



Review of
Search for Common Ground
ENCISS Media and Outreach Component

Sierra Leone

June 2007

A report for DFID
by consultants:

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

CS: Civil Society
CSO: Civil Society Organisation
DACO: Development Assistance Coordination Office (SL Government)
DECSEC: Decentralisation Secretariat (SL Government)
DFID: Department for International Development
ENCISS: Enhancing the Interaction and Interface between Civil society and the State to Improve Poor People's Lives
IRN: Independent Radio Network
MSI: Management Systems International
PIVOT: Promoting Information and Voice for Transparency on Elections
PR: Public Relations
PRSP: Poverty Reduction Strategy Plans
SFCG: Search for Common Ground
SWOT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
TDS: Talking Drum Studio

A/ Introduction

Britain's Department for International Development (DFID) is funding Search for Common Ground (SFCG) to implement a media and outreach component of the ENCISS programme in Sierra Leone. ENCISS is a large DFID-funded programme and stands for: Enhancing the Interaction and Interface between Civil society and the State to improve Poor People's Lives. SFCG has a two year contract through CARE to implement this sub-project, entitled 'Using Media and Outreach for National and Community Engagement to Support Decentralisation and the Poverty Reduction Strategy with Civil Society Development' (2006-2008).

Search for Common Ground is an international peace-building NGO with headquarters in Washington D.C. It has been working in Sierra Leone since 2000, under its local name Talking Drum Studio. SFCG's mission in Sierra Leone is to 'empower people to participate in building a tolerant and inclusive society for sustainable peace'.

The review - at roughly mid-term - was carried out between 8th and 16th of June 2007. Our two-person review team (team leader Dr Mary Myers (MM) and national counterpart Mr Mohamed Taziff Koroma (MTK)) travelled to ENCISS's three focus districts (Western Area Rural, Bonthe (including Bonthe island) and Bombali), met partners in Bo town, and conducted interviews and reviewed documents in the capital, Freetown. A full list of who we met is given in the annexes. Our findings were presented for review by DFID, CARE, ENCISS and SFCG senior staff on 15th June. This report was reviewed and agreed by Jane Hobson of DFID Sierra Leone.

Our thanks go to all SFCG staff, particularly Ambrose James, for giving us their time, attention and for efficiently organising our travels around the country. Thanks also go to all those we met from ENCISS and from governmental, NGOs, civil society and community organisations.

Please note: The names Search for Common Ground (SFCG), 'Search,' and Talking Drum Studios (TDS) are used interchangeably in this report.

B/ Executive Summary

Summary of Findings

1. SFCG's work is a crucial component in helping to achieve ENCISS's outputs and should be acknowledged as an important partner for ENCISS. SFCG's strong reputation for being an honest broker and for giving voice to communities, as well as its national reach by way of the airwaves, and its accessible and entertaining formats are clearly a great asset for ENCISS.
2. There are many cases of SFCG helping to provide a framework for accountable interaction between state and civil society and we found several of SFCG's activities have clearly strengthened the capacity of District and Town Councils to respond to Civil Society.
3. We also found many examples of SFCG increasing the internal capacity of CSOs and CSO groupings, including the skills and capacities of radio stations.
4. We feel that all these activities, as well as the work SFCG is doing under separately funded projects, fit into a logical whole, and they come over coherently to the public.
5. However, it was found that understanding between SFCG and ENCISS, whilst good in the field, is poor at central level. There seems to be some misunderstanding over whether SFCG is a partner or one of ENCISS's sub-contractors. One of the elements that has complicated the ENCISS project so far has been too much overlap between the two bodies. There are also sensitive editorial issues at stake. There is a need for a clearer demarcation between communication as public relations, on the one hand, and communication as awareness-raising, on the other.
6. We also found that SFCG has some areas for improvement, notably in extending its reach to women, and to more of the poor and marginalised.
7. This is a relatively low-risk project, but probably the highest risk is the danger of accusations of partisanship on the part of SFCG which might have a negative knock-on effect on ENCISS - particularly at election time.

Summary Recommendations

1. **CARE should use its position as neutral broker and take more responsibility for smoothing relations and enhancing understanding between ENCISS and SFCG.**
2. **A relationship-building workshop between SFCG and ENCISS should be convened as soon as possible by CARE.**
3. **A common communication activity should be jointly planned and implemented on the ground by ENCISS and SFCG, as soon as possible.**
4. **ENCISS should ensure that SFCG's work plan, methods and geographical focus are known and understood by staff at all levels of ENCISS, and this should be reciprocated by SFCG.**
5. **SFCG should see ENCISS's 6-monthly reports to CARE and DFID.**
6. **The Core Review Committee meetings between ENCISS, SFCG and CARE should be more regular and formalised.**
7. **SFCG should prepare monthly updates for ENCISS and ensure that ENCISS receives copies of media products.**
8. **SFCG needs an independent logical framework, which cascades out of the ENCISS master log-frame.**

9. SFCG needs to pay more attention to strengthening community radio stations.
10. The task forces started by SFCG should establish more formalised and regular relationships with ENCISS on the ground.
11. SFCG needs to pay attention to reaching more rural people and women, and to expanding the number of local languages it uses.
12. SFCG needs to improve its programme distribution mechanisms.
13. The technical standard of radio productions made by non-professionals (e.g. CSOs) needs improving.
14. The drama groups supported by SFCG in ENCISS areas need strengthening.
15. More exchange visits between Councils should be considered.
16. CARE should arrange a re-orientation meeting and subsequent regular formal meetings between DACO/DECSEC, ENCISS and SFCG to unpack the PR and the Decentralization processes
17. SFCG should be more engaged with the local level DECSEC coaches and PRSP focal persons on District Councils.
18. ENCISS and SFCG should clearly demarcate their respective roles with regard to the PR output of ENCISS.
19. Where ENCISS feels that it is having to solve sensitive political issues - particularly re. its partners in the state sector - it should make more use of SFCG's reputation for being an honest and neutral broker. This means that SFCG can raise issues by giving voice to the voiceless, whilst ENCISS can come in to capitalize on the issue raised to ensure interface between the state sector and the citizens in question.
20. There should be a review of the ENCISS Communications Advisor's job description in order that he has more editorial oversight on SFCG's media products.
21. The ENCISS Communications Adviser should try to spend more time with SFCG both in Freetown and in the field.

C/ FINDINGS

1. Do ENCISS and SFCG share understanding of how their respective activities support the ENCISS purpose and goal?

It was found that understanding between SFCG and ENCISS is good in the field but poor at central level.

This partly stems from the two bodies having very different organisational cultures. On the one hand, SFCG is an established NGO - working in Sierra Leone since 2000 - with a well-known brand and a national presence over the airwaves; it can respond quickly to opportunities, and has become known as something of a champion of the common people against abuses of power. ENCISS, on the other hand, is a relatively new body, with a comparatively ambiguous status (framework, programme or NGO?); it has a wide - and, at times, open-ended - brief, and it tends to move more slowly. Furthermore ENCISS works with both supply-side and demand-side governance structures, and therefore has to be much more cautious about taking sides in relation to abuses of power, whether real or perceived.

Added to this difference of organisational culture is the ambiguity surrounding SFCG's relationship with ENCISS: the question being, is SFCG a sub-contractor to ENCISS or a partner? The confusion stems from the fact that DFID set up a separate funding agreement with SFCG, through CARE - thus implying that SFCG was to be regarded as an equal partner with ENCISS. However, DFID at the same time preferred SFCG to work directly under ENCISS's Logical Framework, rather than having its own - thereby implying that SFCG's work should fit *within* ENCISS's work.

This has resulted in the two bodies implementing activities separately rather than jointly. Activities are often done

The Bonthe Video

Difficulties between ENCISS and SFCG were highlighted by a video that SFCG produced about ENCISS' work on Bonthe Island earlier this year. The video focused on the local Council's development plans and showed that certain projects (e.g. the building of a small abattoir) and procedures (election of Ward members) were unpopular with some members of civil society on the island. The video also showed ENCISS helping to resolve the conflict and bringing the two sides together to ensure agreement on future development plans.

Unfortunately, the local Council took offence at being criticized in the first part of the video, and did not like the fact that the video was aired on national television. ENCISS received complaints about it in Freetown - including from at least one MP from Bonthe. This resulted in ENCISS management censuring SFCG for distributing the video in an irresponsible manner.

However, at the same time, ENCISS representatives *locally* - on Bonthe - felt that, in fact, there was nothing wrong with the video, and that it deserved to be shown widely. The Councillors on Bonthe now feel that the video issue has been resolved; both SFCG and ENCISS are now highly appreciated on the island; and the Council is currently working constructively on several joint projects with civil society, such as involving youth in embankment-building. Therefore, the fuss surrounding the video had been felt more at central level, and was perhaps taken more seriously than was merited. However, the whole episode highlighted the fact that there is lack of trust between ENCISS and SFCG - particularly at the central level.

without the other party's knowledge or buy-in. For example, SFCG staff expressed surprise that ENCISS's community meetings sometimes involve the distribution of free condoms and HIV/AIDS advice (a practice which was confirmed to us by the local ENCISS District Manager). On the other hand, ENCISS staff told us they did not see the rationale behind SFCG's support of the Independent Radio Network (IRN). There are many other examples of the same nature, which should not occur if understanding and proper communications were established and maintained

SFCG needs to be able to show clearly that all the activities that it is implementing within the ENCISS programme do indeed contribute directly to the ENCISS purpose. SFCG says that it devotes 40% of its radio productions and 80% of its video products to ENCISS work. Almost a third of its staff (20 out of a total of 59 staff) are, its says, devoted to ENCISS-work and about 25% of its total monthly expenditure is spent on ENCISS activities. We did not have the time to check-up on these figures, but clearly the issue is one of perception: SFCG sincerely believes that they are incorporating ENCISS-type governance issues regularly into their radio programmes, whereas ENCISS does not hear ENCISS mentioned often enough in SFCG's programmes.

The relevance and links between SFCG's activities and ENCISS's targets need to be spelled out, to be logical, and to have indicators attached to them. SFCG submitted a draft log-frame (see E, below) when it first approached DFID in 2005, but this was never used because DFID preferred SFCG to work from ENCISS's log-frame. At least this made the two bodies work to the same outputs (note that SFCG's original log-frame had different outputs to ENCISS). But SFCG's activities, as set out in its draft 2nd year implementation plan, do not spell out clearly how all the planned activities link through to the ENCISS outputs.

It is not clear to key ENCISS staff why ENCISS is not mentioned more in SFCG's workplan. They also do not perceive a clear link between some of SFCG's activities and their own remit. For example, SFCG's action to set up a CS task force in Western Area *Urban* (not Rural) has been questioned by ENCISS because it is outside ENCISS's priority geographical areas. Furthermore, the rationale for SFCG's governance work in other districts - for example, Kono, which they report on under their ENCISS-funded activities - needs to be clearly spelled out by SFCG.

Having a mutually agreed log-frame will, we believe, increase confidence within ENCISS that SFCG is not just interpreting the ENCISS outputs as it sees fit, but is indeed working in true partnership with ENCISS for a common purpose.

Recommendations from 'Section 1':

1. Given the two organisations' very different organisational cultures, CARE should use its position as neutral broker to take more responsibility for smoothing relations and enhancing understanding between ENCISS and SFCG. This should be done on the basis that SFCG is a partner, not a sub-contractor for ENCISS. In order to foster smoother working relationships, CARE could benefit from comparing the relationship that exists between SFCG and the MSI/SDG (Management Systems International/Strengthening Democratic Governance) programme in Eastern districts

(funded by USAID) - another governance programme with similar aims to ENCISS, where relationships are working well.

2. A relationship-building workshop should be convened as soon as possible by CARE, possibly centred around agreeing SFCG's 2nd annual work plan, a new log-frame for SFCG, and/or the next phase of the PRSP. An independent and credible individual to act as facilitator must be involved.

3. A common communication activity, for example, a road-show, possibly centred around the 2nd phase of the PRSP should be jointly planned and implemented on the ground by ENCISS and SFCG together. This would help to build relationships and trust because both parties would see, concretely, what approaches the other uses.

4. ENCISS should ensure that SFCG's work plan (once agreed), methods and geographical focus are known and understood by staff at all levels of the ENCISS programme.

5. In the interests of creating further trust, SFCG should see ENCISS's 6-monthly reports to CARE and DFID, and should have a chance to comment on those areas which concern it.

6. The Core Review Committee meetings between ENCISS, SFCG and CARE should be more regular and formalised and should meet MONTHLY at least for the next 6 months, in order for both organisations to be aware of each others' up-coming activities.

7. SFCG should prepare monthly updates for ENCISS about the ENCISS-related activities that it has carried out over the previous month. SFCG should also ensure that ENCISS management and advisors receive copies of all media products (especially videos for national broadcast), and where this is not practically possible (due to the sheer number of radio programmes being broadcast) ENCISS should be able to access copies easily and quickly, if they wish to.

8. SFCG needs an independent logical framework, which cascades out of the ENCISS master log-frame, in order for all parties (DFID, CARE, ENCISS and SFCG) to properly monitor its outputs against indicators. SFCG wrote an initial log-frame back in 2005 which should serve as a basis for discussion and revision (see Annex E). We therefore recommend that agreeing a new SFCG log-frame for the remaining 9 months should be one of the activities for the relationship-building workshop in recommendation (2) above.

2. Progress against outputs and purpose

SFCG's work is a crucial component in helping to achieve ENCISS's outputs and should be acknowledged as an important partner for ENCISS.

This section sets out our findings about the progress of SFCG in helping to deliver the five ENCISS outputs and its overall purpose, which is:

'Increased capacity of representative civil society to participate in, influence, contribute to and monitor the Poverty Reduction Strategy and local government policy, planning and implementation.' (ENCISS Log-Frame October 2005)

"TDS is the paramount chief for information - they share it for all Sierra Leone!"- member of CS group, Waterloo.

ENCISS/SFCG Out put 1: Development of a framework for responsive and accountable interaction between state and civil society

There are many cases of SFCG helping to provide a framework for accountable interaction between state and civil society.

- First and key are SFCG's national radio programmes, which are well known by the population (although more so by men than women - see our basic poll, Annex I). One example is, *We Yone Salone* which provides information on accountability, corruption and the PRS

"Because of Talking Drum' we know now where our taxes are going" - Community member, Binkolo.

which is aired for 30 minutes once a week on all community radio stations. The soap opera, *Atunda Ayenda* is also extremely popular and it provides a mirror of society in which decision-makers see themselves gently caricatured and in which ordinary

people hear their concerns on governance dealt with in fictional terms (e.g. issues such as corruption, relations with police and other authorities, how CSOs should work, youth grievances, and so on).

- In addition, SFCG provides support in the form of fuel, training of community radio staff and a small stipend for running costs for independent radio stations country-wide, in particular to those radios in ENCISS operational areas.

"TD gets us to know how the Council is using donor money." - Community member, Binkolo.

- In Bonthe District, SFCG intervened to sustain state-CS 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 i.e. people should pay their taxes. In addition, it gave some initial training to the Bonthe Drama group so that through

"The work of ENCISS could not be done without Talking Drum Studio" - Councillor, Waterloo.

skits and radio drama this mobile team could spread the message of the council of civic participation in the councils' work to the entire community. Now relations are cordial and constructive.

- In Mattru Jong, Bonthe District mainland, SFCG's outreach programme has harmonised relationships between Council and CSO and local radio. The radio programmes and quarterly workshops that SFCG has organised have created platforms for CSOs to interact with the Council on a proactive basis. In such programmes, councillors inform the communities about how much funding they are able to get from various sources and about how much they have spent. Phone-in-programmes on community development programmes, aired everyday, provide not only sensitization on why it is necessary to pay taxes, but also to address urgent community problems. The voices of women are increasingly being heard, and a special radio programme called 'Council Hour', slotted among other programme by and for civil society (women's hour, children's programmes, CSO hour, farming issues etc.), give plenty of information on national, council and local events.

"ENCISS and Talking Drum together have made a remarkable difference to the amount of taxation we have been able to raise." - Councillor, Mattru Jong

"ENCISS is doing very well in this area [Bonthe District]: ENCISS is complementing Talking Drum Studio" - Councillor, Mattru Jong.

According to CSOs in Bonthe, the District is now seeing some positive changes such as:

- Political tolerance – regular meetings of political parties and establishment of a code of conduct because the CSO task force brings together the political parties on a regular basis;
- Reduction in the outbreaks of diarrhoea (due to public health messages on the radio);
- Reduction in domestic violence (because the radio 'names and shames' men who are found beating their wives);
- Civil society have been more active in preventing abuse of the girl-child by attending court meetings when the case comes up involving rape or girl child pregnancy;
- SFCG has trained CSOs and the radio staff so that the resident magistrate and CSOs can report together to provide a platform for the local judiciary's work;
- Recently CSOs went on-air to validate local Council receipts which were initially rejected because they seem to bear out of date stamps (2006 dates): this was a big relief to the council as the people had until then categorically seen such receipt as fraudulent.

"Since ENCISS came into our lives we've seen quite a few changes - toilets have been built, roads will be built, a roundabout has been built in Mattru Jong, women are now allowed to talk in meetings at community level... this is also because of the sensitization that we [drama group] have been doing ourselves" - Drama Group, Mattru Jong.

- In Bombali the strategic task force that SFCG initiated, comprising Councillors, CSOs and other Local Unit Commanders of S L police, came together to address a spate of armed robberies in the township of Makeni. Through discussion programmes and other strategies (e.g. practical help for the police such as provision of torches and tea for night duty), the Unit Commander said that there had been much co-operation between civil society and the police - and a reduction in crime.

- The Makeni Town Council regularly meets under the SFCG/ENCISS outreach programme. They meet ward committee members to discuss development plans in each ward and during these sessions members of CSOs are allowed to ask questions.

ENCISS/SFCG Output 2: Capacity of Local Government to inform, collaborate with and respond to Civil Society is enhanced.

Several of SFCG's activities have clearly strengthened the capacity of District and Town Councils to respond to Civil Society. For instance:

"I had a very embarrassing interview [with TDS], but I liked it because they [TDS] will keep on insisting on development issues, like the Tombo water dam, which is my nightmare area... but they are very bold and candid and they don't talk about individuals, only issues." - Councillor, Waterloo

- *Wetin for Bi*, is a weekly 30-minute show made especially at district level and is the platform SFCG has created to highlight success stories of local Councils in the 3 ENCISS focus districts.

- These Councils have also 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 SFCG organised for Council members from Makeni to Bonthe helped Councillors to formulate a common strategy to deal with traditional leadership, through Central Chiefdom Finance Clerks.

- The 'Council Hour' phone-in programmes generate debate and enable Councillors to inform the public about their roles and responsibilities and to manage public expectations of what the Council, local chiefs and NGOs can and cannot do for them.

"TDS is very helpful, they really work hard" - Councillor, Makeni.

- Community members we talked to in Binkolo are appreciative of the *Wetin for Bi* programmes, especially when they deal with governance issues in their immediate locality, as was the case in a programme dealing with the large distances that Ward committee members have to travel in Tambaka chiefdom (Bombali District), and how this has prevented them meeting regularly. According to the community in Binkolo this has helped them understand part of the reason why there is a lack of schools in the Tambaka area.

ENCISS/SFCG Output 3: CSOs become more accountable to and representative of citizens interests at national, district and community levels

SFCG's strategy for making CSOs more accountable is to generate public interest in their activities, primarily through radio programmes, but also through drama groups who do sensitisation plays, both live and on local radio.

"TDS should also criticize CSOs and incite them to do more self-help projects like digging toilets instead of waiting for the Council or for NGOs to do it for them." - Councillor, Makeni.

- All local radio stations in ENCISS target districts now have regular weekly slots for CSOs' own radio programmes, which are put together by the CSO task forces that SFCG facilitates. SFCG ensures programmes are broadcast by paying local radio stations for airtime and/or fuel for these slots. These broadcasts are positive because they make CSOs' activities public knowledge and they serve

to air issues that would otherwise remain unpublicised - for instance, the bad conditions and low pay of oil palm plantation workers near Mattru Jong and the water pollution caused by Sierra Rutile Ltd at the nearby rutile mines were both subjects of recent broadcasts by CSOs. However, programme-making skills and equipment are rudimentary and the sound quality of some of the programmes we listened to was bad. We know SFCG is aware of these shortcomings, and we recommend (below) that SFCG pays attention to these technical problems.

- The Drama Group we met in Mattru Jong asserted that CSOs are now reporting more regularly to their members and that women are speaking up more regularly in meetings called by various different CSOs.

"Relations with the radio station [Voice of Women] have improved. We used to think they were just there to malign us, but now there's a forum organized by TDS, relations between us and the radio station are cordial." - Councillor, Mattru Jong.

- Community radio stations should be, but are not always, accountable to their local communities, and SFCG has helped to prevent some of them abusing their position and taking political sides. For example, in Mattru Jong, Councillors expressed their satisfaction that SFCG had intervened in a situation in which

some local radio station workers who wanted, but failed, to be elected as Councillors, had been using the radio as a platform for self-promotion.

- A more strategic area of work by SFCG is helping to enhance the accountability of local media in general, through support to the Independent Radio Network (IRN). SFCG has trained IRN staff members in journalistic ethics and impartiality, and SFCG has used finance under the ENCISS programme to pressure the IRN membership to set up an ethics committee. Although this will not create public trust in the media overnight, this is an important step in helping a significant part of the Sierra Leone media act more responsibly. As far as ENCISS management is concerned such steps should be acknowledged as a valuable contribution to ENCISS's own Communication Strategic Plan in which it identified lack of impartiality and ethical journalistic practices as major constraints.

Output 4: The capacity of CSOs is increased to engage in decision-making and policy monitoring.

We found many examples of SFCG increasing the internal capacity of CSOs and CSO groupings, including the skills and capacities of radio stations.

- The CSO task force in Waterloo has been formed by TDS where nothing existed before. It is made up of elected representatives - from fishermen's unions, through market women's associations, to the local inter-religious council - they seem to represent a broad cross-section of civil society in the area, and are energetic and well-informed. Their main source of funding is from their own member organisations, but TDS helps with capacity building (e.g. basic radio skills), phone-cards, transport to meetings, refreshment at meetings, stationery and airtime for their weekly slot on local Radio Tombo. These radio programmes have discussed local issues such as tax collection, depletion of fish-stocks, land conflicts, election fraud and road safety.

"TDS straightened us out of chaos - since then we've been doing

- The CS umbrella group on Bonthe and the CS task force in Mattru Jong were not meeting before TDS helped them to do so. The task force in Mattru Jong say that they are now able to coordinate self-help activities such as town cleaning days, they have weekly radio slots and their members regularly attend Council meetings. They have been able to take up local 'burning issues' with the Council relating to local transport, dumping of rubbish in the river, and road-building.

"Before TDS brought us together, we didn't know where to start. Now we've got 'CS Hour' on the radio and we attend Council meetings. Before this we didn't know about self-help projects and revenue issues - but now we do." - CS Task Force, Mattru Jong

- The inclusion of the local radio station in the CS umbrella groups helps CSOs themselves become better organised - for example, in Mattru Jong, the radio broadcasts messages to Sierra Leone Teacher's Union members to come and attend meetings.

- CSO groups on Bonthe and in Mattru Jong was enabled to go on an exchange visit by SFCG to meet their counterparts in Bo, Kailahun, and Makeni. We heard from the Bo youth group (organised by SFCG), that this had been a useful educational experience about the functioning of District Councils for those in Bo as well.

