



2002 INDEPENDENT PROGRAM EVALUATION: SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND BURUNDI (1999-2001)

Since 1995, Search for Common Ground (SFGC), a US non-profit organization based in Washington, DC, has implemented a program in Burundi with the goal of reducing ethnic conflict and encouraging reconciliation. To this end, SFGC currently runs four in-country programs:

- **Studio Ijambo:** an independent radio production studio in which twenty-one ethnically diverse journalists work together to produce accurate and unbiased radio programming designed to promote reconciliation and eased ethnic tensions.
- **The Women's Peace Center:** a forum for unifying and strengthening civil society and promoting democratic processes.
- **The Youth Project:** a cooperative project which brings together ethnically mixed youth leaders: from throughout Bujumbura and Bujumbura Rurale, as well as organizes other peace-building projects for youth.
- **Integration Initiative:** This new project maximizes the synergies among and around SFGC projects as they expand both geographically and in scope.

The evaluation of SFGC programming in Burundi was completed April 2002, and assessed these four programs from 1999 to 2001. To do so, both qualitative and quantitative tools were employed including staff focus groups, key informant interviews of government officials and NGOs, case studies, document review, and site observations. Ultimately, the evaluation team highlighted a number of ways in which SFGC programming positively impacted Burundi's progress towards peace.

SFGC BURUNDI CREATES SPACE FOR VOICES TO BE HEARD

Through the Studio Ijambo radio production studio, SFGC created space for a vocabulary and dialogue on peaceful coexistence in Burundi. Studio Ijambo's techniques, such as working with the public, going to where events are happening, facilitating dialogue between rivals, and treating all groups with fairness and neutrality, were all present in the responses of key informant interviewees. Most respondents also indicated that they believed that SI was reaching its goals to a great extent. Several of them suggested that SI has contributed to creating a new vocabulary of peaceful coexistence, dialogue and negotiation in the country. They also suggested that SI has been successful in making the voice of the ordinary people heard. SI's work in the interior was also noted to be of unique quality. Many interviewees also asserted that SI has been successful in breaking through several social taboos.

SFGC BURUNDI ENGAGES & EMPOWERS WOMEN

Since its foundation, the Women's Peace Center (WPC) has provided a safe place for women to meet, to create a network between existing women's associations, and to strengthen existing associations and provide encouragement for creating new associations. All visitors are equally welcomed. This purpose continues to be important. The WPC is viewed with respect and admiration by other women-focused organizations. Expressions of the wish to continue or renew cooperation are frequent. There even seems to be an element of envy, as the WPC does not give the impression to have to struggle for financial support.

SFCG BURUNDI TRAINS YOUTH IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION TOOLS

The evaluation of Youth Program (YP) showed clearly that it has been very effective in making a difference on many levels. The program is fairly new, and is expanding so fast in so many directions. The efforts observed in the evaluation lead to a conclusion that the YP has been successful in communicating the message of peace, conflict resolution, and tolerance using various methods.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Studio Ijambo

1. While continuing to develop and present programs suitable for the undereducated rural population, also **make efforts to develop and present programs suitable to the educated urban population.**
2. Ensure the existence of an ongoing internal evaluation system in order to assess the process and effectiveness of various programs and activities.

Women's Peace Center

1. Develop a vision and mission for the WPC in a cooperative process and accepted by all and use it consistently. A consistent reminder of the WPC's mission will provide guidance and inspiration to the staff.
2. Specifically, cooperate with Studio Ijambo to develop informational programs that would guide persons to get and to give assistance in regards to trauma healing.

Youth Project

1. The YP's internal management will need to grow and develop during the next phase of expansion. **Consider whether a larger share of the management burden for the program can be shifted to local youth association partners** as an integral part of a capacity building strategy. Hiring more staff, with specific skills to address emerging issues, must also be considered.
2. As YP considers expansion into the interior of Burundi, it should **carefully examine the specific needs of various communities.** In some areas the focus may be on refugee needs; in others the focus may be on education, health, etc.

Source: This document is a summary of, and taken directly from "Independent Program Evaluation: Search for Common Ground in Burundi" by Dr. Amr K. Abdalla, Dr. Noa Davenport, Leslie McTyre and Steven A. Smith. A copy of this document can be acquired at <http://www.sfcg.org/sfcg/evaluations/burundi.html>, or by contacting Nick Oatley, Director Institutional Learning at Search for Common Ground at noatley@sfcg.org

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