



transforming conflict



Our mission is very ambitious:
to transform the way the world
deals with conflict. We emphasize
cooperative solutions, pursued
on a realistic scale and with
practical means.

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Current problems – whether ethnic, environmental, or economic – are simply too complex and interconnected to be settled on an adversarial basis.

We began in 1982 at the height of the Cold War, and we focused on building bridges between East and West. Back then, we had two employees, a handful of supporters, and a minuscule budget. And we had the audacity to think we could change the world — from a win-lose, you-or-me environment, to a win-win, you-and-me place.

Today, that audacity still shapes our work.

But as global conflict has become more diffuse, so has our search for common ground. We currently work in Africa, Europe, the Middle East, Indonesia, and the United States, and we have a staff of almost 400. In addition, thousands of people directly participate in our programmes, and we reach millions more through media projects.

We carry out our work on a realistic scale — one step at a time. Indeed, we strive to be incrementally transformational. We appreciate that people and nations will act, as they always have, in their perceived best interest. We believe, however, that everyone's best interest is served by solutions that maximise the gain of those with a stake in the outcome. Current problems — whether ethnic, environmental, or economic — are simply too complex and interconnected to be settled on an adversarial basis. The earth is running out of space, resources, and recuperative capacity to deal with wasteful conflict.

As you will read in this report, the methods we use vary as greatly as the places where we work. However, our methodology is based on one fundamental principle: *Understand the differences; act on the commonalities.*

Above all, we do our work because we think it makes a difference. For example, our activities in Burundi have played a key role in breaking down ethnic fears and hatred. In Sierra Leone, we are helping the country emerge from a dark night of violence. In Macedonia, researchers have

shown how our hugely popular children's television series has changed kids' attitudes towards those of other ethnic groups. In the pages that follow, you will see descriptions of other successful projects.

Not surprisingly, we have also had our share of setbacks. We have worked for a dozen years in the Middle East, and despite our best efforts, violence soared. And in Liberia looters destroyed our radio studio in 2003. Still, we remain committed for the long haul to these places —

and everywhere else we work. We believe that our message represents hope for the future of countries in conflict. So in Liberia, we have rebuilt Talking Drum Studio and are once again making radio programmes to encourage national reconstruction. In the Middle East, as the death toll spiralled, we re-evaluated our activities and developed a new set of projects to try to help break the cycle of violence.

Although the world is overly polarized and violent behaviour is much too prevalent, we remain essentially optimistic. Our view is that, on the whole, history is moving in positive directions. Failures in peacemaking do not cause us to give up. Rather, they convince us that we — and the world — must do much better in addressing conflict.

The challenge is extraordinary, and I consider myself immensely privileged to be able to do the work that I do. I am doubly blessed to have so many wonderful colleagues, funders, and friends. My gratitude is overwhelming.

John Marks, President and Founder



vision

Our mission is to transform the way the world deals with conflict: away from adversarial approaches, toward cooperative solutions.

Our vision is of a world where individuals, organisations, governments, and societies respond to conflict in non-adversarial ways — where differences stimulate social progress, rather than precipitate violence. We seek a world in which non-violent conflict resolution is the norm, not the exception.

OUR CORE PRINCIPLES

Conflict is both normal and resolvable

While conflict is inevitable, violence is not. Conflict is a product of human diversity and can be either positive or negative. When approached cooperatively, conflict can lead to great progress.

Common ground is not the same as compromise

Finding common ground does not mean settling for the lowest common denominator. It means finding a higher denominator and ultimately discovering shared humanity.

Conflict can be transformed

Beyond helping to resolve specific disputes, our goal is to shift the way people, communities, and societies view one another and deal with their differences so that they resolve their problems in a cooperative manner.

Peace is a process

Peace is not an event. The most effective way to make and build peace is to commit to a long-term process and find solutions that maximise the gain of all involved.

Humankind is interdependent

The world is increasingly interdependent — and vulnerable. Security increases as people and nations feel more secure.

OUR OPERATING PRACTICES

We avoid parachuting. We do not drop into a conflict for a short visit. We make long-term commitments. We use our continuing presence to develop a knowledge base and to build networks of relationships on all sides of the conflict.

We use an integrated approach. We work simultaneously on multiple levels and on multiple fronts. In essence, we practise societal conflict transformation.

We become engaged and then see the possibilities. Conflicts are extraordinarily complex, and it takes profound engagement in order to understand them. Although we conduct assessment missions before undertaking any new programme, we strive to remain flexible to adapt to the changing environments in which we operate.

We are social entrepreneurs. In our staff, we look for problem solvers and creative thinkers who, from a shared vision, can develop finite and achievable projects. We continuously develop new tools and approaches.

We are immersed in local cultures. We work with and build on individuals' and communities' knowledge, wisdom, and creativity. We partner with local peace builders to strengthen their ability to transform their own conflicts.

We practise cooperative action. Dialogue is a necessary but insufficient means to change attitudes and behaviours. Wherever possible, we work with parties in conflict to help them not only to understand their differences but also to act on their commonalities.

our



OUR TOOLBOX

We have developed a broad array of operational methods, which we call collectively our “toolbox.” These include well-known conflict resolution techniques, such as mediation and facilitation, and less traditional ones, like TV productions, radio soap opera, and community organising. We have found that employing several tools at the same time increases their overall effectiveness.

Traditional Conflict Resolution Techniques

Mediation and Facilitation. Everywhere we work we serve as a mediating and facilitating force between contending parties. We also train people in mediation skills, leading, for example, to the establishment of independent mediation centres in Gaza and Ukraine.

Capacity Strengthening. We work to increase the skills and understanding of individuals, organisations, and institutions to respond to conflicts.

Shuttle Diplomacy. Sometimes, rather than physically convoking opponents, we shuttle among them. We have done this on a sustained basis between Israelis and Palestinians, as well as between Iranians and Americans.

Back-Channel Negotiations. On a confidential basis, we facilitate high-level communication between opposing parties.

Court-Based Mediation. In Ukraine we have established alternative dispute resolution systems to lighten court dockets and improve the judicial process.

