

## 2007 REVIEW OF SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND ENCISS MEDIA & OUTREACH COMPONENT

Search for Common Ground (SFCG) has been working in Sierra Leone since 2000 with the mission to empower people to participate in building a tolerant and inclusive society for sustainable peace. ENCISS, the acronym for ‘Enhancing the Interaction and Interface between Civil Society and the State to Improve Poor People’s Lives’ is a DFID-funded programme. The overall goal of the programme was **to increase the capacity of representative civil society to participate in, influence, contribute to and monitor the Poverty Reduction Strategy and local government policy, planning and implementation**. As part of this programme, SFCG has a two year contract through CARE to implement a sub-project entitled ‘Using Media and Outreach for National and Community Engagement to Support Decentralization and the Poverty Reduction Strategy with Civil Society Development’.

This evaluation set out to determine SFCG’s progress in helping deliver these five programme outputs:

- Development of a framework for responsive & accountable interaction between state & civil society
- Capacity of Local Government to inform, collaborate with & respond to Civil Society is enhanced
- CSOs become more accountable to and representative of citizens interests at national, district, and community levels
- The capacity of CSOs is increased to engage in decision-making and policy monitoring
- Increased citizen’s awareness of the PRS and local government policies, roles & responsibilities

To assess SFCG’s work in light of these outputs, the evaluation team conducted interviews with partners, staff and beneficiaries as well as reviewed relevant project documents. Ultimately, a number of SFCG activities were highlighted in contributing to the overall ENCISS programme.

### SFCG IMPROVES STATE & CIVIL SOCIETY RELATIONSHIPS

In Bonthe District, SFCG intervened to sustain state-civil society interaction. Radio Bontico was taken off the air because it was seen as partisan by the Council, and was allegedly mismanaging funds. SFCG organized civil society groups into a strategic task force which intervened to create a common understanding between the radio station and Bonthe City Council. It also employed the radio and the task force to assist the council for revenue mobilization. Additionally, it provided some initial training to the Bonthe Drama group so that through skits and radio drama this mobile team could spread the council’s message of civic participation. Now, relations are cordial and constructive.

Talking Drum gets us to know how the Council is using donor money

-Community Member, Binkolo

### SFCG BUILDS LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAPACITY

Local Councils have been trained by SFCG in understanding their roles and responsibilities through workshops and they have benefited from exchange visits to learn from other Councils in the country. Through this process, they have been able to articulate their reactions to public concerns and difficulties such as meeting targets under the PRSP.

For example, the exchange visits that the SFCG organized for Council members from Makeni to Bonthe helped Councillors to formulate a common strategy to deal with traditional leadership, through Central Chiefdom Finance Clerks.

## SFCG HELPS CIVIL SOCIETY ENHANCE ACCOUNTABILITY & REPRESENTATIVE

SFCG's strategy to increase accountability and representation of citizens interests is primarily through radio programmes and drama groups. All local radio stations in ENCISS target districts now have regular weekly slots for CSO's own radio programmes, which are organized by the CSO task forces that SFCG facilitates.

SFCG ensures programmes are broadcast by paying local radio stations for airtime or fuel for these slots. These broadcasts enable CSO's to publicize their activities which otherwise would remain unreported to the public.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Below is a sample of recommendation given in the evaluation report:

1. A relationship-building workshop between SFCG and ENCISS should be convened by CARE.
2. SFCG needs an independent logical framework, which cascades out of the ENCISS master log-frame.
3. SFCG needs to devote more attention to strengthening community radio stations
4. The task forces started by SFCG should establish more formalized and regular relationships with ENCISS on the ground.
5. ENCISS and SFCG should clearly demarcate their respective roles with regard to the Poverty Reduction output of ENCISS

*Source: This document is a summary of, and taken directly from "A Review of Search for Common Ground ENCISS Media and Outreach Component" by Dr. Mary Myers and Momoh Taziff Koroma. 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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