between Members of the Council and the indigenes outside Bimbilla. They also agreed to form a joint committee made up of both gates to find a lasting solution to the conflict. They also promised to be part of the mediation effort by working closely with the NPC/NRPC.

### 3.2.2.3 Engagement with the National House of Chiefs:

The NPC also engaged all 10 representatives of the National House of Chiefs (NHC) in Kumasi with a view to charting a common path towards a peaceful transformation of the Bimbilla Conflict.

Coincidentally, that was the first time all representatives of the NHC met the Governing Board of the NPC. The meeting accorded the NPC the opportunity to brief the NHC on the steps it was taking so far



*Figure 6: Governing Board of the NPC in a group picture with Members of NHCs*

in mediating the conflict. It also shared with them the challenges it was encountering in promoting peace. Both parties had course to complain about the delay in deciding the case which was pending at the Supreme Court as well as the political interference. The NHCs and NPC issued a joint



*Figure 7: Engagement between NPC Governing Board and NHCs*

statement appealing to the Chief Justice as a matter of urgency to see to the determination of the case.<sup>9</sup> The statement which was jointly signed by Togbe Afede XIV, Chairman of the NHC and, Most Rev. Prof. Emmanuel

Asante, the Chairman of the NPC also called on the Politicians to desist from interfering in chieftaincy related matters.<sup>10</sup> A four Member Committee, two from each sides were to meet the President, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo to discuss how lasting solution could be brought to Bimbilla.

<sup>9</sup> <https://adrdaily.com/house-chiefs-peace-council-want-speedy-resolution-bimbilla-conflict/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/abide-by-rulings-peace-council-chiefs-tell-bimbilla-parties.html>

### 3.2.2.4 Post Supreme Court Verdict – engagement with youth, women’s groups and teachers

To consolidate the ongoing intervention following the Supreme Court verdict in May 2018 and considering the precarious nature of the Bimbilla conflict, the National Peace Council engaged 45 participants made up of the youth, women’s groups and teachers in a training to build their technical capacity and ensure that community members actively participate in maintaining peace in Bimbilla. The training targeted these groups as they have not previously been actively engaged in the process of maintaining peace and resolving the conflict. It was also to ensure that the youth and women, through informal platforms can promote unity and peace in Nanung. The teachers were urged to inculcate the values of peace into children that they were teaching. Participants were reminded to fight for the common interests of peace for Nanung and not for individual interests. Participants also agreed to organize and implement the following activities to promote peace in Bimbilla: local drama to promote peace; inter-community youth games; peace advocacies on radio; establish peace clubs; on street youth and women campaign shows.



*Figure 8: A section of participants*



*Figure 9: A group photo of participants*



### **3.2.3 Results:**

Though the NPC was under no illusion that this engagement was going to resolve the conflict, it has made some notable impact which if built upon can ultimately lead to a transformation and a resolution of the conflict.

1. **Enhanced community participation in the Bimbilla peace process.** Following the engagement with the media for instance, a community-based radio station in Bimbilla, *Gmantambo FM* allocated airtime to the NPC free of charge, to educate the people on the need for peaceful coexistence. The Executive Secretary of the NRPC also identified three opinion leaders (two Imams and President of the Concerned Citizens), who jointly educated the people on the need to eschew violence and co-exist peacefully. As a result of these radio engagements, community members in and around Bimbilla organised forums to denounce violence. For instance, four communities (Limam Fong, Dangbei, Baatingli, & Subure-Fong) declared themselves non-aligned communities. Similarly, some of these community members reported to the security agencies persons in possession of illegal small arms.
- 1.2 The role of women and youth in building peace cannot be underrated and should be harnessed. Following the training programme, for example, certain known firebrands had attitudinal changes; an example was two rival youth who held entrenched positions and had always shown hostile attitudes towards each other, extended reciprocal visits to each other's households and interacted with relatives. Another renowned firebrand (a woman) was reported to have started extending greetings to neighbours after the training. Participants recounted that it was a shock to see her visiting and interacting with hitherto long time 'enemies'.

