

# Sierra Leone Update

DECEMBER 2009



Staff of Radio Gbafth

## Community Radio: Driving Development

SFCG counts radio stations as its most important operational partners across the African continent. To assess the impact of community radio on peacebuilding, in June of this year SFCG recruited four interns to work in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The interns carried out an evaluation that looked at how community radio stations address development issues, how development programming is perceived by the audience, and what changes resulted in the targeted communities. The interns were based in four community radio stations—Radio Kolenten in Kambia and Radio Wanjei in Pujehun on the Sierra Leone side, and Radio Life in Voinjama and Radio Kergheaman in Ganta, Liberia—

for a period of seven weeks. To assess the impact, the interns used guided questionnaires, interviews, case studies, and direct observation. The research found that the stations were actively participating in diffusing conflict and promoting inclusive development. While the radio stations have yet to meet their full potential for quality and quantity of radio-led peacebuilding, government and civil society use the radio effectively to distribute information and, to a lesser extent, to gather information. In all the cases, community residents expressed a strong desire for more programming, pointing to a loyal listenership base and appreciation for independent radio programming.

### Radio Life: Informing Liberia

Located in Lofa County, Radio Life is the only available radio station and the principal source of both news and entertainment for two of the county's six districts: Zorzor and Salayea. For more information on Radio Life's accomplishments visit:

<http://bit.ly/4ld1Yz>

Overall, this report emphasises that the contribution of community radios to the development process should not be underestimated and is crucial as the 2012 elections. To read the report, please visit: <http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/sierra/pdf/New%20Community%20Radio%20Assessment%20FINAL.pdf>

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## Fostering National Debate on Chieftaincy Reforms

With the national and local elections processes completed, Sierra Leone is holding elections for its Paramount Chiefs this month. The process began with the Chieftaincy Act, which outlines procedures for electing and appointing Paramount Chiefs, a highly politicised issue which brings together divergent voices, opinions, and interests. Many Sierra Leoneans argue that the balance between chiefs' service to the government and service to the community has shifted too far in favour of government and national political parties. In the past, chiefs often served as political enforcers, sometimes actively suppressing free speech and political association. Chiefs who enjoyed the patronage of the politically powerful also tended to abuse their authority for private gain, exploiting their



**Young community radio journalist in studio**

people in that process. There have been worrying signs of a return to this kind of behaviour in the post-war era. Given the sensitive nature of the reform process and various vested

interests by a number of officials and politicians, there is the need for sustained advocacy to ensure that the issues being raised for consideration in the reform process are consistently being debated, bringing in diverse voices from across the nation and ensuring a national perspective. To support the process, for the last few months SFCG has partnered with other civil society players to implement a media campaign raising awareness and stimulating dialogue around the Chieftaincy reform and its implications for leaders and citizens, using programming such as the daily soap opera *Atunda Ayenda*. In this way, SFCG and civil society players can address the above-mentioned issues, effectively stimulating proactive action from policy makers.

### Where are they now?

At the core of SFCG's mission is the hope that the organisation's work will be sustainable and that programming will successfully build capacity in the countries in which it is implemented. In 2001 TDS radio program *Troway di Gun* (or throw away the gun) aired while the disarmament and reintegration process was taking place in the country. *Troway di Gun* was hosted by two former combatants, one who served with the Revolutionary United Front and another who fought with the government-aligned Civil Defense Forces, Foday



Sajuma. Through the program, both hosts talked about their experiences putting down their weapons and rejoining civilian life.

Their stories of personal transformation encourage other young men and women to change the society they live in. Now more than seven years later, Foday Sajuma has gone on to be hired as the radio station manager in his home town, standing as a highly respected leader of his community and integrating the common ground principles he learned with SFCG into the community radio station that he runs. To see a video that captures his and other inspiring stories visit:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?>

### 'Accountability Now'

'Battling corruption in search of peace: The Common Ground Approach', an article recently written by SFCG Country Directors for Liberia and Sierra Leone, Oscar Bloh and Ambrose James, explores the crucial role of community radio in increasing transparency; its ability to mainstream the voices and concerns of ordinary people; build a base of societal knowledge; and create a more dynamic, engaged and representative public sphere. The article can be found here: <http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/sierra/pdf/NexusPeaceCorruption.pdf>

# Diamond Area Community Development Fund

With mineral extraction and natural resource management both representing areas of economic promise and sources of conflict and corruption in Sierra Leone, SFCG has launched media campaigns to address the lack of transparency in resource extraction industries.

The Diamond Area Community Development Fund (DACDF) was established by the government in 2001 as a vehicle for community development. The fund requires the government to allocate money to be distributed among the diamond mining chiefdoms in the country, delivering benefits for their resource and mineral wealth. However, the changing context in Sierra Leone has let the focus of the DACDF slip recently. The accountability mechanism has been largely absent. The development priorities have not been set in consultation with the people and the chiefs have not been accountable to the people on the utilisation of the DACDF funds. In some instances, funds are being used as compensation for the chiefs for supporting the political parties. One chief described how he was chased into the bush by ministry officials demanding their cut of the money as soon as he received it. As a result, there have been complaints by the people that they have not seen any tangible development brought about by the DACDF.

To address this issue, SFCG's radio programmes in Kono and Kenema have facilitated lively debates around the utilisation of the fund. This is particularly important given the role diamonds played during the conflict and the conditions of youth and lack of community development. SFCG's support for the DACDF is done in the hope that the new procedure of working the funds through a formal chiefdom administrative system and community

involvement in prioritising development projects and utilisation of public procurement policy can enhance transparency and accountability. The radio programmes put in place by SFCG aim to encourage government officials to conform to this new procedure.

SFCG specifically targeted citizens in Kono district, as it is the primary producer of diamonds. Activities included radio programmes and panels to discuss the DACDF with representatives from the Ministry of Mineral Resources, members of civil society and citizens, including Paramount Chiefs. The programming focused on information awareness around the DACDF, its purpose, where the money comes from, who benefits, how money is allocated and how often, as well as the new procedures of DACDF with regard to chiefdoms.



Jean-Claude Coutausse/ CONTACT Press Images)

## Bringing People to the Government

Using video as a tool, SFCG is documenting the everyday realities of Sierra Leonean youth in an effort to bring the voices of the youth to their leaders. In makeshift tea houses, youth meet to discuss topics ranging from

politics to music and current events. SFCG has filmed several of these lively discussions, questioning youth on the issues that affect their daily lives and their expectations for the future of Sierra Leone. These entertaining

vignettes are presented to local and government authorities to showcase the perspectives of youth and generate greater cross generational dialogue around complex political issues.

SFCG in Sierra Leone thanks the following donors for their support:

