

## SFCG-Guinea

### Information Letter, January 2006

#### **SFCG Takes Stock of Women and Girls' Rights Survey in Kissidougou**

Equality between men and women is enshrined in the Guinean constitution, yet ignorance and discriminatory practices continue to stymie efforts at improving the status of women in Guinea.

In December 2005, SFCG conducted a research on public awareness of rights and protection of women in three targeted préfectures in Kissidougou. Designed to both assess the level of awareness on women and girls' rights and protection and better understand people's perceptions and attitudes, the research involved conducting a series of focus groups with a broad cross section of Kissidougou residents in Albadaria, Koniadou and Kissidougou town.

The focus groups were particularly useful in helping participants gain a deeper appreciation for one another's ideas, values and feelings related to women's rights. During the discussions, it became clear that cultural practices and social roles continue to have an important influence on people's views. Indeed, those present identified the prevailing 'culture of silence' in Guinean society, as well as strained intergenerational relationships as deterrents to public dialogue on rights issues. Serious gaps in public knowledge about basic rights and institutional weaknesses were also identified as major impediments to women's progress.

The research is a component of SFCG's programme in Guinea, which aims to promote positive behavioural change towards gender equality and respect for women's rights. Key findings and recommendations will help inform project activities, including soap opera programming and organizing listening clubs. With support from the US embassy, SFCG's work will complement existing civil society initiatives

aimed at increasing knowledge and awareness among Guineans about basic rights, particularly women's rights.

#### **Assessing Community Needs in the Forest Region**

The Forest Region has been the location of persistent instability for over a decade. Years of civil war in neighbouring countries, followed by the subsequent influx of refugees, have exacerbated unresolved and pre-existing local conflicts, as well as gradually eroded social cohesion and peaceful coexistence between border communities.

In efforts to gain a clearer understanding of community needs in the Forest Region, representatives from SFCG in Guinea recently visited Fassankoni and Koyama. The mission involved meeting with community members and local partners, including Radio Rurale in Kissidougou, UNHCR, ACORD, Plan Guinée and the Fangamadou Radio project. Discussions centred on the dynamics of intercommunity violence in the sub-region, as well as communities' potential for conflict mitigation.



*SFCG representatives meet staff from Radio Rurale*

SFCG has observed that communal violence is triggered by struggle over livelihoods and security issues. In areas inhabited by diverse ethnic groups, sporadic rebel attacks and retaliatory killings have accentuated rifts

between communities, fostering inter-ethnic hatred. At the same time, demographic pressure and high influxes of refugees have strained already scarce resources. Impoverished villagers are facing increased food insecurity and limited income opportunities. As a consequence, communities have resorted to forming local militias for protection and control over land and resources.

*"We look like friends but deep inside, we are full of hatred. Wise men in our communities have tried to resolve existing conflicts, but they have been helpless."*

Former teacher in Koyama

SFCG also found that the lack of access to local information has prevented community members from being informed on regional developments and important issues affecting them.

Villagers in Fassankoni and Koyama have tried to use traditional responses and mechanisms to ease tensions and settle disputes. However, rebuilding trust and confidence for sustainable livelihoods remains a formidable task for communities on both sides of the border.

SFCG is working with partners and communities in the Forest Region to address the root causes and recurrence of conflicts and explore further community-level conflict prevention activities. A good intervention requires careful analysis to inform its development and ensure effective impact.

### SFCG Studio in Conakry

With funding from NED, SFCG is in the final stages of renovation of a new state-of-the-art production studio in Conakry. The production facilities for media programming will work at both the national and local levels, strengthening local partners' capacity to produce high quality programmes.



SFCG Studio in Conakry

Drawing on SFCG's experience in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone, the studio will respond to citizens' need for balanced and responsible broadcasting through credible programmes that tackle critical social issues and promote dialogue and tolerance among Guineans.

### Winners of SFCG Script Competition honoured

SFCG Guinea announced the winners of its nation-wide script competition on girls' education, HIV/AIDS and the fight against malaria. The competition, organised by SFCG and supported by UNICEF, was open to playwrighters

across Guinea and aimed to create local content scripts for a radio series on health issues and girls' education. A jury comprised of joint representation from Radio

Rurale Guinée and SFCG chose three scripts from a short list of eight contributions. The entries were impressively varied and the jury was enthused by the level of participation.

Mawata Camara, with "I am an innocent victim of HIV/AIDS", and Aissata Thiam, with "Aspersions" received prizes for the best two entries, which included a one week visit to TDS/SFCG offices in Sierra Leone.

### New Team Member Joins SFCG Guinea

*SFCG Team in Guinea continues to grow with the addition of a new member, Patrick Masuba, to its team. Joining us from CARE, Patrick has also worked and been associated with SFCG/TDS in Sierra Leone since the programme's inception. Based in Kissidougou, Patrick is supporting the development of a soap opera in collaboration with UNICEF and other partners. He is responsible for conducting research and listenership surveys for media programming.*

### In Guinea, SFCG is engaged in:

- Strengthening the 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, reinforcing the links between the media and civil society, and supporting social cohesion and sustainable development.