

SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND IS ENGAGING LIBERIAN COMMUNITIES AND FACILITATING TOWN HALL MEETINGS AROUND THE USE OF \$3 MILLION OF ANNUAL DEVELOPMENT FUNDS FROM ARCELORMITTAL. THE PUSH FOR TRANSPARENCY IS LIFTING UP COMMUNITY VOICES, PREVENTING CONFLICT AND MAXIMIZING THE DEVELOPMENT IMPACT.



Community members and local officials participate in a town hall meeting in Buchanan, Grand Bassa County, Liberia

COLLABORATIVE DECISION-MAKING FOR CORPORATE SOCIAL INVESTMENT

LIFTING UP COMMUNITY VOICES

Corporations play an increasingly important role in the regions where Search for Common Ground operates. In Liberia, where SFCG has worked since 1997, steel giant ArcelorMittal has begun a \$1.5 billion iron ore mining project, the country's largest foreign investment since the end of a devastating war.

The mining project offers an opportunity to promote much needed economic development in Liberia. It also represents a potential source of conflict as communities vie to receive economic benefits and object to the project's negative impacts. Search for Common Ground believes that transparent communication between corporate, community and government actors is essential to maximize the project's positive impacts and minimize conflict.

This transparency is particularly critical for the \$3 million of annual development funds ArcelorMittal will provide three Liberian counties. In late 2007, Search for Common Ground convened and facilitated Town Hall Meetings for government officials to discuss with community members priority uses for the funds. The well-attended meetings revealed the importance of seeking consensus-based and transparent use of corporate social investment funds. Search for Common Ground, with support from the British government, is following up with these communities to promote transparent mechanisms to oversee spending.

In Search for Common Ground's experience, when community members and their elected leaders decide collectively how they want to better their community, the potential for conflict is minimized and positive patterns of interaction are engrained. For a company such as ArcelorMittal, this transparent process reduces the risks of corporate funds becoming associated with corrupt practices, misuse or community conflict.

SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND IN LIBERIA

SFCG has worked for more than a decade in Liberia to support peace building and conflict prevention, using media produced at its Talking Drum Studio as a primary tool. The studio today produces 8 programs a week broadcast nationally over 44 radio stations. Its staff represents some of Liberia's most creative production talent.

Search for Common Ground's programming and related activities in Liberia have allowed the organization to become a credible convener of community, civil society and government stakeholders.



For more information on Search for Common Ground's Sustainable Business Practice, please contact Reme Moya, Director at rmoya@sfcg.org. For more information on Liberia, please contact Rebecca Besant, Regional Program Manager, Africa at rbesant@sfcg.org

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