Children & Youth Global Strategy for working with Children and Youth in Transforming Conflict

Search for Common Ground

2009
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface
I. Introduction
   Acknowledgement
   Mapping Search for Common Ground
   Accomplishments

II. Strategic Plan
   Mission, Vision, Guiding Principles
   Strategic Context
   Strategic Goals
   Core Initiatives
   Activities

III. Appendices
   Case Study
   Appendix A: Children and Youth Staff contact list: Membership, Structure & Leadership
This Strategic Plan sets out the vision, strategic goals and core initiatives that will guide the work of the Children and Youth Unit of Search for Common Ground (SFCG) over the next 3 years and provides a framework for the development of work with Children, Youth and Conflict across our field offices and programmes. This paper articulates Search for Common Ground’s strategy of working with children and youth, and how we hope to move forward. All the recommendations of this paper emerge from a review of SFCG’s existing programs with children and youth and result from consultations with young leaders and our partner organizations throughout the world. The aim of this framework is to provide some overarching goals and objectives to help guide our work with children and youth and set some achievable targets for our growth and development in this area. This document is designed to be a “living document”, the vision and priorities articulated can be updated or changed to reflect change in global, regional, country dynamics or country’s programme mandate. The document is intended to be used as a guide for all SFCG’s Children and Youth staff globally.

SFCG’s Children and Youth Unit’s goal is to transform the role of young people in conflicts so that they may have concrete alternatives to violence and can significantly contribute to building lasting peace. In order to do this, SFCG strives to ensure that children and youth are fully included – “mainstreamed” – in programs where their incorporation can be seen as crucial, bringing added value to program activities. This mainstreaming encompasses their participation in all aspects of the programs, planning/design, implementation, and post project.

Since the inception of the Children and Youth Unit in 2002 the Unit has successfully created a vibrant and dynamic community of practice around children, youth and conflict across programs and country activity in 16 countries that advances crosscutting program design and implementation, and program cross-fertilization.
Executive Vice President
Date:  
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Mapping Search for Common Ground’s Children and Youth Programmes
1. INTRODUCTION
Search for Common Ground (SFCG) is an international NGO that works to transform the way the world deals with conflict—away from adversarial approaches, toward cooperative solutions. Search for Common Ground (SFCG), is headquartered in Washington, DC, and employs approximately 350 staff members in nineteen countries: Angola, Burundi, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Guinea, Indonesia, Iran, Liberia, Macedonia, the Middle East (with offices in Jerusalem and Amman), Morocco, Nepal, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Ukraine, Belgium, and the USA. SFCG also runs four cross-cutting projects – Partners in Humanity (with the C-100 group of the World Economic Forum), which supports joint action projects between the Western and Muslim worlds; Radio for Peacebuilding (Africa), which promotes conflict resolution over the airwaves in 21 sub-Saharan African countries; Common Ground Productions, the media arm of SFCG which uses television, radio and internet to transform the way individuals deal with conflict; and finally, Child Soldiers Initiative (CSI) is working to build political will and also the technical capacity of military, human rights, and humanitarian organizations to work effectively together to stop the use of child soldiers. Thousands of people are directly involved in these programmes, and millions more are reached through SFCG’s media projects.

In 2008, SFCG, with a budget of $24m, delivered services to conflict-affected communities and people at risk of violence covering conflict resolution training, civic education, radio and TV production, capacity building, mediation and facilitation. SFCG is engaged in a long-term process of incremental transformation, pursued on a realistic scale and with practical means. It works with local partners to find culturally appropriate ways to strengthen indigenous capacity to deal with conflicts constructively. Each program seeks to engage multiple sectors of the society that it serves, including governments, armed
groups, demobilised combatants, rural populations and urbanites, youth and children, women’s groups and community organizations.

Search for Common Ground prefers a participatory approach that focuses on transforming the role of young people in conflicts so that they have concrete alternatives to violence and can significantly contribute to building peace. We work directly with children and youth who have been affected by or are involved in conflict to help them identify and carve out positive roles for themselves. SFCG has been working with children and youth since its inception and launched one of its first project specifically aimed at children and youth – the TV show *Nashe Maalo* – in Macedonia in 1999.

The principles that guide our efforts globally are:

1. **Self-Transformation** – Help youth manage the way conflict affects their life by creating space for them to contemplate or understand conflict. This helps facilitate a personal transformation and the internalization of the principles of conflict transformation. SFCG strategies take many forms, from pre-kindergarten education to dialogue and radio work. They combine approaches that focus on giving youth those tools and skills, and informing them about what affects them, supporting them to develop strategies to address those issues, and creating experiences to help their personal transformation.

2. **Voice** – Often youth want to reach across the divide but they do not have access. SFCG’s work focuses on enabling youth to find their voice or create platforms for young people’s voices to be heard, and through which they may contribute to the debates that are taking place in their society. In order for the youth voice to be effective, parallel strategies need to be used with adults to help them see the value in the creativity and energy that youth bring to the dialogue, and also help both groups build on the experience of adults. Strategies include radio, dialogues series, etc.
3. **Create 5-degree shifts** – SFCG’s experience has shown that the difference between youth getting involved in violent activities or peace-building work is small: both often involve the same skills (for example, leadership skills) that simply need to be redirected slightly, the so-called “5 degree shift”. SFCG’s programmes aim to create such small shifts, enabling youth to use their skills for positive engagement in their society.

4. **Work with “multiplier youth”** – SFCG focuses on children and youth with a strong influence on their peers; what we call “natural youth leaders” or “multiplier youths”. Young people organise themselves naturally and have their own youth leaders who influence the groups’ attitudes and behaviour. SFCG works with these leaders, as their transformation is likely to change the attitude and behaviour of many others.

5. **Work with and through existing youth organisations and structures** – In zones of conflict, young people create formal and non-formal groups to address their own development and protection needs. It is important to work with these structures as they are already formed, to empower them, and to help young people develop the skills to effectively participate in their communities and political systems.

6. **Replace the power of the gun** – SFCG acknowledges that children and youth gain political, social and economic power by owning a gun. Our programmes offer alternative sources of power (“my voice is more powerful than my gun”) by empowering children and youth through radio, leadership development programs, training and other educational activities that create true knowledge and enable young people to engage in their societies positively. These activities also enable young people to fully develop their potential by creating space for them to participate in the national dialogue, thereby transforming them from passive to active citizens.
7. *Create adult-youth partnerships* – Violent conflict often turns intergenerational relationships upside-down, sometimes even giving children and youth authority over adults. A return to peace which reinstates the old order can be perceived by young people as a loss of power and will therefore be resisted. SFCG’s approach to adult-youth engagement focuses not only on creating opportunities for young people but also bridging the generational gap between youth and elders. We try to achieve this by creating a platform for both groups to build a consensus on how they related to one another prior to war and what this relationship will be in the post-conflict arena.

8. *Policy* – Addressing the ways children and youth are dealt with by influencing policy at the local, national and international level, with the aim of creating a safe space for young people to inform policies that concern them and to facilitate the rights of young people as stated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Search for Common Ground is the Secretariat of the Child Soldiers Initiative which is supporting global dialogue and advocacy efforts to end the use of child soldiers by putting the spotlight on two key issues: 1) how the use of child soldiers is fuelling and spreading conflicts and instability; and 2) the need for more concerted and collaborative action by all key actors, from both the security and humanitarian sectors. A further example is the Washington Network on Children in Armed Conflict (WNCAC) forum, which facilitates dialogue between practitioners and policy-makers around issues of children and youth affected by conflict.
ACCOMPLISHMENTS

SFCG started working with children and youth in the 1980s, when it organised youth exchanges between the United States and the former Soviet Union in an attempt to overcome the ideological divide and build confidence between citizens from the two nations. In 1999, SFCG created its first children-focused TV show, *Nashe Maalo* (“Our Neighbourhood”), which continues to be broadcast in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia with immense success.

Today, SFCG’s Children and Youth Unit has 29 programmes in Angola, Burundi, Côte d’Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea, Liberia, Macedonia, the Middle East, Morocco, Nepal, Rwanda, Indonesia, Sierra Leone and Ukraine. Some examples of the successes of our work with children and youth include:

- **Sisi Watoto** (East Africa), a part of the Golden Kids Network, a consortium that includes children and youth’s radio and theatre programs in many parts of the world. The program focuses on sensitizing children and others on the risks and effects of armed conflict. By interviewing young people and other community members, youth reporters present solutions to the challenges of reintegrating ex-soldiers and displaced children. The program encourages child participation in community development and in the promotion of peace. Specifically, this project encourages boys and girls to find opportunities to demobilize. *Sisi Watoto* was given the Children’s Lives, Children’s Voices Award by UNICEF in 2004.

