

Search for Common Ground Côte d'Ivoire Newsletter n°4-June 2006

Premier of new radio soap opera, "L'Equipe" (The Team)

On June 1st, SFCG/Talking Drum Studio, in collaboration with local radio stations and Radio ONUCI, launched a new radio soap opera entitled "L' Equipe" (The Team). The program aims to promote social cohesion between and among various communities in Côte d'Ivoire, in an innovative manner.

The soap opera, written by two scripwriters from different regions, intends to maximize the impact of the 2006 World Cup soccer tournament and the participation of the Ivorian national team, in order to reinforce the sense of national unity which this event inspires in Ivorians, regardless of community identity. "If the *Eléphants* [the national tea] succeed, it's because on the field they act as a team, regardless of differences in ethnicity, religion and politics," commented one citizen in Korhogo to the national newspaper *Fraternité Matin*.

Presenting the story through the eyes of two footballers returning home to Côte d'Ivoire after having been abroad, "L'Equipe" addresses real issues which often divide communities within the country. Upon their arrival, the two players realize that the tumultuous realities of their home country remain unchanged: everyday conflicts are directly tied to ethnicity, land tenure, and politics. Listeners are able to hear how these two main characters confront and reconcile differences with their traditional communities, which have since become foreign to them.

The program presents listeners with the opportunity to reexamine their ideas on a myriad of subjects, and to consider alternative behaviors and attitudes while taking into consideration individual fears and concerns.

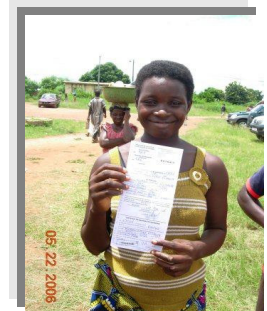
« L'Equipe » is broadcast three times each week throughout the duration of the World Cup, on 14 local stations partnering with SFCG, on RTI (the national public radio), and on Radio ONUCI.

Talking Drum Studio provides media coverage of citizen identification

Citizen identification is considered a central element of the reconciliation process in Côte d'Ivoire. The question of who is Ivorian and who is not has elicited tension and debate over the past few years, in both political and social circles. This issue has exacerbated already existing tensions in the country, and has been subject to manipulation by various actors. It is important that the identification process take place in an atmosphere imbued with calm, clarity and transparency, where information is made readily available to the population. The identification process, as with the DDR process, is crucial to lay the groundwork for the upcoming general elections, currently scheduled for next October.

On May 18, the Prime Minister launched the pilot phase in seven of the nation's cities and villages: Bangolo, Botro, Bouna, Méagui/Souburé, Port-Bouët/Abidjan, Sandégué et Tiapoum. "Audiences Foraines" (or field court sessions) were organized in these areas in order to deliver the documentation necessary for the granting of identity cards.

In order to highlight this process, SFCG's radio production studio dispatched producers in three areas - Méagui/ Souburé in the government-controlled area, Bangolo in the buffer zone, and Bouaké in the FN-controlled area - to evaluate the situation as the operation got underway. The lack of information and communication as regards this process was one of many problems that must be resolved. Communities seem poorly informed on certain subjects such as the nature of the administrative documents, and the role of judges and doctors. Furthermore, the concern of citizens who have had to leave their home communities and who may not be able to attend these audiences is very real.



The 2nd Vice President of the National Commission for the Supervision of Identification (CNSI) expressed his thoughts on the objective and the

conduct of the 'audiences foraines' on SFCG microphone. SFCG intends to follow the identification process in an attempt to provide clear information and facilitate communication in the heart of these communities.

In June, the team from the radio program "United in Our Differences" visited the DDR site in Guiglo where they met the PNDDR regional coordinator who explained the process: "It's about beginning with disarmament, getting weapons back from combatants and then profiling them to identify their needs and their aspirations while bringing them to the demobilization site where they receive information on that process."

A meeting in Bouaké bears the first fruits of a dialogue between the zone

gouvernementale and the zone du Nord

In the context of a community rehabilitation project undertaken in partnership with the World Bank, CARE and PNDDR, SFCG organized a conflict resolution training for members of the Project Committee of Bouaké and partner locations.

This unprecedented meeting took place April 25-27 in Bouaké, in the Northern zone under the control of the Forces Nouvelles. The workshop provided the opportunity for twenty-eight men and women coming from both the north and the south to meet and discuss their points of view and various concerns. During the training, the participants were asked to consider divisive issues such as land tenure, power-sharing, and generational problems. "When I received the invitation to this training, I was frightened because of the rumors and perceptions regarding this zone. I thought I might be risking my life. Today I am happy to be here, and I am not afraid to talk with the people who live here," declared one participant.

Evaluation mission according to facilitators - agents of peace trained by SFCG and its partner OFACI

Last May, SFCG and partner organization OFACI (Organisation des Femmes Actives en Côte d'Ivoire) organized two evaluation sessions with community actors from the Western regions of 18 Mountains region, Moyen-Cavally et Bas-Sassandra having benefited from training in

conflict management and prevention. The evaluation permitted facilitators, SFCG and OFACI to assess the situation, following the training, and to understand the successes as well as the failures. In this vein, the evaluation will allow lessons-learned to be incorporated into future trainings.

The trained facilitators represent a large network of people in which men and women; youths and adults; as well as local authorities are represented. Many of the most common conflicts are land-related, generational and familial. Being that certain facilitators were also community leaders, it became clear that it is important to introduce the notion of leadership in future trainings.

SFCG-HCR partnership to accompany Liberian refugees

In the context of the information campaign on the repatriation of Liberian refugees in Côte d'Ivoire, at the end of May SFCG organized a second series of theatre presentations in the cities of Guiglo, Tabou and San Pedro. The enthusiasm, applause, and participation of the refugees signaled their sincere interest in the series.

Furthermore, a project completed in partnership with the HCR, provided for the creation of listening centers for refugees to inform them of the situation in their country through the show Situation Report. They very much appreciate this program as it addresses everyday issues. The listening centers are a response to the need for better access to information regarding the situation in Liberia. They were welcomed with enthusiasm by the refugees who previously had no access to local radio programs with limited broadcasts.

