

SFCG Guinea Information Letter August 2005

Guéckédou and Fangamadou Communities Join Hands to Strengthen Regional Solidarity

Fangamadou district is located in the Préfecture of Guéckédou in the South west of Guinea. The region often referred to as "Parrot's Beak" juts into Sierra Leone. Fangamadou is far away from Guinea's capital city and shares borders with Kailahun District in Sierra Leone.

Communities in Fangamadou have no access to national radio broadcasts. Nor do they have information on what is happening in their region. Residents are increasingly expressing the need for local communities' concerns and opinions to be mainstreamed into local, national, and sub-regional media.



Villagers and their children in Gbessé, Fangamadou

In addition to international radio broadcasts, including BBC and Radio France, residents can listen to Radio Moa, a community radio supported by Search for Common Ground/Talking Drum Studio (TDS) located in Kailahun. Radio Moa's broadcasts are very popular in Fangamadou, particularly programmes broadcast in the Kissi language.

Youth in Fangamadou have tried to bridge the information gap by starting an amateur radio, Radio Mallaya. The radio programmes are youth-centred

with a particular focus on children's rights. Radio Mallaya is cooperating with Radio Moa on issues of mutual interest through inter-radio dialogue and regular exchange visits.

In response to a request from Plan Guinée to support Radio Mallaya develop a radio station for kids, a Talking Drum Studio team composed of members of SFCG-Guinea and Sierra Leone, as well as the engineer from Media Foundation for Peace and Development¹ visited the radio in June. The purpose of the visit was to assess short-term needs for establishing a children's radio, including equipment and training, and address longer-term issues to ensure the radio's sustainability.

Community members told TDS that Fangamadou would benefit enormously from the children's radio project because they place children's empowerment at the centre of effective community development. Further, the project would improve access to information where previously there was none and increase exposure to the issues under debate.

"Our children's involvement in Fangamadou radio will stimulate youth to play a more active role in communities as well as encourage parents and community members to mobilize for and respect children's rights".

Fangamadou community member

Fangamadou communities hope that developing radio programmes in local languages will strengthen relationships and peaceful coexistence between populations living along the border.

Communities on both sides of the border have pledged to help set up and sustain the children's radio station and the Guinean Government, as well as

¹ Media Foundation for Peace and Development (MFPD) has established over 6 community radios in Sierra Leone including a children's radio for Plan in Moyamba in the south of Sierra Leone.



local authorities, have both expressed their support to the project.

Radio Mallaya and Guéckédou community radio will start broadcasting soon and develop radio programmes in local languages that address local information needs and air communities' opinions and concerns. The two stations are intended to complement each other and reach a large audience throughout the region.

TDS Liberia and Sierra Leone Programmes, Unity Boat and Situation Report continue to air on Radio Kissidougou and Nzerekoreh FM in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, thanks to the generous support from the Swiss Development Cooperation and the Swedish Foreign Ministry. Providing wide dissemination of information to Liberian refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) about the situation in their country at such a crucial time for Liberia, with the impending election and the upsurge of violence in Cote d'Ivoire, is critical to their informed resettlement.

SFCG-UNICEF Partnership

In partnership with UNICEF, SFCG-Guinea piloted some action research in the prefecture of Kissidougou. The purpose of the research was to unveil major social issues, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours pertaining to health, including malaria, HIV/AIDS and girls' education.

Drawing on prior expertise in conveying essential health awareness messaging through Radio Drama, SFCG's action research will inform the development of appropriate communication strategies aimed at positive behavioural changes within communities. The research will also serve as a baseline to monitor and evaluate the impact of future projects.

A team of seven people, including SFCG staff, representatives of decentralized services (notably Education, Health and Youth), UNICEF partners, as well as staff from Radio Rurale de Kissidougou, was identified to conduct the research.

During three weeks, the research team carried out investigations in 12 locales and the Commune of Kissidougou, meeting and interviewing communities in both urban and rural areas of Kissidougou.



Interviewing youth in Kissidougou

Preliminary findings indicate that, while traditional communication such as griots stays important, local/rural radio is the preferred communication and information channel for communities in the Kissidougou area.

SFCG is hoping to share the complete results of this research with other partners in Guinea and to assist UNICEF in incorporating some of the findings into a communication strategy.

In Guinea, SFCG is engaged in:

- Contributing to strengthening participation of the population within the local, national, and sub-regional decision-making process through the reinforcement of social dialogue; and
- Supporting existing peace initiatives and contributing to reinforcing the links between media and civil society, and supporting social cohesion and sustainable development.

SFCG-Guinea Information Letter

Spès Manirakiza, Coordinator, SFCG-Guinea - Contacts: (+224) 013 35 14 70. Email : smanirakiza@sfcg.org ou spesmani@yahoo.fr