- **Golden Kids News** (Sierra Leone) – Since the end of the war, SFCG has produced and broadcast this popular children’s news program. On a twice-weekly show, young people cover the news on children’s rights, communicating to adult decision makers young people’s own viewpoints. Specifically, during the immediate aftermath of the war, the
show helped to facilitate the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-child soldiers. Youth reporters disseminated accurate information and discussed challenges with ex-soldiers, parents, and community members.

- **Golden Kids News** (Liberia) – *Golden Kids News* in Liberia was SFCG’s first children-produced radio program. The show was developed when a young leader approached the head of our programs in Monrovia and asked that children be given airtime. Through regular broadcasts, children discuss the issues that are affecting them with adult policy makers. A recent partnership with the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict enabled the youth reporters to cover a set of sensitive child protection issues.

- **Mozaik** (Macedonia) – SFCG Macedonia supports Macedonian educational institutions in bridging the gap caused by linguistic, cultural and ethnic segregation in schools and kindergartens. Mozaik is a unique model of multilingual and multicultural pre-schooling in public kindergartens. During its first phase of implementation, the project included six groups of Macedonian- and Albanian-speaking children ages 3-7. More recently SCGM has reduced the number of groups but increased the diversity of participants by expanding the model to Serbian- and Turkish-speaking children. Using a similar programming format, SFCG Lebanon recently introduced “Kilne bil hay” an equivalent of Nashe Maalo in Macedonia. Kilne bil hay is a children’s TV program that instills a culture of listening and problem-solving in young people. The programme is created to promote intercultural understanding and to encourage conflict prevention in a multicultural society.

- **The Inter-University Forum** – SFCG provides technical and financial support to the Great Lakes Inter-University Forum comprised of University youths from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi and Rwanda. In addition to providing technical support to this initiative, SFCG supports the publication of a newsletter, which has highlighted youth views, issues, and activism in the region.
• **Nepal** – is a multi-pronged initiative that facilitates the participation of youth and children in the peace process. This includes the production of a radio soap opera, community-based youth leadership dialogues and cooperative actions, communications for the return and reintegration of former soldiers (CAAFAG) to civilian society. The program encourages young men and women to develop activities that protect their rights and promote peace in their own communities.

• **Angola** – SFCG produces specific youth engagement programs around the rights and responsibilities of political youth (*Junior UNITA* and *Junior MPLA*). SFCG also produces a similar show known as *Baza Madie* (“Let’s Go”). This program is produced by a group of male and female adolescent journalists to discuss the major issues that teenagers are facing in the post-conflict environment of Angola. Young journalists discuss a wide range of topics, including HIV/AIDS prevention, political participation, gang violence reduction, and reconciliation among other issues. Programs are broadcasted throughout Angola.
2. **Strategic Plan**

In 2007, SFCG identified its work with children and youth as one of the 3 strategic priorities of the organization. To give further momentum to this commitment, SFCG decided to host a “Children and Youth Week” for all its Children and Youth staff in January 2008. At the conference, the desire for a strong and inspiring platform to facilitate continued and innovative growth of SFCG’s Children and Youth work around the world was articulated. This strategic plan was produced in response to this desire.

**Mission**

To support the development of a vibrant community of practice and to promote, assist and co-ordinate collaboration among Children and Youth workers with the aim to transform the role of young people in conflict so that they have concrete alternatives to violence and contribute significantly to building lasting peace in their societies.

**Guiding Principles**

Based on our 26 years experience SFCG is keenly aware of how fundamental young people are to the resolution of societal conflicts and thus the need for them to be engaged not only as important stakeholders, but also as equal partners and agents of change. Decades-long experience of working with children and youth across Africa, Asia, Europe and North America has led SFCG to identify a number of underlying principles which guide our work in this area:

- *The wellbeing of children and youth is intricately linked to the stability of the state.* In conflict zones, there is a relationship between the overall well-being and protection of children and the ability of a state to prevent or emerge from conflict. The long-term interest in peace ultimately depends on the state’s ability to protect children and youth from the destructive environment around them. The structures in society that are designed to protect children –
including family, schools, peer networks, legal systems – all contribute to social and political cohesion. Children should be put at the centre of political transitions.

