

## Search for Common Ground in Côte d'Ivoire Programme Overview

### **COUNTRY CONTEXT**

With the signing of the Ouagadougou Agreement and the appointment of Guillaume Soro, the Secretary General of the Rebel Forces Nouvelles, in control of the north of the country, as Prime Minister, Cote d'Ivoire faces the challenge of implementing the agreement timetable while securing peace and stability. Complex issues that must be addressed by the joint government include: disarming and reintegrating combatant forces, reforming and restructuring the armed forces, and restoring State authority throughout the country. An integrated command centre, run jointly by the President Laurent Gbagbo's government and Prime Minister Guillaume Soro, was established in March 2007 to that effect. Another important task will be the identification of residents, registration of voters and preparations for the holding of free, fair, and transparent elections as stated in the Agreement, which was brokered with the help of Burkina Faso President Blaise Compaore.

### **SFCG APPROACH IN COTE D'IVOIRE**

SFCG started its operations in Cote d'Ivoire during mid-2005 when it opened offices and studios in both Abidjan and Daloa. SFCG's primary goal for Cote d'Ivoire is *to reduce tensions among communities and groups, to facilitate reconciliation, and to strengthen social cohesion*. SFCG works towards two main objectives in support of this goal:

- To strengthen local capacity to transform conflict non-violently; and
- To enhance social dialogue on key issues and constructive cooperation at the community level.

SFCG's unique two-pronged approach to peacebuilding couples media work with community outreach, including local capacity building, networking, and dialogue. This approach directly addresses some of the key problems in Côte d'Ivoire: the politicization of social dialogue, the marginalization of moderate voices, deepening ethnic, political, and regional cleavages, and the preponderance of misinformation and rumors. SFCG's programmes extend into the north, west, southeast, and central regions of the country, focusing on locations with high intercommunity tensions or that are at risk for violent conflict. Target populations include community members, local authorities, IDPs (internally displaced persons), youth, and women. As with all of SFCG's programmes, activities are implemented in partnership with local organizations and tailored to the needs of the local community.



### **MEDIA**

Radio has proven to be an extremely effective method of promoting peace-building in all of SFCG's programmes in Africa, as it promotes positive changes in attitudes and behaviours and reaches a large number of people, including illiterate and under-educated populations. Local personnel trained in 'Common Ground' methodology and production techniques staff both studios, which operate under the name of Talking Drum Studio, leveraging the reputation already developed by SFCG's other programs in the sub-region. In order to extend the reach of its radio programs, SFCG has developed working partnerships with 22 radio stations including ONUCI FM, providing coverage to entire country. With a sound network of partners and the production capabilities afforded by its two studios, SFCG is well placed to achieve its program objectives.

In collaboration with local partners the national programme for community reinsertion and rehabilitation, SFCG has developed a communication campaign focused on tolerance, reconciliation,

and the RRR process. The campaign prepares communities to be more receptive to and become more involved in SFCG's conflict transformation trainings and facilitated dialogues.

SFCG Cote d'Ivoire broadcasts five programs throughout the year focusing on a variety of issues towards target audiences. Program highlights are as follows:

- **Passerelle ('Bridge')**: This program aims to "build bridges" across existing divides by integrating traditional conflict resolution mechanisms of various ethnic groups in Cote d'Ivoire with modern conflict resolution techniques. Using local languages, parables, and other culturally appropriate forms familiar to ordinary citizens, SFCG developed this program in response to requests made by the community radio stations.
- **Unis dans Nos Differences (United in Our Differences)**: This news and features program focuses on the positive initiatives undertaken within the communities in search of non-violent solutions. The program integrates issues revolving around the peace process by providing a space for community members, IDPs, refugees, and other marginalized groups, to address their concerns.
- **Dignité des Femmes**: A talk show format program that features interviews with women from all walks of life on women's leadership and good governance.
- **Enfants en Action**: One of SFCG's newest production pieces, modelled on *Golden Kids* from Sierra Leone and Liberia, *Enfants en Action* works with 40 children in Man and Guiglo to identify stories, conduct interviews, and present programs that address the current issues in Cote d'Ivoire from a child's perspective. SFCG partnered with UNICEF to identify and train the children participants including former child soldiers, children in school, and disadvantaged children all ranging in ages from 9-17 years.
- **Woro Woro Tour**: This short skit takes place in a public taxi, with the driver talking to the passengers coming into his car about the relevant issues of the day.
- **L'Equipe**: This Soap Opera series was developed in conjunction with the 2006 World Cup Championship, using football as a tool to promote reconciliation and foster national identity. Characters represent ordinary people to whom the listeners can relate discussing issues of conflict resolution, tolerance, reconciliation, and peaceful existence.



## **WOMEN AND GOVERNANCE**

Women of all backgrounds are amongst some of the hardest-hit casualties of the Ivorian conflict and its diverse rhetoric built upon political parties, ethnic groups, and geographic regions. Of particular concern, sexual violence affects Ivorian women across the political and ethnic spectrum. As both feuding sides vouch to acquiesce to peace, a window of opportunity opens up for Ivorian women to mobilize around their common agenda and secure an active role in the country's shifting socio-political structure, infusing their interests into the national dialogue.

To achieve this potential, SFCG, with support from UNIFEM, launched a new program entitled *Mobilizing Ivorian Women for Constructive Participation in Governance and Leadership*. Through trainings, workshops, and the radio program *Dignité des Femmes* (see above), SFCG aims to provide accurate information to women on governance and leadership issues, and to facilitate dialogue and exchange between women from the North and South on issues related to good governance and leadership.

## **OUTREACH**

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SFCG's communication strategy is reinforced by the Outreach Team's program of training and capacity building. The program aims to promote dialogue at the community level and strengthen local peace actors' ability to analyse, manage, and mediate conflict. Capacity-building activities target community members, partner organization personnel, and staff of local radio stations and include training workshops, dialogues, and solidarity events.

- 'Common Ground' media training is one of SFCG's principal outreach efforts. The training workshops' aim is two-fold: to strengthen the capacity of radio producers in the production of radio magazines and other program formats in order to promote social dialogue and diversify the participants of that dialogue, and to inform participants about "Common Ground" methodology and its principles.
- SFCG provides conflict transformation trainings including individuals who are in positions of influence and who have conflict mitigation roles in their communities. Using interactive and participatory approaches, the trainings draw on local experiences and prepare the participants to transfer the skills and knowledge they gain to other members of their communities, using a "training of trainers" (TOT) framework.
- SFCG organizes and facilitates workshops and dialogues between divided groups in communities vulnerable to violence. Implemented with a participatory approach, and including techniques such as role-playing and dramatizations, these interactions provide community members with the opportunity to discuss difficult issues and foster confidence, mutual trust, and reconciliation. This in turn helps communities to prepare for the reintegration of returnees and ex-combatants. At each dialogue and workshop, participants are encouraged to move their discussion into action by developing joint action plans.
- SFCG organizes solidarity events that combine shared interests like art and culture to provide a platform for communities, including marginalized groups, to celebrate peaceful coexistence around festivities. Local artists and musicians from different ethnic backgrounds will perform together, helping to overcome negative stereotypes and prejudices that groups may have about one another.

SFCG's outreach team also works to create links between communities and local radio stations. Joint working sessions to map conflict areas and identify affected groups and their issues facilitates the implementation of coordinated, community-driven campaigns.

*Search for Common Ground is an international NGO in the field of conflict transformation. For additional information on our work go to [www.sfcg.org](http://www.sfcg.org), or contact the Sub-Saharan Africa Programme, 1601 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20009, USA; phone (+1)(202) 265-4300; fax (+1) 202 232-6718; e-mail [search@sfcg.org](mailto:search@sfcg.org).*

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