

SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND IS TRANSFORMING ATTITUDES AND BUILDING LOCAL CAPACITY IN LEADERSHIP AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN COASTAL ANGOLAN COMMUNITIES WITH A HISTORY OF CONFLICT. THE INNOVATIVE WORK HAS STRENGTHENED THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT TO PROMOTE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT.



Community members show off new irrigation equipment

STRENGTHENING LOCAL GOVERNMENT, OVERCOMING CONFLICT

Search for Common Ground, an organization dedicated to conflict transformation, has been working in Angola's oil-rich enclave of Cabinda since October 2006. In a private-public partnership co-funded by USAID and Chevron's local oil subsidiary, SFCG has collaborated with nine impoverished fishing communities that require development assistance to meet basic needs such as drinkable water, health services and primary schools. The coastal communities have been torn by conflict, first by the war between the government and a separatist group and then between fishermen and the oil companies over degraded fish habitats and expectations of development support. SFCG's project has two primary objectives to address these problems:

- To empower Cabindans to more fully participate in Angola's political, economic, and social development;
- To strengthen social cohesion within and among different sectors of Angolan society.

Years of conflict combined with periodic handouts from oil companies had fostered a sense of entitlement in the communities. Rather than taking ownership and responsibility for their own development priorities, they awaited assistance from the outside; assistance that rarely came. Government was largely absent.

GOVERNMENT CAPACITY

Strengthening the capacity of local government has been a focus of Search for Common Ground's work in the communities. Municipal officials now co-lead workshops with Search for Common Ground about leadership, conflict resolution and participatory development. More than 150 government officials and employees have gone through the training. Local officials are spending more time in the communities, are becoming more accountable and are more active in community development. Local government is increasingly taking on its role as the primary provider of social services and development assistance.

The capacity building, combined with SFCG's work with community members and civil society, has led to a surge in development activity and drop in conflicts. Village-level administrators and traditional leaders are active in a community volunteer campaign called "We are the Change" that has resulted in over 1,000 person-hours of community service to achieve the development goals villagers themselves have set. Chevron is collaborating by financing related infrastructure improvements. Overall, a new spirit of collaboration and dialogue has taken hold, creating the conditions for sustainable peace and development in a previously neglect area.



For more information on Search for Common Ground in Angola, please contact Rebecca Besant, Regional Program Manager, Africa at rbesant@sfcg.org. For more information on the Sustainable Business Practice, please contact Reme Moya, Director at moya@sfcg.org

Search for Common Ground:
1601 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 200
Washington DC 20009
P: 202.265.4300

Rue Belliard 295 bte 13
B-1040 Brussels, Belgium
P: +32.2.736.7262

www.sfcg.org