- **Children and youth have a tremendous amount of influence on how today’s conflicts unfold.** Children and young people are too often seen merely as their country’s future, a notion that fails to grasp the contribution they can make—and want to make—in addressing “today’s” issues. Young people are often instrumental in political and social changes in their societies.

- **Children and youth have innate abilities** which have been manipulated by politicians and warlords to instil fear and cause destruction. Many young people who participate in violence and armed conflict can acquire positions of authority, giving them a great deal of influence over their peers. Often they rise to these positions because of certain characteristics, including clear thinking, leadership and strong decision-making abilities. When they are told to relinquish these positions, however, their leadership skills are effectively lost, rather than used to affect positive change, and their potential contributions are nullified. Young people’s abilities should always be valued.

- **Young people are well positioned and capable of addressing many of the issues that affect them.** Their voices, however, often tend to be ignored in the context of interventions that focus exclusively on the protection of their rights. Exclusion of this large segment of the population is an obstacle for democratization and reconciliation. SFCG works directly with youth organizations that were created by young people to address their own developmental needs.

- **The protection of children from particular vulnerabilities such as recruitment into armed groups or sexual violence is central to their well-being.** Although SFCG’s programmes focus on promoting children and youth
participation, they are always predicated on the protection of children’s rights and the provision of all necessary guarantees over their well-being.

**Strategic Context: The Global Policy Framework**

SFCG recognizes the significance of youth involvement in sustained peace worldwide. Youth are a strategically important group because of the role they play as actors in a country’s transition to peace (or in conflict). Many youth seek to shape their roles in conflicts, responding in positive ways by forming organizations and student groups aimed at providing support, building bridges of cooperation and protecting their peers. In zones of conflict throughout the world, young people have been organizing in order to insert themselves into civil society and promote peace processes.

Young people are deeply involved in modern-day warfare and civil conflict; not only are they directly victimized by violence, but they play major roles in political and social events. The displacement of populations and the destruction of communities and families have adverse effects on young people’s lives. Children and youth lose their educational opportunities, run households, and struggle with physical and psychological trauma. The disruption of their traditional support structures leaves them with little prospect of healthy development.¹ Young women and girls are often targeted by sexual violence, leading to increased HIV/AIDS rates and early pregnancies. Adult, political, and military leaders often seek to exploit these vulnerabilities to pull young people into violence or into the sex industry.

Wars are often fought by youth and children as they are used to provide popular support to armed actors throughout the world. They are recruited to be combatants and instilled with the values of hate and the mechanics of violence. The Coalition

to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers estimates that there are at least 300,000 children serving as soldiers in active conflicts worldwide.²

Although largely disconnected from the international work that is being done on their behalf, many young people are at the forefront of addressing their educational, economic and social needs. While some have been able to form NGOs, others work in loose associations with no formal organizational structure and lack support from international actors.

STRATEGIC GOALS AND CORE INITIATIVES

Children and Youth Unit will support colleagues within Search for Common Ground in developing our approach to engaging with children and youth. Search for Common Ground will pursue six core initiatives over the next 3 years to achieve its strategic goals of strengthening institutional coordination in the field of children, youth and conflict by improving the effectiveness of delivery and enhancing impact and improving how we measure the impact of what we do.

1. Integrate a Children and Youth Perspective Across All of Our Work

   **Strategy**
   We will commit to nurturing and supporting a global community of practice through learning from each other’s experience and by documenting lessons learned and supporting a network of committed individuals working on children and youth issues across Search.

