

## 2008 EVALUATION OF SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND-TALKING DRUM STUDIO SIERRA LEONE ELECTION STRATEGY 2007

Search for Common Ground (SFCG), known locally in Sierra Leone as SFCG-Talking Drum Studio, has been working in Sierra Leone since 2000 with the purpose of strengthening the capacity of communities to participate in building a tolerant, inclusive society for sustainable peace. Within this purpose, SFCG developed an election strategy which targets conflict prone communities and groups, and combines the enhancement of informational and communication processes with organizational development around institutions or coalitions that are engaged in the electoral process.

Building on well-established relationships with key partners and its lessons learned from work in 2002 and 2004, SFCG proposed a 25-month strategy to reduce fear and mistrust, and minimize the potential for violence in the 2007 presidential and parliamentary election process and subsequent local elections in 2008. This internal evaluation focuses on three main objectives in assessing the election strategy:

- Assess the extent of implementation
- Identify and analyze any outcomes achieved by the tools of the strategy
- Assess the outcomes of the TV soap opera from the target audience perspective

To fulfill these objectives, the evaluation team conducted document review, stakeholder analyses and evaluation framework development, focus group discussions, interviews with election stakeholders, and a SWOT analysis. The evaluation team ultimately concluded a number of positive points of progress with SFCG's election strategy.

### SFCG & PARTNERS PROVIDE VITAL, UNBIASED INFORMATION

IRN, a radio partner in the election strategy, provided appropriate information on the electoral before the election. Its real impact came when participants showed how important it was for them to be kept abreast of the election results on the days of the election. Hearing election results from all areas of the country was seen as a deterrent for any violent flare-ups and a contribution to election transparency. Furthermore, NEW observers were seen as unbiased and 'not wearing any party colors' as on participant noted.

*"I felt, after the show, that conflict was not the only way to bring change."*

-Man, Port Loko

### SFCG FOSTERED STRONG, COHERENT PARTNERSHIPS

The evaluation highlights that discussions with SFCG and partners clearly demonstrated that all shared the same vision of a peaceful and transparent election. Furthermore, the approach of each component of the strategy was not only complementary to the others, but also necessary for the success of each one.

SFCG complemented its partners by bringing in the strategic vision, the technical expertise and the logistical support during the elections.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are recommendations for the election strategy provided by the evaluation team:

1. More efforts should be made to ensure that the money necessary for field observers and reporters be received in time.
2. More efforts should be made to ensure training for new observers to be conducted earlier than in the previous phase.
3. In terms of coverage, more areas need to be covered. Similarly, local radio stations can be strengthened and more radio stations should be recruited to IRN.
4. Stronger monitoring systems should be put in place to ensure that IRN and NEW members are not seen as biased or taking sides during the elections

*Source: This document is a summary of, and taken directly from “Evaluation of Search for Common Ground-Talking Drum Studio: Sierra Leone Election Strategy 2007” by Ratiba Taouti-Cherif. A copy of this document can be acquired at <http://www.sfcg.org/sfcg/evaluations/sierra.html>, or by contacting Nick Oatley, Director Institutional Learning at Search for Common Ground at [noatley@sfcg.org](mailto:noatley@sfcg.org)*

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