

2002 INTERNAL EVALUATION OF TALKING DRUM STUDIO

Search for Common Ground (SFCG, but known locally as Talking Drum Studio) 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. Within a few months, Talking Drum Studio-SL created five radio programming strands that are currently airing on eleven stations for a combined airtime of over 10 hours per week. Though each programming strand has a different format, all of them have the same goal: to encourage peace and reconciliation.

Consistent with SFCG's policy of conducting periodical comprehensive evaluations of its projects, an evaluation mission was conducted in March 2002, in order to assess the effectiveness of TDS-SL in achieving its goals and objectives. This internal evaluation team implemented the evaluation research techniques which have been used with other SFCG projects in Burundi and Liberia. Multiple evaluation methods were developed in order to shed light on TDS-SL activities from various angles:

- Focus groups were conducted with the staff;
- An audience survey was conducted with the public;
- Survey interviewers gave their input into the survey design and methods of implementation;
- Key informant interviews were conducted with a wide spectrum of officials in the government, NGOs and other agencies;
- Case studies were developed and implemented to assess the link between specific TDS-SL activities and certain outcomes which had an impact on the society.

Ultimately, a number of positive points of progress were highlighted in the evaluation.

SFCG IMPACTS ARE FAR REACHING

Most respondents found that TDS-SL programs have been having a great positive impact on various aspects of life in Sierra Leone. One major impact has been to make people appreciate the value of information. Specifically, some respondents stressed the positive impact that TDS-SL has had on people living in remote areas; several respondents suggested that the impact of TDS-SL can be best felt in the country, not necessarily in Freetown. This was due to their approach of giving voice to everyone, and investigating issues where they happen.

SFCG EMPOWERS YOUTH

TDS-SL has developed a children's news program called *Golden Kids News*. This is a news and issues program that is partially identified, reported and produced by kids. It is truly a show for kids by kids. This show engages 16 children of mixed backgrounds who serve as producers, reporters and actors and who identify issues for and about children and advocate on their behalf. This show creates a forum for children to discuss their hopes and fears, advocate their issues and present events important to them. This program also feeds children with a positive perspective of Sierra Leone.

The program seemed to be accomplishing its objectives to a great extent. People enjoy listening to children voice on the radio, and almost all of them (98%) reported that the program changed their attitudes towards the role of children in Sierra Leone. About three-quarter of the respondents reported that they listen to the program with children, and about 82% reported that people like

"TDS has had a massive effect especially on children. Through the children programs they reach out to children, including mine. You should see how anxious they are to listen to TDS programs. Our children are becoming aware because of TDS issues."

to discuss issues raised in the program. The program seemed to also attract not only children audience, but also adults.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. Increase efforts for addressing elections, and possible election-related violence.
2. Address issues of Governance and leadership, tribalism and corruption.
3. Expand non-radio activities, and support Community Radios.
4. Maintain positive relations with various agencies and organizations.
5. Attend to audience's regional variations

Source: This document is a summary of, and taken directly from "Evaluation of Talking Drum Studio – Sierra Leone" by Amr Abdalla, Ph.D., Susan Shepler, M.A., and Suleiman Hussein, M.A. . 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

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