2. **Inter-gate Committee formed to mediate in the conflict.** In any mediation effort, for the parties to accept to dialogue is in itself a success indicator. More so in this situation as this engagement constituted the first time the feuding parties were brought to the same table for dialogue. Previous attempts with the respective gates brought with it misrepresentation of facts leading to suspicion and mistrust, which is not healthy for any mediation. The importance of jointly engaging the parties became apparent when they began to work



*Figure 10: Members of the Committee meeting with the NPC*

- together leading the formation of a joint committee known as the ‘**Committee of the Four-Wise Men**’, which was made up of the spokespersons of the two factions. The main task of the committee was take up measures which will eventually culminate in the formation of a joint committee for mediation. Though the Committee could not be inaugurated at the end of the 2017, they have put in significant efforts such as identifying members of the Committee from each gate. The members of the sub-committee who were spokespersons resolved not to grant unnecessary media interviews to exacerbate the conflict. This gesture in no small way contributed to dousing the tensions.
3. **Common mediation platform adopted.** One main danger in mediation is that, there turn to be too many organizations interested in making an impact thereby deploying their own mediators. This leads to duplication and overlapping roles. Some also go in with different interest. This can make conflict management difficult. As a result of the engagement the NPC held with CSOs, FBO and CBOs, a common platform was adopted. All of them agreed to channel their efforts and resources through the National Peace Council to ensure that the right people were being engaged. For instance, WANEP-Ghana and CARE-International (Ghana) through Northern Ghana Governance Activity (NGGA) Project have engaged some stakeholders in the conflict through the NPC.

### **3.3 POST-ELECTION RESEARCH:**

The 2016 elections were generally assessed as peaceful by all observers (CDD, 2017). Even in hotspots noted for electoral violence such as Yendi, Bawku Central, Asawasi, Mpoho Wassa, Sankore, Atebubu and Odododiodio (Ga Mashie), peace prevailed during and after the elections. How do the various programs outlined and implemented by NPC serve as drivers for peace before, during and after elections? This was what this research set out to achieve. The aim was to enable the NPC document good practices as well as areas of improvement, to serve as a blueprint for future elections.

#### **3.3.1 Intervention:**

##### **3.3.1.1 Recruitment of Consultant:**

The NPC relied upon a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) of the University of Cape Coast (UCC), to conduct this research. Before this, the NPC had successfully worked with the IDS to carry out a comprehensive mapping out of all conflicts in Ghana (latent and active), develop a Mediation Strategy Manual as well as train its Governing Board and Council Members in Mediation, Early Warning and Response as well as Conflict Prevention.

##### **3.3.2 Key Findings of the Study:**

The study found out that, some of the activities implemented by the NPC contributed significantly in the sampled hotspots: these activities include:

- Training workshops, radio, programmes, durbars and dialogue sessions: stakeholders (NCCE, EC, CSOs) partnered with the NPC to deliver targeted messages. Participants in these fora included people that also had significant influence in society. Traditional and religious leaders, media persons, political party executives, the security agencies and the press felt substantially empowered through these messages to also focus on delivering similar messages to their subjects, supporters, listeners, worshippers etc.

- Training workshops targeting the youth as a special group did have the effect of turning some of the youth into agents for the police by reporting potential troublemakers. Some of the youth were also active in talking to their kind not to resort to violence in their campaigns.
- The setting up of the early warning response system – REEWARG/NEEWARG: The groups were active not only in quickly identifying potential sources of violence, but also in acting. The group monitored the press and was proactive in stopping potentially volatile radio programmes. Respondents agreed that the effectiveness of the REEWARGs stemmed from the broad range of expertise brought into the membership and their active participation in peace education. Most REEWARG members had also been trained in mediation strategies by the NPC.
- The numerous peace messages on all kinds of platforms and the many people trained to also pass on the peace messages: It appears there was a deluge of peace messages in these hotspot zones. As one respondent put it: “the people went to numerous seminars organized by the NCCE/NPC/EC. They became enlightened and moreover the political parties empowered their polling agents by also giving them education and also increasing the number of polling agents”. Sometimes, too much of something can achieve positive results.