   **Core Initiatives**
Create a Community of Practice

Activities
i. Create and maintain a list of contacts for Children and Youth workers in SFCG email list (ongoing)
ii. Create and maintain an easy-access database that stores information on how to do children and youth work (April 2009)
iii. Create and facilitate learning activities and cross-fertilization that encourages Children and Youth staff to travel to other countries and regions to train peers and study how other countries or regions do their children and youth work (2 inter-programme learning visits per year; one exchange of C&Y colleague each year)
iv. Organize a Children and Youth bi-monthly telephone call with key Children and Youth specialists across SFCG where staff will report their activities and seek assistance when needed (ongoing)
v. Facilitate a Children and Youth conference in alternating years, which brings together all Children and Youth staff to share experiences, train, share new resources and lessons learned, and to build relationships with each other (Next gathering February 2010)
vi. Produce and distribute a newsletter on children and youth issues to all programmes in Search (bi-monthly)
vii. Identify latest developments in research and practice and share these with the field (ongoing)
viii. Circulate information on courses/conferences that might be of interest to Children and Youth staff in the field (ongoing)

Produce and Publish a Toolkit a Children and Youth on Project and Programme Design
As an accompaniment to creating a community of practice and supporting a global community of practice we will in consultation with country directors, field staff and other children and youth specialists produce and publish a toolkit on integrating children and youth. The toolkit will provide concrete information on how to design, implement, monitor and evaluate youth programmes. A hard copy of the document will be maintained, as well as a living document which will be continuously updated with new information.
Activities

i. Liaise with Country Directors, the Director of Institutional Learning and other Specialists to produce a toolkit that reflects the challenges to mainstreaming children and youth work into projects and programmes. (September 2008)

ii. Publish a toolkit (April 2009)

iii. Widely disseminate toolkit to colleagues within SFCG and other leading organizations globally (May 2009)

iv. Coordinate joint toolkit training sessions for SFCG’s C&Y staff (September 2009)

v. Coordinate joint toolkit training sessions for youth and emerging leaders (September 2009)

vi. Constantly update toolkit with new information from the field and other instances (ongoing)

vii. Produce new companion volume of the toolkit focused on specific themes e.g. “How to develop youth radio programming” (ongoing)

2. Strengthen Existing Programmes

   Strategy
   We will strive to work at the cross-cutting edge of innovative programmes that are context-specific and respond to the needs of young people in conflict settings. We will encourage and support country offices through mini-grants, solicitation and development of proposals for more funding that can be used to improve and strengthen existing programmes.

   We will aim to enhance our collaboration with development and protection agencies by developing programmes that are consistent with the Millennium Development Goals. In post-conflict settings where unemployment and other livelihoods issues are rampant among young people, we will work to ensure that the economic and livelihood needs of
young people are addressed through our programmes. We will work with young entrepreneurs, ‘innovators’ who have succeeded in creating small businesses, by focusing on their successes as models and linking them with other youth as mentors.

**Core Initiative**

**Strengthen Existing Programmes**

**Activities**

i. Through leadership trainings, empower youth to engage in good decision-making (ongoing)

ii. Partner with development agencies to develop community-driven projects alongside urban youth living in poverty (ongoing)

iii. Through radio and soap operas, support policies that seek to increase youth enrolment in primary and secondary education and the delivery of primary and secondary education free of charge (ongoing)

iv. Work with all actors within our programmes to coordinate and enhance the capacities of Children and Youth staff to deliver effective programs that will improve the lives of young people (ongoing)

v. Develop the capacity of SFCG’s Children and Youth workers to respond to the economic dimension of youth issues (sustainable livelihoods) by encouraging them to attend livelihood seminars and to study methods used by development organizations (ongoing)

vi. Increase the skills to monitor and evaluate Children and Youth projects/programmes across all programmes in order to strengthen the evidence for success (ongoing)

vii. Develop and disseminate case studies that capture programmatic challenges, good practices and lessons learned that can be used as examples for ensuring good programming methodology (ongoing)

viii. Assist in developing the capacity of each country office to produce toolkits and other Children and Youth resources (ongoing)
ix. Work with the children and youth programmes to provide more programme evaluations on Children and Youth projects using interns (ongoing)

x. Increase the capacity of Children and Youth staff by providing opportunities to enhance their knowledge of children and youth work through academic courses at institutions of higher learning (ongoing)

xi. In collaboration with Leadership Wisdom Initiative LWI, facilitate a series of “Training the Trainer” workshops and provide follow-up trainings and implementation support and facilitate regional capacity-building workshops for Children and Youth staff (2008-09)

xii. Work with colleagues to enhance their knowledge of children and youth affairs, to encourage them to involve young people in their programme designs, and help them to deliver effective programmes that improve the lives of young people (ongoing)

xiii. Develop case studies that highlight programmatic responses to children and youth issues (ongoing)