Practical Cooperation Projects

We facilitate regional cooperation between Israel and its Arab neighbours to reduce the threat of biological or chemical incidents, whether intended or accidental.

In the United States we sponsor a joint effort by liberals and conservatives to have Congress establish a national Consensus Council.

In Macedonia, we established bilingual kindergartens where ethnic Macedonian and ethnic Albanian children develop mutual respect by learning in each other's languages.

Radio and Television

Radio. In Burundi, Liberia, and Sierra Leone we operate radio studios that produce news, features, drama, and music. A particular speciality is soap opera for social change, which we produce in eight countries, and programming produced by and for children.

Common Ground Television. We produce TV programming for adults and children that treats contentious issues within a common ground framework.

Common Ground Journalism

Journalist Training. Press reporting can both ignite and defuse violence. In Africa, the Middle East, and the Aegean region we hold workshops for journalists to try to diminish inflammatory reporting and promote mutual understanding.

News Service. In the Middle East we operate the Common Ground News Service, which syndicates articles giving common ground perspectives on issues related to conflicts in the region.

Issue-Oriented Magazines. In the Balkans we produce two magazines that examine controversial issues through the perspectives of journalists of different ethnicities and nationalities.

Arts and Culture

Music, Dance, and Drama. We have held peace festivals in Burundi

that celebrated local culture, recorded a national peace song and music video in Angola, and sponsored live drama with common ground messages in West Africa.

Film. We hold Common Ground Film Festivals in Washington and around the world that demonstrate how cinema can illuminate commonalities and promote empathy, rather than glorifying violent conflict.

Sports

We collaborated with USA Wrestling to take an American wrestling team to Iran. In Burundi we sponsor soccer matches between Hutu and Tutsi youths who were previously involved in violence.



Policy Forums

We co-convene the Conflict Prevention and Resolution Forum in Washington and the InterAgency Forum for Conflict Prevention in Brussels, as well as forums in Washington and Brussels to promote information sharing and policy coordination among groups active in Africa's Great Lakes region.

Polling

We have commissioned polls to ascertain attitudes and test innovative approaches toward conflict among Israelis, Palestinians, and Americans.

Awards

We present Common Ground Awards annually to honour outstanding achievements in conflict resolution and bring public attention to the field.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

We are committed to measuring and increasing the influence our interventions have in the communities where we work.

Situations of conflict are rarely simple or linear; multiple actors, causes, and possible solutions all play a role. Identifying the difference that our work makes is therefore a difficult endeavour. The task is made more complex by a lack of reliable tools to measure effectiveness of peacebuilding activities and by physical and social environments that are outside the reach of standard research methodologies. Despite these limitations, we established the Institutional Learning and Research Division in 2003 to measure and enhance our effectiveness, so as to enable us to maximise our impact.

Our approach to improving effectiveness is a commitment to excellence in monitoring, evaluation, and continuous learning. This translates into a number of initiatives, including the country-programme evaluations that are conducted at two-year intervals. The findings of these evaluations inform our work and result in continuing improvements.

While the Institutional Learning and Evaluation Division is newly

established, several comprehensive country-programme evaluations had been previously conducted. At the country-programme level, these evaluations generally have verified the added value of our work and, within the limitations of the methodology, its impact. As

expressed, for example, in the European Union's evaluation of our Sierra Leone programme, "The project already has had a major impact on the general population, who express great respect for it." The external group that evaluated our Burundi programme in 1999 concluded, "This evaluation team is confident to state that Search for Common Ground made its mark on the Burundian culture."

Ongoing self-assessment and informal feedback also provide indications of the results of our work. Our impact appears to be manifest in four important spheres:

Supporting and advancing peace processes. In

the Middle East anecdotal evidence and continuous follow-up with participants indicate that our activities have helped forge key relationships between influential decision makers in the peace process. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) our information-dissemination



The cast takes a break while recording *Nasha Ulitsa*, a radio soap opera promoting tolerance and celebrating diversity in Crimea, Ukraine.

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activities are reported to be one of the critical sources of public awareness of the peace process, helping to reduce suspicion and rumours that can lead to violence.

Reducing violence. In Burundi and in Sierra Leone surveys indicate that our radio programming is a trusted and credible source of information about events in the country, including peacemaking efforts. Such information reduces preemptive violence resulting from fear and misinformation.

Shifting attitudes and building foundations for peace. In Sierra Leone our community outreach programme is strengthening many people's participation in the democratic process — a key to the maintenance of a fragile peace. External evaluations in Burundi found that the radio programmes produced by Studio Ijambo have changed the way people feel about and relate to other ethnic groups in their society. Similarly, evaluations of the interethnic kindergartens we founded in Macedonia have shown them to have significant positive influence on children's views of other ethnic groups, particularly during periods of increased tension.

Equipping communities to prevent and resolve conflicts. Informal tracking and feedback show that many of the vast numbers of people we have trained — 10,000 internally displaced persons in Angola, for instance — go on to implement their new skills, through either establishing new organisations or personally employing the techniques learned. In Macedonia our evaluations show that the *Nashe Maalo* television series provides children with valuable skills for preventing or resolving conflict with their peers in diverse ethnic groups.

We are committed to sharing fully the results of our evaluation and research in ways that will strengthen the field of conflict resolution.

Peace is the most basic human need of all.

CROSS-PROGRAMME DIVISIONS



COMMON GROUND PRODUCTIONS
ARTS AND CULTURE
CHILDREN AND YOUTH

To produce and coordinate programming that supports our country-specific projects worldwide, we operate three headquarters-based divisions devoted to promoting conflict transformation through media, the arts, and youth activities.

COMMON GROUND PRODUCTIONS

Common Ground Productions (CGP) is our radio and television production division. We have found mass media — radio, television, and print — to be the most effective means of reaching the largest number of people with our efforts to break down the prejudice, cultural misunderstanding, and fear that are at the root of most violent conflict. CGP has pioneered the use of mass media — which we employ in most of our country and regional programmes — as a conflict transformation tool.

Radio

Our radio studios in Burundi, Sierra Leone, and Liberia produce programming that carries messages of reconciliation to all sectors of society, from women and youth to returning refugees and ex-combatants. Radio is also an important component of our programmes in Congo, Angola, and Indonesia. Common Ground radio's news and public affairs programming provides objective, unbiased information that counteracts disinformation and hate propaganda. Reaching millions of listeners, highly popular soap operas break down cultural stereotypes and illustrate how people who have traditionally regarded each other as adversaries can — with good will, humour, and respect for each other as individuals — live together harmoniously.

Television

Where it is widely accessible, television can help to break down cultural and social barriers between people. If skilfully directed at children, it can even prevent such barriers from becoming entrenched. Working initially with the creators of *Sesame Street*, CGP developed

Nashe Maalo (Our Neighbourhood), a dramatic series aimed at children in Macedonia aged 7-12. Completing its fifth season in 2003, the series portrays the daily interactions of an ethnically diverse group of children who overcome inherited stereotypes and prejudices to live together as friends.

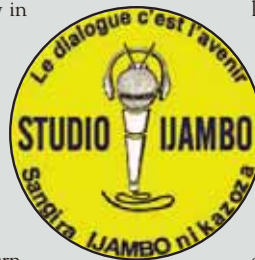
In the United States we produced in 2003 a documentary for public television entitled *Romeo and Juliet in Black and White*.

Based on interviews with the biracial cast, crew, and audience of a theatrical production in Cincinnati, Ohio, the show illustrated how the play's message about the tragic consequences of prejudice and intolerance can be applied to today's search for racial harmony in that polarized community. CGP's most recent production, *The Shape of the Future*, is a five-hour documentary series that will examine

the aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians and show that agreements that do not threaten the national existence of either party are possible.

Print Media

We commission and disseminate news and feature articles, directed primarily at opinion makers, that demonstrate how the press can illuminate what diverse people and groups have in common, rather than what divides them, and promote cooperative approaches to problem solving. Our bridges for the New Balkans project produces *Karavan*, a multilingual magazine distributed in five Southeast European countries. The Common Ground News Service syndicates to Middle East media outlets for republication, articles from Middle Eastern and Western sources that analyze regional issues from a common ground perspective.



ARTS AND CULTURE

Artistic and cultural activities can build strong and lasting community bonds. They draw together people of diverse or even hostile identities around a shared passion. The Arts and Culture Division finds ways to incorporate the arts into most of our programmes.

Common Ground Film Festival

We hold an annual film festival in Washington, DC, and a national student film competition to encourage a common ground ethos among future filmmakers. The films presented at the festival demonstrate that workable solutions can be found to contentious problems. Each year the films travel to colleges and universities throughout the United States. During 2002-2003 about 6,000 people participated in a Common Ground film event.

Music, Dance, and Drama

We use these art forms throughout Africa to reach across ethnic and political barriers and foster a sense of community. In Burundi, for example, we've brought together Hutus and Tutsis to celebrate and enjoy their common culture at peace festivals. In 2002, more than 10,000 people gathered to watch 600 dancers, musicians, storytellers, and actors celebrate their shared cultural heritage in an atmosphere of peace and reconciliation.

In Liberia, Angola, Sierra Leone, and Congo troupes of actors who appear on our popular radio dramas bring interactive performances to villages, schools, and internal refugee camps, both to entertain and to foster civil dialogue. In Angola we brought together some of the

country's most popular musicians — from both sides of the bitter civil war — to write and record the popular Angolan Peace Song.

Cultural Exchange

We facilitated one of the most important cultural exchanges between the United States and Iran in decades: a contemporary art exhibition in Washington in April 2001, which then toured the United States for two years.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

We have a commitment to transforming the role of young people in conflicts. Most of our programmes aim to foster the potential of youth as leaders for peacebuilding, dialogue, and reconciliation. We engage young people as stakeholders and recognize that their involvement in resolving societal disputes is key. We create opportunities for youth to lead efforts to build bridges and contribute to peace processes. The Children and Youth Division provides technical support to our programmes through education, media, and action projects.

We create educational opportunities for young people to learn about conflict resolution, interethnic relationships, and reconciliation. Using media, we create platforms for young people to have voice and participate in dialogues and discussions in their communities.

Our programmes seek to engage young people as protagonists for peace and to create opportunities for youth-led organizations to gain skills and access to resources. Our youth partners have led election monitoring efforts in Sierra Leone, organized soccer tournaments in Burundi, and trained their peers in conflict resolution in Indonesia.

community



Macedonian and Albanian children learn and play together at Mozaik, a multicultural and multilingual public pre-school programme in Skopje.

harmony



SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

ANGOLA
BURUNDI
D.R. CONGO
LIBERIA
SIERRA LEONE

At some point in the forty-odd years since most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa gained their independence, nearly every one of them has experienced violent civil conflict. These conflicts have created much death and destruction, as well as great poverty, illiteracy, plummeting health standards, and masses of refugees and internally displaced persons.

One of the most devastating of these conflicts was in Rwanda, where organised genocidal attacks by the majority Hutu ethnic group on the Tutsi minority led to the death of an estimated 800,000 people in 1994. A year later, we opened our first African field office in adjacent Burundi, with its similar demographics and history of political violence.

In the years since, our activities have spread throughout the continent — to Liberia, Sierra Leone, Angola, and the Democratic Republic of Congo — and programmes in neighbouring countries, including Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire, are in development.

Using a variety of mutually reinforcing techniques, we are able to link grassroots efforts with national campaigns. Our radio programmes help create a national dialogue around critical conflicts and issues that affect the peace process. Community outreach initiatives — including workshops, trainings, and facilitated dialogues — help communities examine conflict and search for solutions at grassroots and personal levels. All Common Ground programmes, which are planned and carried out predominantly by culturally diverse local staff, aim to build the conflict resolution capacity of our partners with new skills and resources.



Mass Media

Prejudice based on ignorance and misconceptions is a prime breeding ground for violent conflict. An essential step in transforming conflict is enabling people to communicate and provide accurate information about each other. So a central emphasis of our efforts in Africa is bridging that gap through mass media. In a region of high illiteracy and low technology, radio has proven to be the most effective medium for reaching large audiences, serving not only as a messenger of reconciliation but also as a model of inclusiveness.

At Burundi's Studio Ijambo, an ethnically diverse team of journalists produces programmes — a mix of news, drama, documentaries, and discussion — that examine all sides of the country's deeply embedded conflict, highlighting issues that can

unite rather than divide Burundians. Our long-running soap opera, *Our Neighbours, Our Family*, depicts the intertwined and harmonious lives of neighbouring Hutu and Tutsi families. It is listened to by close to ninety percent of the Burundian population.

Talking Drum Studios in Liberia and Sierra Leone have an equally broad reach. For most people they are the only source of diverse and objective information about what is happening in their country. Each studio produces over a dozen programmes that cover news,



FAUSTIN MBONYINGINGO

BURUNDI “When there used to be tensions on the university campus, I found shelter among my ethnic group. But since SFCG became involved with the university students, my feeling of affinity changed, from an ethnic identity to a more universal one.”

Faustin Mbonyingingo, president of the Bubanza Province Student Association, Burundi

(Left) Journalists and radio personalities with whom we work are popular figures and role models in the countries we work in.
 (Above) A common beat draws people from near and far during Burundi’s Sangwe Festival.



An essential step in transforming conflict is enabling people to communicate and provide accurate information about each other.

public affairs, entertainment, and practical information. For example, *Golden Kids News*, produced by and for children, addresses issues of concern to these much-abused and usually ignored citizens of the future and advocates on their behalf. Other programmes address issues of concern to women, refugees, and ex-combatants.

Building Community, Building Peace

A thirty-year civil war in Angola drove millions of people out of their homes. In the internally displaced persons (IDP) camps where they found refuge, traditional social mechanisms no longer function and conflict is often rife. Our Centre for Common Ground (CCG) works to ease tensions through dialogue, cultural activities, and training in conflict resolution. In the process, we help prepare IDP's to deal with conflicts that could arise as they return to their homes.

At the Women's Peace Centre in Burundi, women of different ethnic backgrounds get together for dialogue and camaraderie. The centre provides support to a network of hundreds of women's associations involved in rebuilding the country, exemplifying interethnic solidarity and mobilising for peace. Another project helps at-risk youth resist the political manipulations



In Sierra Leone, young men now use their time constructively by serving their community as election monitors and operating Talking Drum Studio listening stations.

Women in Angola transform their roles in the community through conflict resolution workshops.



that often draw them into perpetrating violence. Instead, they join together in ethnically mixed football tournaments, conflict resolution workshops, and humanitarian relief projects.

Talking Drum Studios in Sierra Leone and Liberia take their mission of reconciliation directly to the people through their community peacebuilding units. Through direct mediation, peace carnivals, and soccer tournaments, these multi-media units stimulate grassroots solutions to community problems. Throughout our work in Africa, community outreach efforts feed back into the media programming, and vice versa, building momentum for peacebuilding at all levels of society.

Building Capacity for Resolving Conflicts

In Angola our peace and security programme provides conflict resolution training to the armed forces, police, ex-combatants, and local and international non-governmental organisations. In Congo our training of United Nations observers and peacekeeping forces has helped them deal in a non-adversarial way with the potentially violent situations they face every day. By empowering others to impart these skills

to their peers, we enable thousands of Africans and international peacekeepers to contribute to healing their war-ravaged countries.

(Left) In the midst of divisive conflict, Talking Drum Studio radio programmes unite people in celebration of hope and possibilities.



Mozaik offers Macedonian and Albanian children a chance to become socialised in a tolerant environment where everyone is valued equally.

During the Cold War years, Search for Common Ground sponsored projects whose aim was to reduce tension between East and West and to expand cooperation in areas of common concern.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, we shifted our focus in 1993 to Macedonia, where we sought to strengthen interethnic relations and prevent violence, and in 1994 to Ukraine, where we worked with local partners to help improve the country's capacity to deal constructively with post-communist conflict. We are currently building on lessons learned during the last two decades of work in the region to extend our activities, through the Balkan Bridges media programme, into Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Kosovo, and Bulgaria.

BELGIUM

We work in partnership with Belgian organisations to transform the way Belgians deal with conflict. As part of the *Parcours de la Diversité* (Road to Diversity) project, we train secondary-school children in problem-solving techniques, helping them to understand the different cultural backgrounds of their peers and the wealth of diversity in a multicultural society. Through the *Festival des Libertés* (Festival of Freedoms) we run conflict transformation workshops for the general public and promote cooperative problem solving in everyday life. We are also developing projects that will use TV and radio to improve tense relations between communities in Belgium.

MACEDONIA

In 1993, we began work in Macedonia to strengthen interethnic rela-

tions and help prevent violence. We became involved at a time when other parts of former Yugoslavia were caught up in internecine warfare. Our goal was to strengthen Macedonia's immune system, so that the country would hold together.

Children and Youth

With the major ethnic groups, Macedonians and Albanians, isolated from each other in self-segregated neighbourhoods, children naturally take on the prejudices and cultural stereotypes of their parents. Our challenge was to break down those prejudices, or even to prevent them from taking hold. Our efforts have been focused on two projects: *Nashe Maalo*, a television drama series directed at 7- to 12-year-olds, and *Mozaik*, a multilingual and multicultural pre-school programme in public kindergartens.

Nashe Maalo is set in an imaginary neighbourhood where Macedonian, Albanian, Roma (Gypsy), and Turkish

children live and play together. Although their normal frictions are often aggravated by cultural prejudices, they eventually work through them and remain the best of friends. The show is watched by more than 75 percent of children in the target age range. So powerful are the show's messages that surveys of young viewers both before and after watching it reveal sharp reductions in the levels of prejudice and stereotyping of other ethnic groups.



Greek and Turkish journalists meet for SFCG-sponsored dialogue



Dance traditions bring Crimean youth together in Ukraine during the SFCG-sponsored children's Rainbow Festival.

Mozaik offers Macedonian and Albanian children aged 4-7 a chance to become socialised in a tolerant environment where everyone is valued equally. During Macedonia's civil conflict in 2001, despite fears that heightened ethnic tensions would lead parents to pull their children out of the schools, enrollment actually went up. Mozaik is now seen as a pedagogical model for all pre-school teachers, who will be given introductory seminars to Mozaik's philosophy and methodology. To share its lessons more broadly, and to learn from other practitioners, Mozaik collaborates with other multicultural and multilingual pre-school educators in Europe.

Media — Domestic and Regional

Our media activities have both a domestic and a regional component. Within Macedonia, we publish *Multi-Ethnic Forum*, a quarterly magazine written and edited in the Macedonian and Albanian languages by ethnically diverse journalists and thinkers. We work with regional Macedonian-, Albanian-, and Romany-language television stations to exchange materials that are broadcast in the language of each respective audience. There is a similar exchange among regional radio stations.

With the European Union pressing for Southeast and Eastern Euro-

pean countries to integrate regionally, and because countries in these regions share common experiences, we are significantly expanding our regional activities. Our first cross-border initiative, Bridges for the New Balkans, was created in Macedonia in 2001. Reaching into five neighbouring countries, Balkan Bridges produces regional television documentaries and a multilingual regional magazine, *Karavan*, which is distributed free in four different languages and has a combined annual circulation of one million. Each issue deals with a specific concern affecting the Balkans, as seen from the varying perspective of writers from around the region.

Building on that initiative, in 2002 we established the Southeast and East Europe Regional Programme, based in Brussels. The programme's initial activities focus on Bosnia, Albania, and Cyprus.

UKRAINE

Since 1994 the Ukraine Centre for Common Ground (UCCG) has worked in education, mass media, organisational leadership, and the criminal justice system. The central tenet of our approach is that people are more content, more productive, and thus more likely to undertake positive change when they are engaged *with* persons and institutions that affect their lives, rather than when these persons or institutions do things *to* them or *for* them.

Working in the Educational and Judicial Systems

We develop and institute peer-mediation programmes for high school students. This Secure Schools training programme received recognition and great interest at the first All-Ukrainian Pedagogical School Conference in 2003. We are encouraged to see these models being adopted in other parts of the Ukrainian educational system.

We have also established court-based alternative dispute resolution (ADR) services within the Donetsk and Odessa regional courts, which

ease the courts' caseloads and provide disputants with alternatives to costly litigation. Jointly with the Academy of Judges of Ukraine, we conduct ADR workshops for newly appointed judges and develop a strategy for institutionalising ADR in the Ukrainian judicial system.

By introducing the concept of restorative justice into the courts, we seek to reform the criminal justice system in Ukraine. Restorative justice provides restitution to the crime victim for physical and emotional harm and at the same time restores the sense of responsibility of the offender. The pilot project is in Kiev, in partnership with the Supreme Court of Ukraine.

We have also developed a web-based conflict resolution resource, in the Ukrainian and Russian languages, to provide information on state-of-the-art conflict resolution practice for both professionals and the wider public.

Crimean Dialogue

During the Stalin era, Crimean Tatars and other smaller ethnic groups were deported en masse to Central Asia. The return of these formerly deported minority peoples adds considerable strain on an already fragile social and economic infrastructure. We have developed a Crimea Dialogue project that works to mobilize local communi-

ties and bring together diverse groups around issues like unemployment, citizenship, environment, discrimination, and religion-based problems. We also produce *Nasha Ulitsa*, a radio drama that depicts the complexities of conflict centred on everyday pressures on young adults.

GREECE/TURKEY/CYPRUS

Since 1998 we have been carrying out a variety of projects with a team of Greek, Turkish, and Cypriot journalists and TV producers. We facilitate cooperation among Turkish, Greek, and Cypriot reporters in producing articles and newspaper supplements on subjects of mutual concern, which are published in all three countries. We train students and working journalists in journalistic ethics, conflict resolution, and issues related to diversity.

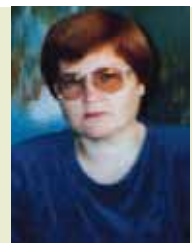
In 2001, Common Ground Productions produced "Gimme Six," an eight-part children's television series about Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot children who meet in London. There they share with a multicultural group of kids an adventure in which they overcome prejudice and come to understand and trust each other. The show was broadcast to both the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities, as well as to national audiences in mainland Greece and Turkey.



GALINA SADYCHKO

UKRAINE "Connection with new approaches promoted by the Ukrainian Centre for Common Ground has changed my life, filling it with new meaning. My colleagues believe that the practical application of these approaches in our region is the best thing I have done during my twelve years of professional experience in a sphere of interethnic relations. I believe they are right."

Galina Sadychko, Head of Interethnic Relations at the Department of Regional and State Administration, Ukraine





When conflict subsides, children move beyond ethnic differences and find common ground in games.

Indonesia is by far the largest country (outside of the USA) in which we operate — 230 million people, more than 17,000 islands, and 365 ethnic groups. Such vast diversity and complexity present this programme, founded in 2002, with unique challenges.

To try to influence a broad national audience, we carry out mass-media projects with general messages about conflict, peacebuilding, and tolerance. At the same time, to engage in the dynamics of specific conflicts, we carry out dialogue and mediation projects in several widely separated regions.

Mass Media

Our radio soap opera *Menteng Pangkalan* centres on a fictional neighbourhood in Jakarta where a mélange of people from all over Indonesia live and interact, fall in and out of love, and learn to deal with crisis together. The programme plays on 180 radio stations across the country and is heard by nearly 25 million people. Interviews and listener call-ins indicate that most people who hear the show respond sympathetically to its common ground message.

To young people, we reach out through a comic book series about an ethnically mixed soccer-playing gang of kids who work together to solve problems. Comics are very popular with Indonesian teenagers, and they

can be followed by illiterate and semi-literate children. Our comics are both used in schools and distributed through comic-book vendors.

Community-Based Conflict Transformation

We are working to transform severe ethnic and social conflicts in Kalimantan, Madura, and Papua. Working with local civil society organisations, community-based teams carry out cross-sectoral dialogues and conflict resolution training. The dialogue we facilitated in Kalimantan between the Dayak and Madurese ethnic groups contributed to the return of thousands of displaced Madurese to their homes. In Papua, we have developed video dialogues through which small groups express their points of view on divisive issues within their communities. These are then used as the basis for dialogue in communities in conflict.

We also work with a network of women's peace organisations in these same communities on capacity building, micro-credit, and arts projects. These aim to move away from the stereotype of women as victims and engage them as leaders in conflict transformation in their communities.



ELIAKIM SITORUS

INDONESIA "There is still hope to reconcile people, even in war. So if we can live peacefully, why should we quarrel?"

Eliakim Sitorus, Community-Based Conflict Resolution Programmes Manager, Common Ground Indonesia



Prejudice based on ignorance and misconceptions is a prime breeding ground for violent conflict.

In 1996, we started a series of discreet meetings between well-placed unofficial Iranians and Americans. The aim was to explore the possibility of better relations. In 1998, newly elected Iranian President Mohammad Khatami called for a “dialogue of civilisations” with the West, and the United States in particular.

Shortly thereafter, we launched our first citizen-to-citizen exchange, which involved working with USA Wrestling to take the American national wrestling team to Tehran. The visit sparked a great amount of interest and was referred to in the media as “wrestling diplomacy.”

Since then, we have organised exchanges in a variety of areas. We work at two levels. We carry out highly visible exchanges between Americans and Iranians in areas where both cultures excel. At the same time, we sponsor informal low-key encounters between Americans and Iranians to encourage official contacts and facilitate improved relations.

Art

In the quarter-century since the Iranian revolution and the hostage crisis led to pervasive hostility and severance of almost all relations between Iran and the United States, Americans have lost touch with important, highly creative artistic developments that were taking place in Iran. Seeing an opportunity to break down barriers, we hosted jointly with Washington’s Meridian International Centre an exhibition of contemporary Iranian painting and sculpture, called *A Breeze from the Gardens of Persia*. The accompanying two-month celebration featured Persian music, textiles, poetry readings, and Iranian cuisine.



Film

Of all contemporary art forms, Iranians have achieved the greatest international recognition in filmmaking. In 2002, we co-presented the Film House of Makhmalbaf, a retrospective of some twenty films by acclaimed filmmaker Mohsen Makhmalbaf and his family, which was screened at the National Gallery of Art and the American Film Institute in Washington. We also co-sponsored at Washington’s Corcoran Gallery of Art the American premiere of director Bahman Ghobadi’s most recent film, *Marooned in Iraq*.

Astronomy

In mid-2001, eight Iranian scientists, astronomers, and educators traveled to the U.S. to meet their American counterparts. They visited Washington, Denver, Los Angeles, and San Francisco in an exchange that included two trips to Iran by American astronauts and astronomers.

Environment

In 2001, we invited four Iranian environmentalists to learn about U.S. environmental law and to collaborate with their American counterparts in building an environmental law graduate programme at the University of Tehran. In exchange, in April 2002 American environmentalist Lester Brown of the Earth Policy Institute visited Iran under our auspices and keynoted a major conference .

(Left) U.S. scientists are greeted by local children during a visit to Iran to observe a solar eclipse.

In 1991, we launched a multi-track initiative to promote peace, security, and cooperation in the Middle East.

Over the years, we have sponsored scores of meetings and activities that involve Arabs, Israelis, Iranians, and Turks — retired generals and ambassadors, academics and policy analysts, editors and journalists. Participants have formed relationships with each other and become part of a Common Ground network of people willing to push the limits of permissible interaction. Our meetings complement — and sometimes catalyse — official negotiations. By providing a safe space for informal, confidential discussions, we encourage fresh approaches and the reframing of sensitive issues.

In 2002 we moved our regional office from Amman to Jerusalem and launched a series of projects to try to reduce the level of violence in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Despite the difficult times, we remain committed to the idea that it is both possible and inevitable that Palestinians and Israelis will find ways to live together peacefully.

Media

Our activities with Middle Eastern media professionals have improved communication across borders and encouraged journalists to challenge their own biases and stereotypes. For a decade, we convened regional meetings of editors, publishers, reporters, and editorial cartoonists with the aim of encouraging journalists to use their great influence to help resolve rather than exacerbate conflict.

Our most ambitious recent undertaking, begun in 2003, is a series of five television documentaries on the final-status issues that need to be resolved in order for there to be a comprehensive peace agreement between Israelis and Palestinians. These include Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, borders, and the nature of the two states. Produced by Common Ground Productions, these documentaries seek to demon-



strate that mutually acceptable solutions are actually possible. The documentaries are being aired on Israeli and Palestinian TV in Hebrew and Arabic respectively, as well as internationally in English and other languages.

Our Common Ground News Service distributes in three languages a weekly selection of articles that support bridge building and creative problem solving. The service goes to about 100 Middle Eastern media outlets and 9,000 well-placed individuals. The service both commis-

Using the media creatively to inform and challenge prejudices is a central part of our Middle East strategy.



sions original articles and distributes appropriate selections from leading publications with permission to reprint them. Hundreds of CGNews articles have been reprinted by leading Arab and Israeli media outlets.

Every year we present the Eliav-Sartawi Journalism Awards, founded by the J. Zel Lurie Journalism Fund, to honour writers in the Arabic, Hebrew, and English-language press whose reporting and commentary have contributed to better understanding and increased regional dialogue on important issues. Past winners have written for such newspapers as *Al-Hayat*, *Al-Quds*, *Ha'aretz*, and *The New York Times*.