### **3.3.2.1 Identified Challenges**

This section presents information derived from the field on the challenges associated with the delivery of the messages. The focus is on what issues confronted the NPC in ensuring a more effective message delivery.

- ✓ *Funds:* In all the study sites, REEWARG was praised for the good work they did in spreading the messages and their proactive responses to challenges. However, members complained of the lack of financial support. They relied on their own resources for transportation to attend to election related issues and to attend meetings. NPC should consider supporting the operations of these groups. In the long term, some respondents suggested that the NPC should stop relying on government funding because the shortfalls accounted for the lack of support for the REEWARGs.

- ✓ *Personnel:* Respondents in many areas complained that there were too few people going around to educate people on the elections. NPC has presence only in the regions. Consequently, it appears the peace messages were rather delivered through the NCCE. This accounts for the fact that many people are not even aware of the NPC at the local level. NPC needs to make its presence felt at the local level by opening district offices or requesting to be acknowledged by the NCCE in all their operations relating to the peace messaging.
- ✓ *NPC to be active always:* Concern was raised about the NPC being active only during election years. This issue has also been raised by the review reports mentioned earlier. ‘Being active always’ would ensure that there is continuous peace education. The lack of this accounts for the formation of hardened, partisan positions, which unravel during elections. Formation of peace clubs in communities and schools has been suggested for the NPC to remain ‘active always’.
- ✓ *Inter-party and intra-party violence:* Inter and intra party violence has characterized the political scene for some time and remains a major challenge to the NPC. Cooperation among the political actors is required to stem this. Although the 2016 elections were largely peaceful, intra-party violence before the elections and inter-party violence after the elections clearly are sources of worry.
- ✓ *The NPC Board:* The review by the Commonwealth Secretariat (Shale, 2017) particularly stressed the issue of the insufficient representation of women on the national and regional councils of the NPC. From this research, respondents complained about the fact that the councils over-represent Christians compared to the other religions, too many elderly people and none for the youth as well as non-representation of NGOs. These perceptions are real.

### **3.3.4 Recommendations:**

Following the findings, the research came up with these recommendations:

- Institutionalization of interparty dialogue at the regional and constituency levels: This dialogue process was found useful in some of the hotspots. It is recommended that this process should be scaled up to the constituency level. This dialogue provides opportunities for all the parties to iron out differences. It should not remain at the national level only.
- Presence of NPC at the local level: respondents appear not to be generally aware of the NPC at the local level. This situation will improve when NPC is able to set up district level offices as required by the Act establishing the Council.
- NPC should collaborate with traditional leaders: awareness of the activities of the NPC also appears to be at the level of the paramount chiefs. While the paramount chiefs are expected to relay the messages to the sub-chiefs, this does not appear to be working well. Efforts need to be made to support the paramount chiefs to relate the messages to the local levels.
- NCCE needs to acknowledge NPC in their activities: many respondents would acknowledge the role of the NCCE in peace education, although many of the messages were prepared by the NPC.
- REEWARG needs to be strengthened: the complaints about lack of funding support for the REEWARGs stem from the reliance on NPC. Since these groups work at the local level, NPC should explore the possibility of linking them up with the Regional Coordinating Councils and the District Assemblies for funding and other logistics support.
- Continuous peace education in schools and communities: many respondents complained that NPC works only during election years. By linking up with CSOs and the Information Services Directorate, it should be possible for the NPC to be seen engaging in peace education all the time.

### **3.3.5 Conclusion:**

The interventions came off successfully in accordance with the terms agreed with DANIDA. Programmatic goals were largely achieved particularly, with regard to building a strong and resilient institution. This project has kick started the needed action, and the successes will be built upon to get an institution that is fit for purpose. Similarly, this project has offered the NPC the opportunity to engage in one of its most sustained mediation effort through the Bimbilla conflict. Here again, signs of success have started to emerge, not least, getting the feuding parties to lead in efforts towards peaceful transformation of the conflict through the formation of a joint committee as well as getting the citizens outside Bimbilla to join in the mediation efforts. The Council has also learnt useful lessons from 2016 general election and has started taking steps to ensure that it contributes positively to making 2020 incidence free.