Three steps to prevent a fight.

Most fights start the same way. Something happens — a payback, a land argument, a theft, an insult, a compensation payment that never came. Someone decides the answer is a gun.

That decision can be changed:

STEP 1 Talk to people before anything happens

Begin with the people you already know who might fight, or who would back a fight. Most of them are in your own community.

You do not need a meeting or a programme. A conversation is enough. What matters is that it happens while everyone is calm.

- Ask people what they think the right answer is when a dispute comes up. Listen before you say anything.
- Tell stories about communities that protected themselves without fighting. If you know one, send it to ShieldPNG so others can hear it.
- Sit with someone who is drawn to fighting and help him work out why, and what else he could do. We have resources that show you how.
- Work out now who could talk who down when trouble start.
- Raise it in your church group or women's group, and with your community leaders. Ask what you could all do.
- Walk through a dispute that could happen here, and agree what each person would do.
- If you see someone online calling for violence, do not share it. Send the link to ShieldPNG.

STEP 2 Show that you are ready

Once people agree, show it. Your rivals need to know about it.

BEING READY MEANS THREE THINGS:

01

People know how to gather evidence that can put an attacker in jail, and are willing to give a statement.

02

The police know your community will support a prosecution — including when the offender is one of your own. That last part is what makes it believable.

03

Everyone understands that an attack now means arrest.

- Hold a practice exercise, take photos or film it, and share it.
- Meet your rivals and tell them plainly what your community will do if there is an attack.
- Tell them they can do the same. When both sides prepare, both are safer.

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Step 3 — Hold the line when something happens

This step works best if you have done the first two. It is still worth trying if you have not.

- **Stop the first response.** When you can see someone has been triggered, step in, or get the person he listens to step in. Calm him down. Talk through what happens to him and his family if he shoots. Do this every time, not once.
- **Make sure something real happens instead.** A weak response opens the door to a violent one. If no answer was agreed beforehand, someone needs to find one now — mediation, the village court, the land court, the police.
- **Get people to agree to it.** Start with your own group if you need to, then the leaders and the men most likely to organise a fight.
- **Prepare if an attack looks likely.** Alert the police and the people who need to know. Keep everyone safe.
- **Gather evidence if an attack happens.** Take it to the police, or use the ShieldPNG evidence system.
- **See it through.** Support the witnesses so they do not withdraw. Keep asking the police for arrests. Keep your community behind the process, even when it is slow.

Start small. Pick the one dispute most likely to turn deadly where you live. Work out the few people who matter. Have the first conversation this month.