

2008 REPORT OF EVALUATION:
FACILITATING CIVIL SOCIETY DIALOGUE AND DEVELOPMENT TO
FOSTER ACCOUNTABILITY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE IN LIBERIA

It is to address all these that Search for Common Ground (SFCG) developed this proposal known as, *Facilitating Civil Society Dialogue and Development to Foster Accountability and Good Governance in Liberia*. This project was designed with the overall goal of SFCG in Liberia, which is **“to strengthen participation and inclusion to consolidate peace in Liberia.”** With the above in mind the project has two clear strategic objectives:

- Increase the capability of civil society to engage their new leaders on governance and accountability issues.
- Increase constructive engagement between the government and civil society on how the state is governed.

To these ends, the project has implemented a variety of activities including town hall meetings (THM), media/outreach programs (radio program production and strengthening of Association of Liberia Community Radio), strengthening partnerships, and building capacity in journalists and civil society. To assess these activities in light of the goal and objectives, qualitative methods were employed including key informant interviews and focus group discussions. Ultimately, the evaluation highlighted several positive findings from the project.

SFCG DEVELOPED EFFECTIVE, IMPORTANT PARTNERSHIPS

The partnership with both the media and civil society turned out very successful. For instance, SFCG helped to facilitate the Motorcycle Union of Bong and even supervised their elections. Additionally, SFCG assisted them in organizational development and in some instances; SFCG provided financial assistance through subcontracts, payment for radio programs etc. SFCG was also instrumental in ensuring full civil society participation in the various THM.

“We have been doing a lot with SFCG ... We have been getting technical support which has helped to upgrade our capacity. They have also helped to provide international support by making people especially government officials to know that we are not just local.”

-Key Informant, Ganta

SFCG EFFECTIVELY UTILIZES MEDIA AS A
MEDIUM FOR PEACEBUILDING

The individuals interviewed were particular about the use of drama as a vehicle for conveying the message. As a strategy, it has been very successful. Because Liberia has high illiteracy rate, and radio is largely oral, ***the medium is powerful*** which means that an abuse of the power of radio could have devastating consequences on the nation.

More generally, the other media programs from Talking Drum Studio (TDS) have been very effective. In all the FGD and KII, people declared that the media programs have been very effective. As one media person who participated in KII in Seclepea put it, “TDS programs are educative especially for young people, when the children hear their colleagues they want to be like them. That is why we now have child broadcasters, it brings in more listeners, it makes people to listen to the radio station.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are a selection of recommendations:

- Association of Liberia Community Radio should be encouraged to network with other such groups within the West African sub-region like the Independent Radio Network of Sierra Leone and Radio and Television Workers Union of Nigeria.
- The issue of urban/rural divide must be addressed because it is key to the future Liberia e.g. urban vs. rural radio, urban vs. rural civil society etc.
- There should be advocacy around the need to decentralize government activities e.g. people have to travel for close to four hours to Monrovia to get license plates for their motorcycles, and when they get there the plates are not available
- The organizational development component must also incorporate processes for civil society to internalize the values of accountability and participation in their various organizations and not just preaching it to government officials
- Youths particularly wanted youth-focused programs to be aired in the evenings when they are at home and not when they are in the school or at work
- Participants wanted more program in their local languages

“Youths are involved in meetings and others but after that nothing. For instance going beyond THM and not just creating forum but to monitor results, follow the issue to the end. Youths are invited to meetings, if there is disagreement a new meeting is called, our views are partially taken into consideration. But when it comes to implementation our views are not taken in.”

-Focus Group Discussion Participant

Source: This document is a summary of, and taken directly from “Report of Evaluation: Facilitating Civil Society Dialogue and Development to Foster Accountability and Good Governance in Liberia” by Austin Onuoha and Ambrose James. A copy of this document can be acquired at <http://www.sfcg.org/sfcg/evaluations/liberia.html>, or by contacting Nick Oatley, Director Institutional Learning at Search for Common Ground at noatley@sfcg.org

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