3. **Expand & Replicate Successful Programmes**

   **Strategy**
   We will take stock of our existing programmes and practices by examining the results of our work and lessons learned, and making necessary changes that will have a positive effect on more young people. We will also share good practice and methodology of successful existing programmes from one region or country and export them to other regions or countries while taking cognizance of the social, cultural, economic, religious and political factors.

   **Core Initiative**

   **Programme Expansion and Consolidation**

   **Activities**
   1. Expand children’s soap opera programmes and airtime to address livelihood issues (ongoing)
ii. In collaboration with Child Soldiers Initiative (CSI) colleagues, we will support CSI to conduct the field research needed to develop and trial a Field Guide that will guide the actions of key actors, humanitarian and uniformed actors alike, when addressing the issue of child soldiers in a conflict zone. (2009)

iii. We will share good practice and methodology with other countries together with successful programmes such as Golden Kids, Nashe Maalo and other successful radio programmes and soap operas. (ongoing)

iv. We will work to increase our Children and Youth design, monitoring and evaluation (DM&E) capacities and documentation by working with the DM&E specialists in our Institutional Learning Team to provide trainings to staff (2009)

4. Develop New Programmes

   **Strategy**
   Conflict settings are fragile and ever-changing. We will develop new programmes or will adapt old programmes to address changes and new issues facing young people. Capitalizing on our vast experience in programme design and implementation, we will aim to design holistic programmes that deal with the different challenges faced by young people in conflict settings. Our unique relationship with colleges and institutes of higher learning will be used to provide opportunities for staff to take courses and trainings that will enhance their knowledge and increase their capacity to deal with the challenges of conflicts.
Core Initiative
New Programme Development
Activities

i. Build partnerships with development agencies to design programs that target the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (ongoing)

ii. Build more partnerships with child protection agencies to help enrich our programmes and to provide a more holistic approach to our overall Children and Youth programming (ongoing)

iii. Develop programmes that will mobilize young people to get engaged and foster a partnership that will address issues like gender and female circumcision (ongoing)

iv. Partner with institutes of higher education to train Children and Youth staff in peace-building education (ongoing)

v. Children and Youth Unit in collaboration with leadership Wisdom Initiative (LWI) will conduct training for trainers in selected countries. Trained Children and Youth staff will travel to other regions to train their peers. At the end of these trainings, the Unit in concert with the Country Directors, core group and Children and Youth staff will develop training tools that can be used globally by youth organizations (ongoing)
5. **Shaping Policy Development & Implementation on children and youth in conflict transformation**

   **Strategy**
   The Children and Youth Unit is in a unique position to facilitate coordination and leverage expertise in shaping global policies on children and youth by creating networks of young people and institutions that promote initiatives around integration of youth in the global development agenda. With key initiatives such as the Washington Network on Children and Armed Conflict and the Inter-Agency Network on Evaluating Youth Programmes in Areas of Conflict, we will build bridges with policymakers and help provide them with new research information and discussions from meetings. In collaboration with key partners, such as the Federation of Liberian Youth (FLY) and Bike Rider Associations (BRA) etc we will work to influence policies concerning children and youth in fragile settings.

   **Core Initiative**

6. **Shaping Policy Development & Implementation on children and youth in conflict transformation**

   **Activities**
   - i. We will continue to seek new partners and increase membership for The Washington Network on Children and Armed Conflict (WNCAC) and The Inter-Agency Network on Evaluating Youth Programmes in Areas Affected by Armed Conflict (EYPAC) (ongoing)
   - ii. We will target policymakers and other actors such as embassy staff to attend and participate in the WNCAC and EYPAC meetings. Where appropriate we will provide concerned country representatives with copies of presentations and recommendations from meetings (ongoing)
   - iii. We will replicate WNCAC in Brussels. Target group here will be representatives from EU, EC and Embassies and other actors (ongoing)
iv. We will encourage field programmes to participate in WNCAC & EYPAC conferences through web conferencing (ongoing)

v. We will encourage field office replicate WNCAC & EYPAC formats to create a forum where all INGO can congregate to share information and lessons learned (ongoing)

vi. We will create opportunities for children and youth programmes such as Golden Kids, Jujay and Sisi, Watoto and Mozaik to address youth policies and recommendation in their programming (ongoing)

vii. We will create safe space and forum for discussions and communication between youth leaders and policymakers and other relevant actors to discuss issues concerning children and youth (ongoing)