- SFCG has organised exchange visits to enhance the experience and skills of local radio stations, for example, Radio Bontico in Bonthe and Voice of Women in Mattru Jong visited radio stations in Bo, Makeni, and Kailahun, and the IRN trained 2 radio interns from Bombali in Freetown. The participants on the trip included CSO and Council representatives as well as broadcasters. From talking to some of the participants, the experience seems to have been valuable. In the case of Voice of Women, this exchange visit prompted them to set up their own editorial board, where they did not have one before.

Output 5: Increased citizen's awareness of the PRS and local government policies, roles and responsibilities

This is the ENCISS output under which most SFCG's activities fit most naturally. As well as local radio programmes and outreach, SFCG has found it easy to insert awareness-raising messages and debates around the PRS and decentralisation into its existing **national** radio programmes, and we feel that using its ENCISS grant to do this is fully justified. DACO representatives said they felt that TD covers areas of the PRSP very well in *Atunda Ayenda*. However, DECSEC felt there was less on the subject of decentralization in the soap opera, and wanted to hear more.

"TD's radio programmes really remind people about decentralisation and they help us meet the milestones of the whole process" - Councillor, Waterloo.

The following are some successful examples of awareness-raising that came to our notice.

- The relatively new 'Accountability Now' radio programmes - seem to be increasing citizen's awareness of council budgets and expenditure.

- The Independent Radio Network is supported by SFCG and, as part of its mission to bring impartial national news to listeners of local radio, IRN does work around decentralization,

specifically training journalists so they can better understand and report on decentralization issues.

"Talking Drum has explained the PRSP to us - now we know that it is about reducing poverty by working for ourselves." - Community member, Binkolo, near Makeni.

- Drama groups on Bonthe Island and Matru Jong have had basic training to enable them to understand the PRS and decentralization and the role of local government in, for example, taxation, and to

re-interpret and simplify this for the public - both in the form of radio plays and in live theatre. We heard that the drama group in Matru Jong has at times attracted a 1,000-strong crowd to its live performances.

- Videos produce by TDS and shown on national TV have helped to raise the public's awareness of progress made by various Councils on the progress on the PRSP. One of the videos captured development plans carried out in areas such as Kenema, Makeni, Freetown, Bonthe, Kono and Kailahun. The video showed a live discussion of the work of the national Budget Committee, commissioning of ferry by VP Berewa, testing of Bumbuna hydro-electric power-station and commissioning of water-well facilities in Eastern Freetown. All these fall under the implementation of the PRSP and help positive development stories become better known.

However, there are still great needs and expectations, for example:

- According to a very rough and ready poll we conducted, (we briefly interviewed 44 men and 45 women at random in small towns and villages on our itinerary around the country - see Annex I) far fewer women listened to Talking Drum programmes than men, even though they said they listened to the radio regularly. This implies that women have a need for programmes in formats and languages that are more attractive and accessible to them. It was also clear that the more remote and less educated people are, the less they can A. access a radio set at all or B. understand Krio. So, SFCG should consider how to attract rural and local-language speakers to their programmes.

- Civil Society in Matru Jong expressed the need for more training on PRSP and the decentralization process, in terms of how these processes affect their members.

- The drama group in Matru Jong was unable to broadcast their radio monthly, as planned, largely because they are unable to pay the radio station for the fuel necessary to broadcast their plays.

- The community members we met in Binkolo (23 men and 10 women) unanimously wanted *more* of everything from SFCG, including more frequent visits to their community and to surrounding villages, more live dramas, more women reporters, more radio programmes in Limba, more localized information on taxation, and more workshops on 'how to solve problems in their community'.

Recommendations from 'Section 2':

1. SFCG needs to pay more attention to strengthening Community Radio stations by way of sustained training of personnel, and financial support for running costs and equipment. There are great needs countrywide, but as an example, Voice of Women in Matru Jong has such a weak transmitter that it reaches only a 26 mile radius around the town; it has only intermittent power, due to lack of fuel and a faulty generator; it possesses no means of transport to gather news (reporters in rural chiefdoms have to deliver their cassettes to Matru Jong on foot); no means to edit audio materials; and no paid staff.

2. The task forces established by SFCG should establish more formalised and regular relationships with ENCISS on the ground, namely through the ENCISS Project Officers in Waterloo, Makeni and Bonthe. ENCISS should regard the prior work that SFCG has done in establishing a CS task force in the Western Area Rural as an asset to be built on, and should avoid setting up any alternative structures, when it comes to field work in this new district.

3. SFCG needs to pay attention to reaching more rural people and women, therefore more local language programmes need to be produced. Programmes in the Sherbro language are particularly important for the island of Bonthe and more in Limba is needed in Bombali. SFCG also probably needs to simplify the language of its 'Accountability Now' programmes, and needs to provide more explanation of financial terms for an uneducated audience.

4. SFCG needs to pay attention to their distribution mechanisms and to ensuring that cassettes of radio programmes produced in Freetown arrive at their destinations undamaged and on-time. Finding a reliable courier system to reach remote areas like Bonthe island is a problem.

5. The technical standard of radio productions made by members of task forces, e.g. 'Council Hour' and CSO, youth and women's programmes need improving - possibly by providing these groups with better equipment for outside recording.

6. The drama groups supported by SFCG in ENCISS areas need strengthening in terms of training, equipment (e.g. costumes), and bicycles for outreach. To increase their commitment a small stipend should be considered. In Bonthe, the suggestion that local comedians should be helped to re-interpret *Atunda Ayenda 'live'* and in local languages should be considered.

7. More exchange visits between Councils should be considered. These would be particularly valuable if they concentrated on a theme, for example on the relationship between them and the Chiefdom Councils.

8. CARE should arrange a re-orientation meeting and subsequent regular formal meetings between DACO/DECSEC, ENCISS and SFCG to improve the production of radio programmes relating to the PRSP and decentralisation. This would achieve four things:

- a greater feeling of ownership by DECSEC and DACO of the messages
- offer DECSEC/DACO the opportunity to clarify points of fact
- greater collaborative atmosphere and trust around other issues
- it can speed-up SFCG's activities on PRSP and decentralisation.

9. SCFG should be more engaged with the local level DECSEC coaches and PRSP focal persons on District Councils, in order for there to be a clear line of reporting up within DECSEC/DACO on SFCG's outreach and media activities.

3. Strategic Issues that Need Attention to Achieve Programme Purpose

One of the recommendations of the recent 2007 ENCISS Annual Review was that there needed to be a 'radical and rapid simplification of project design' within ENCISS. From our, admittedly limited, observations of the ENCISS programme as a whole, we would wholeheartedly endorse that recommendation. One of the elements that has complicated the ENCISS project so far has been too much overlap between what ENCISS is doing and what SFCG is doing. Thus, we find SFCG initiating meetings and task-forces with Civil Society, and we find ENCISS making videos and other communication products. This kind of overlap - indeed some would see it as a reversal of roles in some cases - is bound to create complications and bad-feelings.

There needs to be a clear demarcation between communication as PR (public relations) on the one hand, and communication as awareness-raising and voice, on the other. We suspect thus far that ENCISS and CARE have tended not to draw a line clearly enough, and have expected SFCG to act both as a means by which ENCISS will become better known, *and* a means by which to address ENCISS's core aims, namely to provide a conduit for better communication between government and civil society. We suspect that since the end of ENCISS's contract with the Media Consortium - which as we understand it was providing more of a PR role - the demands falling on SFCG have become even more weighted towards PR.

Recommendations from 'Section 3':

1. ENCISS and SFCG should clearly demarcate their respective roles with regard to the PR output of ENCISS. We suggest that ENCISS's Communications Adviser and his team should be responsible solely for PR matters, and that SFCG should take care of all public information that relates to awareness-raising and amplifying the voices of the poor. However, there may be occasions when SFCG, through its contacts, and by mutual agreement could help arrange PR, if necessary.

2. Where ENCISS feels that it is having to solve sensitive political issues - particularly re. its partners in the state sector - it should make more use of the fact that SFCG has a reputation for being an honest and neutral broker. This could help to divert the blame away from ENCISS, and could help ENCISS's purposes to be realised. For example, on the issue of difficult chieftom-council relations in sharing the tax revenue, SFCG could be used to voice demand from civil society in those affected areas, thereby justifying ENCISS's intervention on this strategic issue.

3. There should be a review of the ENCISS Communications Advisor's job description in order that he has more editorial oversight on SFCG's media products and is able to flag-up potentially sensitive media products before they are disseminated. This is particularly important for products like videos which will have a national airing on TV. Note: this should NOT become a censorship mechanism but rather one that is aimed at facilitating balanced, objective and well-informed media products that are disseminated in the correct order.

4. The ENCISS Communications Adviser should consider spending more time with SFCG both in Freetown and in the field. He should ensure that SFCG's activities are reported on in a structured manner so that ENCISS knows the broad outlines of what SFCG is doing at any one time.

4. Risks that Need to be Considered

We find that this is a relatively low-risk project, but we have highlighted some threats in a SWOT analysis in Annex D that need to be considered. Probably the highest risk, which would have a medium impact, is the danger of accusations of partisanship on the part of SFCG which would have a negative knock-on effect on ENCISS. This is a constant threat, but especially acute in election years, i.e. 2007 and 2008. We believe that SFCG is far from being politically naïve, but one of our recommendations (see above) is to ensure that potentially politically sensitive media materials are carefully disseminated, and with the full knowledge and participation of ENCISS in their creation.

