

# Nigeria Update

SEARCH FOR  
COMMON  
GROUND IN  
NIGERIA

January 2009

Dear Colleague,

Since launching Search for Common Ground's Nigeria programme in January of 2008, I have reached several exciting milestones including the establishment of an office in Abuja, the continuation of the television programme *The Station* and the start up of new projects. Along the way, I have found the current Nigerian context to be fertile ground for SFCG's mission to change the way the world deals with conflict away from adversarial methods to cooperative solutions. Given the diverse population of and the vast resources that Nigeria has, there are many opportunities to find the space for individuals to find common ground and find solutions that will benefit the society as a whole.



Summer Glee – Nigeria Programme Director

With a strong belief that communication is the key to transforming conflict, I am excited about the projects that we are developing in Nigeria: ones that lay the groundwork for improved communication between civil society and the government; bring youth together to learn about governance, democracy and civil society; and continue our groundbreaking media programmes that provide Nigerians with a model for peaceful engagement around conflict. The coming year is sure to be full of new opportunities for SFCG's innovative approach to conflict transformation. I look forward to continuing to building our partnerships with individuals and organisations that will enable our work to thrive and Nigerians to find a peaceful path to a strong democracy.

Best Regards and Happy New Year,

Summer Glee

## New Strategies to Address Regional Conflict

SFCG has long recognised the interlinked and regional nature of conflict in West Africa. With a goal of updating its regional strategy for new and evolving challenges in the region, SFCG's Nigeria Director joined participants from across West Africa, including Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea at a meeting in Yamoussoukro, Cote d'Ivoire. Through the planning meeting, four strategic themes pertinent both to Nigeria and the region were identified:

- **Unemployment** of youth is leading to exclusion and increasing poverty and is being exacerbated by the global financial/food crisis. With an estimated youth population in Nigeria of 45 million, it is vital to prepare the youth in taking a greater role in the decision-making process.
- **Bad governance** is undermining development and generating violence which can exacerbate divisions in society, spawn grievances and promote corruption.
- **Ethnicity**: Given the size of Nigeria, it is important that it find a way to create systems of inclusion for all ethnic groups to have a voice so that it can set an example of the rest of the region.
- **Leadership** is a key in the region because it contributes to the creation of a platform for dialogue between leaders and the population and on the other hand sensitise the population on their rights and responsibilities.

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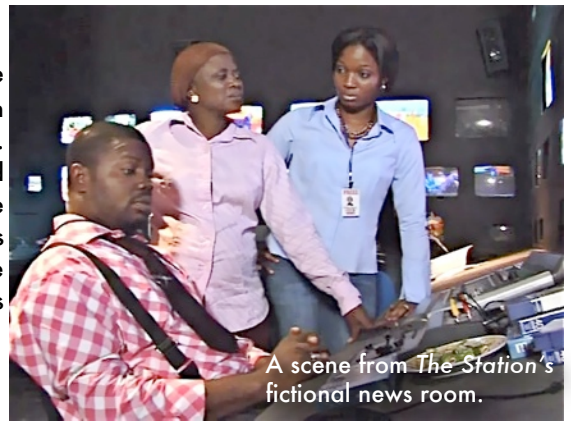
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## Providing a New Model for Peace: *The Station*

Starting in 2004, SFCG produced a four season television and radio programme called *The Station* from a studio in Lagos. *The Station* is a fictional news room which dramatises a diverse news team covering contemporary conflict issues in Nigeria. Providing insight into the lives and aspirations of Nigerians from various groups and backgrounds, the TV series models problem solving strategies, breaks down negative stereotypes and promotes alternative and diverse points of view. The programme is currently in its third season on Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) and season one has been adapted for radio and is being aired on Voice of Nigeria. *The Station* has three main objectives:

1. To encourage inter-ethnic, inter-religious, and inter-regional understanding;
2. To promote democracy; and
3. To train a diverse team of Nigerians in TV and radio production skills.



A scene from *The Station's* fictional news room.

*The Station* has been made possible by the generous support of Nestlé, DFID, CIDA, SIDA and UNDP.

## Addressing Conflict through Communication: Media Sector Mapping

In many countries, a gap exists between the government's communication intentions, goals and strategy and the information that actually reaches the people. Also, there are few feedback mechanisms in place that function as a way for citizens to ask questions and receive responses from the government at the local, state and national level. Formal and non-formal communication norms and traditions, as well as the specifics of different media are central to the successful management of conflict; however, without proper management and attention, communication can also be central to the creation, manipulation and maintenance of violent conflict. In Nigeria, state and national radio as well TV and print outlets represent underutilised resources to support and promote the country's development agenda and in addressing violent conflict, particularly in the Niger Delta and most recently, in Jos – central Nigeria.



Two members of the SFCG research team lead a focus group for the Media Sector Mapping

In 2008, with DFID support, Search for Common Ground Nigeria began a Media Sector Mapping research project in three states in the Niger Delta – Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers. SFCG's past experience has shown that, in addition to providing valuable data on the media landscape and dissemination of information, the process of a media sector mapping is a way to start a constructive dialogue on how communication is being used to promote non-violent problem solving. It can help challenge the status quo and transform the relationship among the media, government and local population from a top-down approach to a more inclusive dialogue that can help build civil society, improve understanding of key policies, and improve access to information.

In November, the Project Director teamed up with the Liberia Country Director to launch implementation in the three states: finalising the methodology, validating the terms of reference with various national stakeholders and training of the survey team. The research lasted for one month and visited a number of communities both urban and rural. The results and report are expected to be released in early March.

## Strategic Planning Development

Recently, Nigeria's Project Director, Summer Glees and Sierra Leone Country Director, Ambrose James traveled to Plateau and Kaduna states to visit organization and individuals to develop the country strategy for SFCG, Nigeria's programmes. One of the key strengths of SFCG's overall strategy is to build on existing programmes and networks in countries, states, and communities. The team met with many wonderful organisations and individuals making a difference in Nigeria including: Basketball for Peace, Centre for Conflict Management and Peace Studies – Univ. of Jos, Christian Association of Nigeria, Community Action for Popular Participation, Community Based Development – NGO Forum, Entrepreneurs Resources and Advisory Council, IFESH-Conflict Abatement through Local Mitigation, Interfaith Mediation Centre, Jos Repertory Theatre, LEADS-Nigeria, League of Democratic Woman, National Teachers' Institute Radio Station- Kaduna, Save the Children, Space 2000, Strategic Empowerment and Mediation Agency, Jamatu Nazrul Islam, Young Stars and Youth Advancement Initiative. Summer thanks everyone who made the trip so successful. SFCG Nigeria's 2009-2011 programme strategy is currently being finalised.

SFCG in Nigeria thanks the following donors for their support:

