



SFCG theatre troupe member interviews a recent returnee

The socio-political climate in Rwanda has been marked by a number of noteworthy developments. Despite downward trends in the global economy, Rwanda grew by nine percent in the first half of 2009 with projections said to enter the double digits had the worldwide economic crisis not occurred. Similarly, inflation was contained at 5%, down from 22%, while per capita incomes are rising. This growth has been attributed to prioritising and increasing expenditures, while taking measures to enable the banks to lend more money on a long-term basis.

These developments coupled with other improvements in the economic, political, and social spheres are making the country safer and more attractive for refugees to return to their homes. The repatriation process, however, has not come without problems. Returnees often go home to find others who have been living in their houses or on their land for years. Determining how to come to an agreement in these situations is crucial for the future of the country's stability. Further fanning the flame is the rapidly increasing value of land. For example, one square meter of land that once cost 800frw is now valued at 6,080frw, an almost 800% increase. This exacerbates already tense situation by giving the new residents of the occupied land more incentive to stay.

Finally, Rwanda recently became the 54th member of the Commonwealth of Nations, an organisation of countries co-operating towards goals of democracy, rule of law human rights, and good governance. This came, said a representative, in recognition of the progress this country has made in the last 15 years. Meanwhile, the country is preparing for the August 2010 elections while addressing concerns that the registration process was too short and not announced widely enough. Still, the government in Kigali is working towards a smooth election process with the production of new identity card and the training of 19,000 polling workers.

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Our Land: SFCG Rwanda Launches its Third Radio Programme

In July 2009, with the support of USAID and the EC, SFCG launched its third radio programme airing in Rwanda. Following on the success of *Generations Grands Lac* and *Urungano*, *Ubutaku Bwacu* (Our Land) takes the discussion of land issues, a growing concern in Rwanda as returnees arrive home, out of people's homes and onto the air. The programme is produced as collaboration with three journalists coming from partner radio stations (profiles featured below). This approach involves a training period based in SFCG's studio, where these journalists improve their production skills and produce a variety of programmes incorporating SFCG's Common Ground approach to sensitive issues.

Using a live "call-in" format, *Ubutaku Bwacu* allows listeners to ask their land-related questions to a panel of experts on their rights and the law. Broadcast in Kinyarwanda, the show reaches out to some of Rwanda's poorest residents, giving them the opportunity to share their own experiences with the national land reform process. So far programmes have been broadcast on topics ranging from expropriation, land law, land registration, and specific land conflicts related to marriage and divorce. The show also features positive examples of land conflict resolution, highlighting existing interventions by the National Land Center, NGOs, and associations offering legal aid and community mediation.

"We received land as a gift. After many years, children of someone who had given this land to us came back and took back this land. Is this their right?"
- Listener from Ruhango District, via phone

Meet the journalists of Ubutaku Bwacu!

Muhira Therence has been working as a journalist and production manager on Salus Radio since 2005. Passionate about conflict resolution and journalism, Therence is a presenter on *Ubutaku Bwacu*, as well as two other radio shows. He appreciates *Ubutaku Bwacu* for addressing land conflict, an issue few others touch on. "When you speak about conflicts in Rwanda, people hear more of socio-political conflicts. *Ubutaku Bwacu* is a channel for me to identify that problem and help others to know."



Niyonshuti Beata is a 25 years old journalist at Contact FM, a popular commercial radio in Kigali. A student of computer management at the Universite Adventiste d'Afrique Centrale, Beata has been working in the newsroom reporting events for over two years. As a presenter on *Ubutaku Bwacu*, she enjoys that the show highlights real conflicts in the population and brings people and authorities together to look for solutions.

26 year-old **Uwase Kabendera Mariam** says that journalism runs in her family. Taking after her father and her sister, Mariam has worked as a journalist at Contact FM since 2007. In addition to presenting on *Ubutaku Bwacu*, she also works on *Dunia Yetu* reporting on various life issues in Kinyarwanda and *Zilipendwa*, a music programme in Swahili. What she likes about *Ubutaku Bwacu* is that they give the population an opportunity to learn about and express their concerns about land and help find solutions through media.