5. How do the different SFGC activities fit together? Do they represent a feasible workload?

The focus of ENCISS on improving relationships between government and governed, is clearly a natural theme for SFCG whose vision is to *empower people to participate in building a tolerant and inclusive society for sustainable peace*. SFCG's strong reputation for being an honest broker and for giving voice to communities, as well as its national reach by way of the airwaves, and its accessible and entertaining formats are clearly a great asset for ENCISS.

SFCG's other work revolves around similar and overlapping topics, as follows:

- elections under the DFID-funded PIVOT project,
- youth and women in elections under funding from Irish Aid,
- human trafficking and border relations under USAID funding
- strengthening citizens' security with Conciliation Resources, with DFID funding
- strengthening democratic governance, particularly in Eastern districts, with USAID funding
- youth re-integration into the agricultural economy, with USAID funding.

"TD is perfect on communicating what ENCISS is doing, but ENCISS is wanting - we don't see them often enough." -
Community member, Binkolo.

We feel that all these activities fit into a logical whole, and they come over coherently to listeners and to community groups.

With studios and offices in Freetown, Bo and Makeni, Search is well-placed geographically to support ENCISS's target districts, and it has a specially appointed field worker in Matru Jong which is convenient for outreach in Bonthe. The workload seems manageable - and, indeed, feedback from community groups suggests that SFCG staff are consistently easy to contact, and are very much present for them on the ground. We received only two small complaints of SFCG's tardiness: one from Radio New Song in Bo, who complained they sometimes had to wait a month before SFCG paid them air-time in exchange for programmes; and another from the Council in Bonthe, who felt that SFCG was being slow in filming a promised follow-up video.

Everything that SFCG takes on is designed to fit under four priorities; namely Corruption, Quality Education, Good Governance and Women & Youth. As an organization it is sometimes asked to popularize messages on other topics, for example, on malaria for agencies like UNICEF, but it resists this, not wishing to dilute its core mission.

It may appear that time spent by SFCG on elections is impinging on time devoted to ENCISS. But, as local communities see it, the elections are part and parcel of all the governance issues that affect them. For example, the CS task force in Matru Jong are just as interested in monitoring the voter registration process as they are in monitoring tax revenue collected by the authorities, or following the roll-out of the PRSP, and they are using the local radio to raise public awareness on all these issues.

The national reach of SFCG should be seen as an advantage to ENCISS. It means that ENCISS's governance messages can be amplified and scaled up beyond its three focal areas to reach the whole country. This is done, for example, by taking segments of the localised *Wetin for Bi* programmes and slotting them into SFCG's national radio programmes such as *Atunda Ayenda*, *Common Ground News* and *Parliament Bol'At* and by means of SFCG working on other governance projects in other districts, such as in the East with MSI (USAID) project.

ANNEXES

D/ SWOT analysis

This table sets out our assessments of SFCG's attributes as they relate to ENCISS - (NB The table below does not relate to SFCG as an organisation, nor to any other of SFCG's programmes.)

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to respond to opportunities and partners' (including ENCISS's) needs at short notice • Highly trusted by most stakeholders and population at large • Highly popular radio programmes • Staff well-motivated and result oriented • High quality media products • SFCG can amplify ENCISS' programme beyond the 3 pilot districts to a national audience • Has a cooperative management style • Has good network of knowledgeable staff on the ground • Well established and respected from grassroots, right up to international level; therefore almost unassailable even when giving voice to controversial views. 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self assurance can sometimes be misunderstood and appear to be arrogance which can engender institutional jealousies • Sometimes perceived as not being an indigenous NGO • Working fast under time pressures produces some hasty productions which are not always cross-checked with key stakeholders • Limited use of local languages • Having difficulty reaching women and really poor and marginalised groups • Protective attitude towards own 'brand' can sometimes make SFCG appear inflexible • Having an ambiguous contractual arrangement with ENCISS and no overall project document or log-frame.
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structures and activities already exist around which SFCG can strengthen its relationship with ENCISS • CARE is willing to be more hands-on to help relationship-building • Expanding democratic climate = more local radio stations and greater willingness of communities to engage in local governance • Its wide portfolio of projects means SFCG can bring its experience in other geographic and thematic areas to bear on ENCISS programme • Potentially, ENCISS could be proactive in helping SFCG to solve local level governance conflicts at central level by bringing them to the attention of Freetown-based Ministries, Departments and Agencies. 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heightened sensitivities during election periods brings danger of accusations of SFCG being partisan → knock-on effect on ENCISS • If elections result in overwhelming victory for incumbent, ruling party could clamp-down on free speech • Donor fatigue and shifting donor priorities are a constant threat to any NGO, including SFCG. • Both ENCISS and SFCG have the potential to misunderstand each other's work if relations with key Ministries are not handled carefully.