Our Core Principles

Search for Common Ground (SFCG) is an international non-governmental organization that has been working in the field of conflict transformation and peacebuilding since 1982. SFCG currently works in more than 20 countries across five continents.

Common ground is not the same as compromise. Finding common ground does not mean settling for the lowest common denominator. It means finding a higher denominator; ultimately, discovering shared humanity.

Conflict can be transformed. Beyond helping to resolve specific disputes, our goal is to shift the way people, communities, and societies view one another and deal with their differences so that they resolve their problems in a cooperative manner.

Peace is a process. Peace is not an event. The most effective way to make and build peace is to commit to a long-term process and find solutions that maximize the gain of all involved.

Humankind is interdependent. The world is increasingly becoming interdependent and vulnerable. Security increases as people and nations feel more secure.

Our Toolbox

We use a wide range of tools and methods to bring people together from across dividing lines so that we can work cooperatively. Our toolbox includes media - radio, television, films and magazines; mediation and facilitation; training and coaching; work with community organisations; sports; drama; and music.
SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND IN NEPAL

SFCG has been working in Nepal since 2006 with the overall objective to support the peace process. Using the common ground approach with youth, civil society organisations, media, and other key stakeholders, SFCG works with local partners to:

• Increase local ownership and participation through youth, civil society organisations, and media at local and national levels;
• Strengthen inter-communal relations across ethnic, caste, geographical, and political lines; and
• Promote reconciliation to reweave the fabric of society that has been torn apart by war.

“WE DECIDED TO ORGANISE A PEACE MARCH ON 26TH JANUARY. 2009. THE PARTICIPATION WAS SURPRISINGLY OVERWHELMING; ELDERLY PEOPLE WERE EXCITED, THEY CAME FORWARD IN NUMBERS. THERE WERE ALREADY MORE THAN 400 PEOPLE, WHICH INCLUDED MADHESHI, PARADES, MUSLIMS AND MANY OTHER MINORITY GROUPS, WOMEN AND CHILDREN TOO. WE DECIDED TO USE THE PEACE SONG IN THE BACKGROUND, IT REMINDED US THAT WE DON’T HAVE TO STUDY PEACE, WE HAVE TO LEARN TO SURVIVE PEACEFULLY. I FELT THE TIME AND SPACE INVOLVED TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN YOUTH AND ADULT HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL.”

Chairperson of youth club in Ghaghapura VDC, participant in SFCG Youth Program.

PROGRAMMES

SFCG Nepal’s approach is to combine media and communication campaigns with community peacebuilding. The media programs, which have nationwide reach, thus reinforce the work of peacebuilders at the local level. Community peacebuilding programmes focus on sixteen districts including Baglung, Salyan, Rolpa, Rukum, Jumla, Bardia, Kalikot, Doli, Achham, Barjara, Surkhet, Sankhuwasabha, Siraha, Saptari, Dhanusha and Mahottari.

“THE PROTOCOL”

Using methodologies which have been tried and tested in conflict zones throughout the world, SFCG uses media programs to encourage solution-oriented dialogue, cooperative problem solving, and foster new models of participation and leadership. In partnership with Antenna Foundation Nepal, New World, Far Western Media Development Centre and FM stations across the country, we support the production of original radio dramas, talkshows, magazine programs and television drama.

Our programs include: Naya Baato, Naya Paila (New Path, New Footprint), a radio soap opera broadcast nationally about the role of youth in peacebuilding; Samaj Mandi (let’s listen, let’s talk), a program produced by children from diverse backgrounds and designed to give children a voice; APEF - (Wider Earth), a franchised radio talk show between both regional and local versions, which aims to strengthen inter-communal cooperation and dialogue on issues of concern to people in marginalised communities; FMAC, various FM stations; Sangor, an innovative weekly radio drama in Maithili (NW); and Sajhedari, a radio magazine focusing on improving relations between local government and citizens (NW, NCIP) 2010 will also see the launch of a TV drama “The Room”, part of 10 country initiative that uses football to promote good governance, cooperation and inclusive leadership.

“WE ARE SURPRISED TO KNOW THAT WE CAN DISCUSS AND DECIDE TOGETHER WITH ADULTS. LATER WHEN I RETURN TO MY VILLAGE, I WILL TALK TO THEM; TODAY I HAVE REALIZED THAT TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.”

A 19 year old female participant of SFCG Youth Program

PEACE SONG

“No on my heart, I write New Nepal”

- lyrics from Ma Timmo Aankhama peace song

In the year leading up to the 2008 democratization elections, Nepal’s peace process hung in the balance. Ethnic, political, and communal clashes were common as agitating organisations took advantage of the power vacuum to increase their position at the table.

Four months before the elections, SFCG and partners worked with renowned Nepali folk music band Kutumba to create a peace song. Ex-combatants from both sides of the conflict, current leaders of political and agitating organisations, peacekeepers, and the famous poet and lyricist Viplob Pratik were invited to participate in a dialogue process to discuss what needed to happen for Nepal to come to peace.

As the dialogue process took place hostilities between the various groups dissolved, and the workshop resulted in two songs that wove the musical traditions of the various ethnic groups of Nepal together into a unified call for peace. Two weeks after the elections, the songs were performed to a packed house in Kathmandu and broadcast on national radio and TV.

Listen to the songs here: http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/Nepal/nepal_comm_campaing.html