News From the Field: Preparations for SFCG's country-wide theatre festival are underway, inviting troupes from Rwanda, Burundi, and DRC to showcase their work January 25th through the 29th. Performances will take place at the main festival in Kigali as well as in various locales throughout the country.

Study Reveals Urgent Need for Information Dissemination on Land Reform

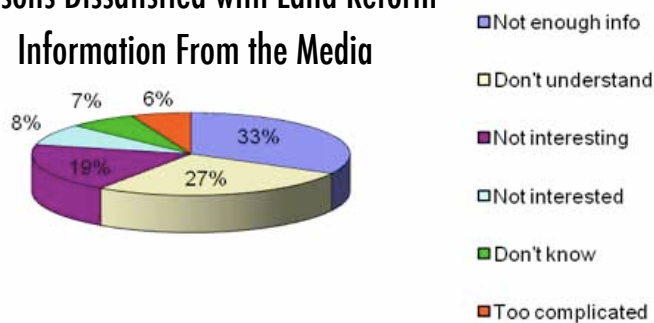
SFCG Rwanda recently conducted a baseline study to obtain a detailed view of the public's participation in and knowledge of new land laws and land policy. With the recent influx of returnees, SFCG believes the dissemination of information on these issues and the training of Abunzi, local mediators, are essential to avoiding conflict during this transformative time.

SFCG's baseline study revealed sobering results. Fewer than half of all interviewed were satisfied with the information they could get from the media on land reform, and a mere 2% were able to identify 3 issues regarding land rights, the National Land Policy and/or the Land Law. SFCG plans to work with local radio stations using programmes, such as *Ubutaku Bwacu* (Our Land) to raise awareness of new policies and citizens' rights regarding land. More than half of the reported disputes involved women, and fewer than half of the youth interviewed were aware of their rights regarding land.

Government officials interviewed said that they were using radio, newspaper and other forms of media to share information with Rwandans. This suggests that additional channels can be adopted to complement the work being done currently by civil society, government and the media, perhaps by focusing more on radio programming with feedback mechanisms, newspapers with high readership and credibility and using other approaches such as training, workshops and interactive theatre.

Other interesting findings indicated that the Abunzi are trusted sources of conflict resolution in general and, although the number of land conflict cases resolved by Abunzi cited in the survey was small, over 75% of respondents have faith in the ability of the Abunzi to find unique and effective ways to help resolve land disputes. This is encouraging to hear, and with further trainings organised by SFCG, hopes are high that Rwandans will increasingly bring land disputes to the Abunzi to avoid conflict and seek peaceful solutions. Overall, SFCG is excited to implement its programmes of participatory theatre, radio programming and Abunzi trainings as ways to continue to support Rwandans in finding non-violent solutions to land conflicts.

Reasons Dissatisfied with Land Reform Information From the Media



Urungano Celebrates One Year on the Airwaves

SFCG's radio programme *Urungano* (Kinyarwanda for "Generation") is celebrating its first anniversary since production began in September 2008. Produced by Rwandan adolescent girls, the programme gives a voice to youth in Rwanda, particularly young women who have little influence or prospect for self-expression, in the media. "We chose to use girls in order to emphasise gender balance by empowering them," said co-ordinator Christine Rwanpungu. "The show emphasises education for all, and the feedback we get from the audience, an estimated 2.5 million listeners, shows there is a change."

Recently visited by a journalist from Rwanda's daily newspaper, *New Times*, "the enthusiasm for what they do," she wrote, "is written all over their faces as soon as the studio door opens. Young girls continuously talking and brain storming about the next show and who their sources should be is all you hear." Now one year old, "we have no regrets," says Rwanpungu. Surveys and anecdotal responses from young people point to positive changes in the attitudes of youth in sensitive regions of the country "Youth listen to their peers more than their parents and guardians. This makes it easy to introduce change." says Begnine Ishimwe, another presenter. Rwanpungu never imagined the programme would thrive this fast. As young *Urungano* journalists discuss the next topic to hit the air waves, they look forward to a new Rwanda through their broadcasts.

Read the *New Times*' article on *Urungano* here: <http://allafrica.com/stories/200911030070.html>



An Urungano reporter conducts an interview

SFCG in Rwanda thanks the following donors for their support: