



CHILDREN AND YOUTH PROGRAMME REVIEW

Search for Common Ground (SFCG) in the DRC, known locally as Centre Lokole, was established in 2001 to support communications around the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, the cornerstone of the peace process that began in Lusaka in 1999. Its overarching goals are to support the peace process, to promote unity for the Democratic Republic of Congo, and to reinforce the capacity of local organisations to resolve local conflicts through the use of media, arts, dialogue, and training programmes based in peacebuilding centres around the country.

The Children & Youth programme in DRC, initiated in 2002, has worked to engage children and youth who are at-risk of involvement in violence to facilitate their participation in transforming the ways their societies deal with conflict. This was done through three primary operational methods: formal and non-formal education, platforms for youth to have a voice in society, and opportunities for youth to take concrete actions in their communities.

SFCFG has accomplished essential work and have contributed to transform the collective consciousness of Congolese society.

This external evaluation, conducted in August 2010 by an international intern, sought to assess the overall performance of SFCG’s Children & Youth programming in the DRC over the past five years. A total of eight projects were assessed:

- Tribune d’expression populaire
- Tosalel’ango
- Génération Grands Lacs
- Duel Jes Jeunes Démocrates
- Cultural Space in Baraka
- Sisi Watoto (Us the Children)
- Uishe na Upende (Live and Love Programme)
- Joint Conflict Transformation Activities in South Kivu

The evaluation also sought to determine whether the assumptions underpinning project theories of change were correct and identify good practices in Children & Youth programming. It employed a mixed approach, utilising qualitative and quantitative methods.

The evaluation concludes that SFCG should begin examining ways in which projects, once completed, can be continued at the local level with minimal SFCG involvement. “SFCG could train youth and create the structures that could potentially continue surviving, even after SFCG’s withdrawal.”

The key findings presented below highlight specific projects within the Children & Youth programme review.

TOSALEL’ANGO REALITY TV

Tosalel’ango is a reality TV show in which youths propose subjects they wish to raise with local authorities, ranging from issues of sexual violence, government corruption and access to resources. The production crew then arranges an exchange between the youth and a local public figure and captures the exchange on film to add some accountability.

It is clear from the evaluation that youth who participate in the programme, called ‘Challengers’, have been directly and positively affected by the programme as have their communities:

“When a medical unit left Bukavu for a remote and troubled area in South Kivu to bring medical help to women victims of sexual violence, it was made possible through Tosalel’ango and the Challengers. When some neighbourhoods in Kinshasa were able to secure better access to regular electricity and water, it was made possible through Tosalel’ango and the Challengers.”

Despite these successes the evaluator suggested that SFCG analyse the wider merits, impact and design of the programme on the Challengers. Key recommendations suggested the production process take greater consideration of the long-term impacts of youth participation in the programme: protection of the Challengers' identities; mechanisms ensure the Challengers' participation in the program does not imperil other aspects of their lives and to what impacts are occurring beyond the immediate social circles of the Challengers.

DUEL DES JEUNES DÉMOCRATES

Duel des Jeunes Démocrates (DJD) is a competition between teams from two different high schools on various subjects, ranging from issues of peacebuilding and good governance to literature and geography. The format is reminiscent of television game shows: questions are posed by a moderator and the first team to respond wins that round. The winning school is awarded a portable radio for use in the classrooms. In addition to the live competitions, which are well attended, it is also regularly broadcast on various radio stations—dramatically expanding the reach of the project. Initially applied within the DRC, SFCG has recently expanded the DJD program to include schools from Rwanda.

The cross-border DJD between Goma (DRC) and Gisenyi (Rwanda) left important transformations with the students... Prejudices and their understanding of students from another country, once at war with them, are transformed: “Rwandans are just like us, it was not at all like I imagined them!”

The DJD program brings subjects to the fore that normally would never be discussed in the classroom. “Every student that participated in the focus groups in Bukavu and Goma agreed their experience was an eye opener on subjects they never thought they could discuss openly.” Such topics range from sexual violence and sexually transmitted diseases to corruption and tribal prejudices, among others. The project, furthermore, gives students a platform to learn, exchange, to be listened to, to grow and to feel empowered.

Given the successes of the DJD project, particularly the transformations which occur in the students themselves, the evaluator suggests the project be upgraded and expanded. The project could seek wider involvement in the selected schools and give the students more time to prepare for the competition to allow them to delve into the issues more deeply. The project could also expand to the summer by including entertainment and other disciplines in competition, such as music and arts. This would allow students to maintain contacts with one another outside of the classroom and also encourage creative expression.

RECOMMENDATIONS

With elections in the DRC occurring in November 2011, and as the country may finally be moving in the right direction, SFCG could use the elections to launch a new approach in DRC. It may be time to take SFCG's programmes in DRC one step further, and accompany the youth of the country on a journey so they may *take matters into their own hands*. Now, more than ever, the time is right to move beyond implementation to strategies where the youth of the DRC empower themselves to lead the country into the next decade.

Source: This document is a summary of, and taken directly from “Children and Youth Program Review: Summer 2010.” A copy of this document can be acquired at <http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/drcongo/projects.html> or by contacting Nick Oatley, Director Institutional Learning at Search for Common Ground at noatley@sfcg.org

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