
Search for Common Ground - Sierra Leone Key Findings from 2007 Sisi Aminata Evaluation

Search for Common Ground (SFCG) is an international non-governmental organization founded in 1982 that works to transform the way the world deals with conflict: away from adversarial approaches, toward cooperative solutions. SFCG now works in over 17 countries worldwide using tools such as mediation/facilitation, shuttle diplomacy, training, radio/TV, journalism, sports, drama, and music.

Search for Common Ground began operations in Sierra Leone in June 2000 by creating Talking Drum Studio (TDS) and the Community Peace Building Unit (CPU). Using print, radio and video as tools, these interconnected programs integrate multi-media programming and community outreach to target a diverse population on a broad range of issues central to the consolidation of peace. SFCG's goal in Sierra Leone is to *strengthen communities to participate in building a tolerant, inclusive society for sustainable peace*. SFCG works in Sierra Leone with the support of USAID, the European Union, and the British, Dutch, Swedish, and Swiss governments.

In 2004, Search for Common Ground-Sierra Leone, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST), CARE and UNICEF, initiated a radio program called Sisi Aminata – a radio show designed to increase knowledge and discussion about adolescent sexual and reproductive health and related issues among young people. The show is produced in an enquiry-based interactive format between young people and an older female presenter. In the question-answer format, a woman representing an older sister answers young people's questions about issues of sexual and reproductive health. The answers are then also discussed by a peer group of young people to explore their relevance and analysis.

EVALUATION SCOPE

In November and December 2007, Search for Common Ground/Talking Drum Studio undertook an internal learning evaluation of the Sisi Aminata radio program.

The objectives of this evaluation were:

1. To assess the impacts of Sisi Aminata regarding sexual and reproductive health in Koinadugu and Bombali districts;
2. To discover ways in which Sisi Aminata has not been successful; and
3. To gather lessons learned about the implementation of the Sisi Aminata program.

As Sisi Aminata was researched, packaged and broadcast in partnership with CARE International, the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MEST), Radio Bintumani, and Radio Mankneh, this evaluation will be shared with these partner organizations as well.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

This study was not designed to be representative or statistically significant. Rather, it focuses on the perceptions, thoughts, and opinions of various individuals within the targeted communities.

As a learning evaluation, this study is more concerned with assessing broader impacts than evaluating specific indicators. The evaluation was conducted in two locations: Koinadugu and Bombali districts located in the north of the country. A total sample of 352 people participated in the evaluation, through surveys, individual interviews, focus groups, key informant interviews and most significant change discussions. This study was primarily interested in the perspective of youth, as the Sisi Aminata program targets youth between the ages of 12 and 19. While the majority of respondents were youth, 3 of the focus groups were with parents and the key informants were adults of SFCG partner organizations.

KEY FINDINGS

1. Sisi Aminata has had a large impact in Koinadugu district while it has had almost no impact in Bombali district, as measured both in listenership and in attitude and behavioral change.
2. When initiating the Sisi Aminata program, it is important to do community sensitization and to involve community leaders in order to prevent too much community resistance.
3. Sisi Aminata increases public discussion about sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS, especially in Koinadugu district.
4. Sisi Aminata does not increase youth's ability to ask their parents for advice about sexual and reproductive health, but it does increase parents' ability to offer advice to their children.
5. Sisi Aminata increased the belief in the existence of HIV/AIDS among youth in Koinadugu district.
6. Sisi Aminata has contributed to increased confidence among young girls with regards to their ability to control their sexual and reproductive lives and to pursue their interests in school.
7. Parents believe that Sisi Aminata provides good advice, although some parents believe the show should not teach children about condoms.
8. Sisi Aminata has inspired many youth to focus more on their studies and their future.
9. Both parents and youth attribute a decrease in early pregnancy to the Sisi Aminata program.
10. Sisi Aminata has increased youth's ability to advise each other about sexual and reproductive health, as well as other life issues (such as poverty, education, etc.).
11. Sisi Aminata is more effective when the radio program is combined with other community activities, such as teaching in school, club meetings, live concerts, quiz competitions, etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the recommendations for the Sisi Aminata program in Sierra Leone:

1. Continue programming in Koinadugu, but do not attempt re-initiation of the project in Bombali district.
2. Provide more advice for out-of-school youth on the radio show.
3. Address issues of polygamy from the perspective of taking care of oneself and others with regards to sexuality.
4. Include people living with HIV/AIDS in the program (although this may involve issues of confidentiality and, therefore, must be handled very sensitively).
5. Translate the program into local languages.
6. Potential expansions of the program include:
 - a. Add a drama portion.
 - b. Increase the airtime of Sisi Aminata.
 - c. Distribute Sisi Aminata tapes and tape players to areas that do not receive radio reception.
 - d. Distribute documents and leaflets to accompany the radio program.
 - e. Supplement the radio show with live concerts.

The following are recommendations for the replication of Sisi Aminata in other countries:

1. This program should be replicated in other countries, provided SFCG is prepared to put in the time and resources that this program needs. It has the highest potential to succeed in areas in which there is little discussion about HIV/AIDS and issues of sexuality, as this program is most useful in opening discussion about these often-taboo issues.
2. Before initiating the program, do a sensitization campaign and receive the support from local community leaders.
3. Supplement the radio program with other Sisi Aminata community activities. This could be achieved through partnership with other civil society organizations.
4. Adapt the Sisi Aminata program to the cultural context.
5. Utilize community resources in order to create community ownership over the program. One suggestion would be to have the woman who is the voice of Sisi Aminata be a member of the community in which it is aired.
6. Where possible, get the government involved in order to increase the legitimacy and credibility of the program. This becomes especially important if Sisi Aminata is implemented in schools.

Source: The majority of this document was taken verbatim from the Sisi Aminata Evaluation Report, Search for Common Ground/Talking Drum Studio, December 2007. For the full evaluation, please refer to:

www.sfcg.org/sfcg/evaluations/evaluations.html