7. Fund Raising

Fundraising Strategy

Financial stability and expansion are critical to the maintenance of existing programmes and to the development of new programmes. By building partnerships with development and protection agencies, new funding opportunities open up as the Unit can then tap into funding that is designated to those types of agencies. Subsequently, the Unit will increase its Children and Youth sub-grants to country programmes.

Core Initiative Fundraising Activities

i. Develop a funding strategy for the Children and Youth that identifies a range of opportunities to expand the Unit’s activities across the organization

ii. Identify organizations to approach in order to raise further funding that will support efforts to increase children and youth participation in transforming conflict (ongoing)
iii. Partner with Private Sector Giving to raise funds by developing campaigns and by bringing Children and Youth workers from the field to speak at fundraising events (ongoing)

iv. Improve the process for supporting programmes using the Children and Youth sub-grants (2009)

v. Create “Best of Children and Youth” DVD to be used at fund raising events (May 2009)

vi. Seek donors that can only sponsor specific Children and Youth projects (ongoing)

vii. Improve the process for supporting programmes using the Children and Youth sub-grants, including a more strategic approach based on larger grants to achieve greater impact/leverage (ongoing)

viii. Increase sub-grants to country programmes (ongoing)

ix. Create more Children and Youth leaflets and posters that can be distributed at fundraising events (May 2009)

x. Support the development of proposals that focus on Children and Youth by providing input as required (ongoing)
CASE STUDY
WEST AFRICAN REGIONAL STRATEGY

The case study below is an example of a regional or country children and youth strategy. We encourage all programmes to develop their own children and youth strategy using their specific context as the basis for developing their strategies. Remember to link to your programme strategy to the global youth strategy.

West Africa is currently grappling with a crisis among its youth, brought on by years of war, unemployment and marginalisation. Over the past two decades, youth have been at the core of armed conflicts in Cote d’Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, both as victims and as perpetrators. In each instance, national conflicts took on regional components, with combatants from neighbouring countries being recruited across porous borders to fight alongside indigenous fighters. Commanders and warlords recruited these combatants both domestically and regionally, attracting them with assurances of payment and the chance to loot with abandon. Following the wars, they returned to their homes, where poor socio-economic conditions led to feelings of hopelessness. Unable to support themselves, let alone their families, these regional warriors\(^1\) were re-recruited into neighbouring conflicts, continuing the vicious cycle.

Ex-combatants are just one group of youth in West Africa particularly affected by the current crisis. Though their experience may be different, the socio-economic reality of these regional warriors “is tragically mirrored by millions of others in West Africa... (including the victims they left behind), who, as aptly noted in the report of Sierra Leone’s Truth and Reconciliation
Commission ‘languish in a twilight zone of unemployment and despair.’

The continued difficulties in Cote d’Ivoire and questions of Guinea’s future post-Conte, coupled with development indices in these four countries stagnating at some of the lowest levels in the world, make the environment in the sub-region ripe for youth manipulation and marginalisation, including recruitment into armed combat. In order to consolidate peace in the sub-region, the youth in West Africa, both victims and perpetrators, must fully be included in their countries’ decision-making processes, as well as empowered to engage in the sub-region’s combined development.

Building and expanding on four years of experience encouraging and facilitating just such inclusion in Sierra Leone, Search for Common Ground in West Africa’s youth strategy seeks to identify opportunities where youth can have a positive influence on political and social events as they unfold within the sub-region. With offices in Cote d’Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, the seat of its operational base, SFCG targets three main groups: young people who are out of school and seeking livelihoods; youth leaders who are already part of organised efforts to address issues affecting young people; and elders and decision makers who have a big influence on young people, including district council members, educators and paramount chiefs. The overall goal of SFCG’s youth strategy is to facilitate the inclusion and participation of young women and men in consolidating the peace and developing the sub-region. In support of this goal, SFCG’s activities are aimed toward three main objectives:

1) Depolarise the interactions and debate among young people
2) Foster inter-generational dialogue; and
3) Empower youth to engage in good decision-making.