Non-Violent Action

We work with Palestinians and Israelis to encourage non-violent action, as practised by such visionaries as Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. While non-violence might seem implausible under current conditions, we believe it could help break the cycle of violence among Israelis and Palestinians. Our role is to catalyse, educate, and help enlarge sentiments toward non-violence that are already present.

We have provided technical assistance to several Palestinian non-governmental organisations to strengthen their capacity to encourage non-violence. For example, we worked with Middle East Non-Violence and Democracy (MEND) to broadcast a 26-part radio soap opera that features themes of non-violence. In partnership with the Ma'an Network of independent Palestinian television stations, we sponsored a TV series that featured roundtable discussions on non-violence. We



EMAD OMAR

MIDDLE EAST "When the channels of communication stay active in times of tension, when societies debate the non-violence alternative, when activists defend the human rights of the 'enemy,' and when the media print a message of hope, then we know that Common Ground tools can make a difference in the Middle East."

Emad Omar, journalist and peace activist, Senior Advisor to SFCG Middle East Programme, Jordan

also arranged for the network to air the acclaimed PBS documentary series *A Force More Powerful*, which tells stories of six successful non-violent campaigns.

In 2002 we commissioned two public opinion polls of Palestinians and Israelis on non-violence. They revealed that both sides supported the use of non-violent means to advance Palestinian interests, but were sceptical that the conflict could be moved in that direction. We publicised the poll results widely to help popularise ideas of non-violence in the region.

Regional Security

Since 1992, we have brought together leading regional security specialists for meetings on divisive issues. Our current activities focus on encouraging regional cooperation against the threat of terrorism involving weapons of mass destruction. Under our auspices, Egyptian, Israeli, Jordanian, and Palestinian health professionals have established the Middle East Consortium on Infectious Disease Surveillance to develop and harmonise regional methods for detection, reporting, processing, and collecting data on disease outbreaks,



Dialogues with leaders such as HRH Prince el-Hassan bin Talal of Jordan serve to build understanding in the Middle East.

SFCG President John Marks sets the tone for dialogue.



whether natural or caused by biological attack. There is a parallel group of specialists who meet regularly on chemical issues.

understanding, and convoking university presidents from the West and predominantly Muslim countries to discuss means of intellectual collaboration.

PARTNERS IN HUMANITY

Together with HRH Prince el-Hassan bin Talal of Jordan, we convened a meeting in July 2003 of sixty world leaders in the promotion of dialogue and cooperative action between the West and the Muslim world. The gathering's purpose was to establish connections among the participants and to facilitate, under the aegis of Partners in Humanity, joint projects that can advance Islamic-Western understanding through practical cooperation.

The initiatives undertaken include an electronic news service to disseminate articles that promote constructive perspectives and dialogue between the West and the Muslim world, training in the use of journalism skills to build cross-cultural

Morocco is moving fast towards an open, pluralistic political system and experiencing the tensions that typically accompany the process of democratisation. Our role is to strengthen the capacity of Moroccans to build consensus and use the techniques of conflict resolution.

Labour

In the labour sector, conflicts and drawn-out strikes are the norm. We work with the government, private sector, and the main labour unions to institutionalise a culture of collaborative problem solving. To this end, we conduct workshops to build capacity in mediation, negotiation, consensus building, and training. In 2002 we brought seven Moroccans to the United States to visit U.S. labour institutions and undergo specialised training, learn about the models of labour/management relations in the U.S., and explore how they could apply these experiences in Morocco. In May 2003 our group of participants from the private sector and one labour union was responsible for a historic breakthrough during negotiation of a new labour law. By their account, the training and resources we provided aided them directly in achieving tangible progress.



Environment Day brings out a spirit of cooperation among community residents, association members, and local authorities in Morocco.

Building Collaborative Communities

In the shantytowns that surround Moroccan cities we conduct community-building youth workshops that train leaders, facilitators, and experts in advocacy and engage youth in joint cultural and environmental protection events. The project also assists in the development of micro-credit ventures and literacy classes and established a community computer and resource centre.

Common Ground Media

Moroccan media often inflame rather than inform the public discourse and contribute to the polarisation of society on important issues. We train Moroccan print and electronic journalists in Common Ground reporting, so they can better use their skills to reduce tensions and present polarising social issues in a constructive way.

America is struggling with dilemmas that have been debated since its first Constitutional Convention in 1787: how to give voice to the many factions that make up the nation without tearing itself apart, and how to advance the common good without overriding the legitimate interests of people who lack the power or the votes to protect their interests.

Opinion polls repeatedly confirm that Americans want to deal effectively with endemic poverty, racism, environmental destruction, human rights, and related problems, both here and abroad. Yet when it comes to taking decisive action, whether internationally, nationally, or locally, the country too often finds itself mired in chronic divisive internal disputes.

Search for Common Ground in the United States (Search-USA) works with leaders at various levels — from members of Congress to grassroots activists — to devise strategies to defuse intense conflicts and find common ground on divisive public issues. We facilitate development of new public policies on important national issues. And we help to build and test new institutions that foster cooperative problem solving in situations of entrenched conflict.

CONSENSUS BUILDING ON PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES

Faith-Based Initiatives, Human Needs, and the U.S. Constitution

To address the contentious issue of public funding for social services provided by faith-based organisations, Search-USA formed a Working



Momentum for the United States Consensus Council builds as partners discuss its benefits on public television's "This is America with Dennis Wholey."



Search USA Executive Director Roger Conner (left) and Senator Harris Wofford report on groundbreaking consensus found among members of the Working Group on Faith-Based and Community-Based Initiatives.

Group on Faith-Based and Community-Based Initiatives. With bipartisan support from high-level congressional leadership, and led by former Senator Harris Wofford, the group included a broadly diverse spectrum of religious and political leaders. Their mandate was to seek as many areas of agreement as possible, without compromising their fundamental beliefs. The group's initial report, issued in early 2002, carried 29 consensus recommendations, some of which were subsequently incorporated into congressional initiatives and agency actions. A second report in early 2003 focused on implementation of the recommendations at the state and local levels and in the private sector.

