

2008 PROMOTING INFORMATION AND VOICE FOR TRANSPARENCY ON ELECTIONS: END OF PROGRAMME ASSESSMENT

For the first time in the history of Sierra Leone, the procedures for electing and appointing Paramount Chiefs and sub-chiefs have been set out in the Draft Chieftaincy Act 2008. The Draft Chieftaincy Act presents a historic opportunity for reform and a platform for civil society to engage bringing in diverse voices, opinions, interests and positions.

PICOT, a coalition supported by Christian Aid, has engaged in a number of advocacy events that includes meetings with the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development, press releases, district meetings, TV and radio programmes etc. SFCG has been working on with PICOT to support its media strategy in the advocacy campaign for reform of the chieftaincy system. The project worked towards the overall objective of ***providing a national platform for debate on chieftaincy reform whilst influencing policy to ensure that the reform is consistent with national aspirations during its 6 month life span.***

The project's specific objectives were:

- To promote basic understanding amongst civil society and communities about the need for chieftaincy reform and how it supports democratic values and principles;
- To stimulate discussion and national debate on the role chiefs should play in a democracy vis-a-vis the decentralized local government (district councils)
- To ensure civil society's position on the Draft Chieftaincy Act is taken into consideration in the discussions leading to the final enactment.

SFCG INCREASES COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WITH COUNCILLORS AND CHIEFS ON THE REFORM PROCESS

As part of its media framework, SFCG/TDS produced a national bi weekly series called the Nyu Barray. The programme was aimed at raising public awareness amongst policy makers at national and district levels around the need for reform and the inherent challenges facing the advocacy campaign. It was also designed to showcase the link between reform and development. A total of 14 thirty minutes radio magazines were produced during the project cycle that were aired on 27 radio stations given a total of 11,340 minutes or 189 hours of programming across the country during the project period.

SFCG PUBLICISES CRITICAL ELECTION ISSUES IN RADIO PROGRAMMES

Atunda Ayenda is a radio soap opera broadcast on 24 radio stations across Sierra Leone and through the internet. In the Mandingo language, Atunda Ayenda means Lost and found. Atunda Ayenda was created to address issues around the country's ten year civil war, more importantly to foster trust and commitment among the citizenry and former fighters to make the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process a success and promote peace and reconciliation.

IMPACT STORY

Henry Mafindoh was a paramount chieftaincy aspirant in the Gbaneh chieftaincy, Kono District who was denied the right to contest the elections.

The aspirant ran to SFCG for help, apparently he had heard the 'Nyu Barray' on air. It was clear in his discussions with the producer that he didn't know what else to do after he was refused the right to contest the elections because, according to the Internal Affairs Ministry, he was claiming the throne from his maternal side which they claim is untraditional. The Ministry wasn't particularly interested in discussing his situation as SFCG realised from an interview with the Minister, Dauda Kamara.

The 'Nyu Barray' programming content took time to focus on the specifics of that situation and backed with a law suit from the aspirant, the Ministry was forced to postpone the election and re-run the declaration of rights session which Henry was allowed to take part in.

The soap opera modelled four characters to roll out messages in the chieftaincy advocacy campaign and primarily focus on issues around the paramount chieftaincy elections, the 2009 Chieftaincy Act and chieftaincy reform. Seventy five (75) episodes covered chieftaincy issues that were aired on partner radio stations across the country.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following is a complete list recommendations:

1. The partners continue to organise platforms and do more public information and education. The approach must be gradual and partners must try to win more supporters of the advocacy in government, among chiefs and political parties.
2. The campaign partners should try to identify 3 or 4 issues that they will want to focus on and organise a sustained campaign on these issues in a consistent manner
3. PICOT should be able to get a buy in from all the partners about the direction and focus of the campaign. It is essential for all the partners to have the same understanding about what the campaign is about and how it should be pursued
4. Effective Coordination is vital for the success of the campaign and coordination itself is an investment that is time consuming. PICOT and especially CCG should invest some time in ensuring coordination efforts are yielding dividends.

Source: This document is a summary of, and taken directly from “Sustaining a Civil Society Campaign around the Chieftaincy Reform Process in Sierra Leone: Final Report from Search for Common Ground” by 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

**John Marks
President**

Search for Common Ground
1601 Connecticut Avenue NW | Suite 200
Washington, DC 20009 | USA
Tel: +1 202 777 2222 | jmarks@sfcg.org

Search for Common Ground in Sierra Leone

44 Bathurst Street
Freetown, Sierra Leone
Phone: +232 (22) 223-479
Fax: +1 (202) 232-6718
E-mail: ffortune@sfcg.org
rbesant@sfcg.org



Understanding Differences; Acting on Commonalities (www.sfcg.org)