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4 In West Africa, the term ‘youth’ is defined not only by age, but also by life stage and an individual’s relationship to his/her work. Once gainfully employed, young people are no longer considered youth.
Depolarise the interactions and debate among young people

Beyond radio, SFCG will work with youth to help them identify common interests and strategies on how they can best work together. Drawing on its experiences in Sierra Leone, SFCG will create platforms for youth groups to dialogue with one another on issues that affect them. SFCG will form coalitions and networks, bringing together youth groups with different political affiliations and creating access points for those organizations that are marginalized. These activities will have the following results:

- Relationships will be formed between those groups that are linked into the power structures and those that are currently left out;
- Youth groups will increasingly work together and gain independence from the political parties so that they can all advance their own agendas;
- Youth groups will see how political manipulation has evolved in the post-conflict environment and will have the ability and perspective to avoid it.

Foster intergenerational dialogue

SFCG will bring together youth leaders and elder decision makers to focus on key issues both on the radio and in community activities. SFCG will pair local youth groups with community-level councils and community-based organizations in forums and dialogues aimed at encouraging youth groups to get more active within the communities. These activities will achieve several results:

- Youth will have an increased sense of inclusion;
- Elders, who often speak about including youth, will have a platform to do so, involving youth in non-political ways;
Youth and elders will understand each other’s perspectives;
Channels of communication will be opened or expanded between youth and elders within the communities; and
Youth will be able to manage their expectations more effectively, understanding the benefits that they are entitled to, as well as the limitations of the local decision-makers.

Media work

In support of Objectives 1 and 2, SFCG will work through its media arm, Talking Drum Studio5, to create a platform for young peoples’ voices on the radio. TDS will expand its existing news and soap opera programmes and dedicate even more airtime to addressing youth issues. In Sierra Leone and Liberia, SFCG/TDS will include a youth version of its popular Golden Kids News and encourage community radios to do more youth programming. Building on proven impact in Sierra Leone (see text box6) and Liberia, SFCG will develop similar youth programming in Cote d’Ivoire and Guinea. In order to foster dialogue and promote inclusion, SFCG will present case studies of successful instances of conflict resolution both among youth and between youth and decision-makers on the radio.

Empower youth to engage in good decision-making

SFCG will work with young entrepreneurs, ‘innovators’, who have succeeded in creating small businesses, focusing on their successes as models and linking them with other youth as mentors. SFCG will work to strengthen existing youth groups

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5 SFCG in West Africa currently produces radio programming in eight Talking Drum Studios: Cote d’Ivoire – Abidjan and Daloa; Guinea – Conakry; Liberia – Monrovia and Gbarnga; and Sierra Leone – Freetown, Bo and Makeni.
through organizational development, promoting good leadership and management, systems, and consensus building. SFCG will select the target groups based on their ability to address the major issues facing youth within their communities and to reach across political lines. As a result,

- Young people will develop soft skills that will help them find employment and make active, independent decisions that help them to avoid being manipulated by their elders;
- Key youth groups will become more successful in developing and implementing activities and managing their resources;
- Other youth groups will learn about what it takes to be successful; and
- Youth groups will gain the skills and relationships to address key issues that are affecting them and their communities.

In Sierra Leone, the elections in 2007 provided a clear opportunity for youth to participate in the political process, serving as an entry-point for their inclusion in the country’s decision-making. In Liberia, the new government and its promises to work towards sustainable peace offers youth citizens a real opportunity to engage in their country’s development. The liberalisation of the airwaves in Guinea provides SFCG/TDS with the opportunity to strengthen its media work in the country, while recent youth uprisings in Cote d’Ivoire serve as grave reminders of the continuing manipulation of youth in violent conflict situations in the sub-region. As it has done since 1997, SFCG/TDS’ radio programming will continue to provide a platform for young people’s voices, while its outreach work will continue to engage youth and youth groups, further promoting their inclusion in the consolidation of peace and development within the sub-region.
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