Crime, Punishment, and Community Safety

In Philadelphia, we facilitated the Consensus Group on Reentry and Reintegration of Adjudicated Offenders. In 2003 the group produced a rare agreement among all the key stakeholders, including prosecutors, public defenders, police, prison officials, parole agencies, and ex-prisoners. Their policy recommendations dealt with measures that range from instilling per-

sonal responsibility in prisoners while still incarcerated to lifting some legal and procedural barriers to employment and training of ex-offenders. The consensus group's report, *They're Coming Back*, was embraced by Philadelphia's mayor and lauded by other civic and religious leaders as a model for how ostensible adversaries, using basic conflict resolution techniques and a lot of good will, can find common ground on even the most contentious of public policy issues.

Dialogue and Cooperation in a Divided Community

In Cincinnati, Ohio, local leaders are using Search-USA as a resource in an ambitious experiment to address the issues of police/community relations and economic inclusion of African Americans. Cincinnati's Search for Common Ground is linking local bridge builders to each other and to resources from around the country.

INSTITUTIONAL REFORM

Building Conflict Resolution Capacity in Washington, D.C.

Working with a number of partners, we have spearheaded a campaign

to create a United States Consensus Council. Modeled on similar bodies in several U.S. states, the council's aim will be to build agreements for action among individuals and organisations holding widely differing points of view on legislative issues of national importance and to serve as a model for consensus building on public policy. Legislation to create a publicly funded consensus council was well on its way to adoption in late 2003, with strong bipartisan support in both houses of the U.S. Congress.

Building Capacity in Local Communities

At the request of key community leaders, and working with innovative practitioners at the grassroots level, we provide training to enable entire communities to move away from ingrained patterns of adversarial conflict and toward a culture of cooperation. Pilot projects in two quite different Maryland communities demonstrate how — through problem-solving exercises on neighbourhood-level disputes and culturally appropriate skills training — local civic leaders can produce a new vision to serve their entire communities.



KAREN WOODS

UNITED STATES "I have been privileged to participate in all three of the Search-USA working groups. Senator Santorum was wise to ask Search to convene a most diverse group to determine points of agreement regarding faith-based initiatives and human needs. Some issues will always be in the 'agree to disagree' column, but knowing specifics makes a valuable contribution to the debate. The Search staff is tireless in their superb professional support."

Karen Woods, Executive Director, The Empowerment Network, Washington DC

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In 2003 Search for Common Ground (founded in 1982 in Washington) and the European Centre for Common Ground (founded in 1994 in Brussels) united under the name of Search for Common Ground, with one management structure and headquarters in both Washington and Brussels.

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In Memoriam. We mourn the passing in 2002 of Ambassador Alfred L. “Roy” Atherton, Jr. Roy was a wonderful man who, in addition to serving as Assistant Secretary of State for the Middle East and U.S. Ambassador to Egypt, played a key role in building Search for Common Ground in the Middle East. He joined our advisory board in 1991 and served as its chairman from 1993 to 2000. Roy brought credibility and recognition at a time when we very much needed it. He gave us the gift of integrity, wisdom, and indomitable spirit, and we shall always be grateful.

peace

SFCG Staff

SENIOR MANAGEMENT

JOHN MARKS, President



Mr. Marks founded Search for Common Ground in 1982 and the European Centre for Common Ground (now the SFCG Brussels Headquarters) in 1994. He is also co-director, with Susan Collin Marks, of SFCG's programme in the Middle East. Mr. Marks served as a Foreign Service officer in Washington, DC and Vietnam, and as executive assistant for foreign policy to Senator Clifford Case. He was a fellow at Harvard's Institute of Politics and a visiting scholar at Harvard Law School. He is the award-winning author of two books, one a best seller, and of numerous magazine and newspaper articles.

SUSAN COLLIN MARKS, Executive Vice President



Ms. Collin Marks worked as a conflict resolution practitioner and peacemaker during South Africa's transition from apartheid to democracy. In 1992 she founded *Track Two*, a quarterly magazine on community and political conflict resolution. In 1994 she was awarded a Jennings Randolph Peace Fellowship to the United States Institute of Peace. In 1996 she co-founded the Coexistence Initiative. Her book on the South African peace process, *Watching the Wind: Conflict Resolution During South Africa's Transition to Democracy*, was published in 2000. She co-directs, with John Marks, Search for Common Ground in the Middle East. Ms. Collin Marks speaks, teaches, writes, facilitates, and supports peace processes and conflict resolution programmes internationally.

SHAMIL IDRIS, Chief Operating Officer



Mr. Idriss began his long tenure at SFCG as an intern and later as assistant director of the Civil Society Working Group of Search for Common Ground in the Middle East. He then coordinated some of our first projects in citizen diplomacy between the United States and Iran. Before being named chief operating officer in 2000, he served as director of our Burundi programme. Since 1998, he has worked to build bridges between Americans and Europeans and the Muslim world. Mr. Idriss has received extensive training and practice in mediation and facilitation.

SANDRA DJUVARA MELONE, Executive Director, SFCG Headquarters in Brussels



Ms. Melone established the Brussels headquarters (formerly the European Centre for Common Ground) in 1996. She previously founded the Women's Peace Centre, a project of Search for Common Ground in Burundi. Before coming to SFCG, she worked in human rights advocacy with Amnesty International and in international education. Ms. Melone has given numerous workshops in mediation, consensus building, negotiation, and cross-cultural communication, as well as presentations at international gatherings on media and conflict resolution. She has appeared on CNN, BBC, and the Voice of America. Ms. Melone is a citizen of France, the United States, and Romania.

JOHN TRAYLOR, Chief Financial Officer



Mr. Traylor has practiced non-profit financial management for fifteen years in Washington, DC and Boston, Massachusetts. He previously served as CFO of the United Cerebral Palsy Association, the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Institute, the Children's Defense Fund, and the Technical Education Research Centers. He has also taught organizational development and management at the university level, full- or part-time, for more than twenty years. Mr. Traylor sings in his church choir and is an avid, though — by his own account — not very proficient golfer.

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