At the end of 2009, SFCG received a grant from the World Bank’s State and Peace-Building Fund to implement a 24-month project entitled *Strengthening communication and transparency for governance reform in Côte d’Ivoire*. The project has the overall goal of *strengthening communication and transparency in priority areas of governance reform in Côte d’Ivoire*.

Following widespread violence in the wake of the 2010 presidential elections, the project was extended until April 2013 and re-oriented towards greater promotion of social cohesion and reconciliation, with the objective of *building the capacity of government, media and civil society organizations (CSOs), to communicate better particularly in matters relating to the government’s economic recovery and reform program*.

The beneficiaries included government officials and multi-stakeholder groups such as media professionals, CSOs, private sectors associations and local authorities. The project aimed to achieve the following outcomes:

- Strengthen effective and sustainable networks of institutions that are able to monitor and advocate for better governance;
- Lobby and encourage the government to implement a strategic communication program to garner greater support for and understanding of economic reforms.
- Strengthen institutional capacity of CSOs to increase the use of relevant instruments and approaches on specific mechanisms of social accountability and economic governance.
- Increase information sharing and awareness building on governance reforms over the radio waves.

As the project came to an end after 36 months of implementation, SFCG called on an Ivorian external firm to conduct the final evaluation. *Using a mixed-methods approach (desk review, focus groups, interviews, field visits, and surveys with 288 interviewees), it focused on the project’s relevance, efficiency and impact.*

**VERY GOOD REACH OF TARGET POPULATION THANKS TO THE « SYNERGY » RADIO SHOW**

For the radio programming, the evaluation highlighted a very good listenership rate amongst the population from the 8 project target zones. *Thanks to the active implication of one community radio per zone, SFCG was able to have a large reach: 61% of interviewees said they knew the “Synergy and Governance” radio show produced in the framework of this project. 82% of those knowing the show had listened to it at least once over the course of the last week, while half of them had listened to the entire show.*

In addition to these positive results, the evaluation brings out two ways for improvement: first, the participation rate, via SMS or phone feedback, was very low, with only 4.5% of listeners having ever having done so. Second, while SFCG collaborated with its long-term community radio partners, the evaluators underscored that other radios could have proved to be even more relevant partners in the framework of this project, based on their audience rate and structural strengths.

Globally speaking, the radio show was a success and was a relevant way to reaching the project’s objectives, as 57% of listeners stated that they have had discussions over the show topics, either with friends or with their family. *67.8% stated that thanks to the “Synergy and Governance” show, they felt more involved in the management of their local administration.*

**SFCG’S PROGRAMATIC FLEXIBILITY WAS KEY TO THE PROJECT’S SUCCESS**

SFCG proved to be extremely responsive to a very evolving and volatile context: *over the course of the project, SFCG faced the post-election violent crisis, a change of government and Ministers, the looting of its Abidjan...*
Office, a change of country director and of the World Bank focal point. Still, SFCG successfully adapted the initial project and objectives to the evolving context and new stakeholders. The evaluation points out that by stimulating an on-going dialogue with the project’s partners and beneficiaries, SFCG was able to design new activities and orientations that were relevant and well adapted to the beneficiaries’ new needs and expectations. This flexibility and spirit of innovation and questioning was a real asset for the program. Evaluators note that in future similar situations, SFCG would benefit from formally redesigning the program over the course of one or more re-design workshops, instead of adapting the program piecemeal.

AIMING TO REACH AUTORITIES AND MINISTRIES WAS A TOO AMBITIOUS OBJECTIVE

The project had three main targets: the general population (via the radio show, see above), the CSOs and the high-ranking government officials from the Ministry of Finance. Activities held with CSOs were very effective and efficient: 100% of interviewed CSO members state that the various activities were relevant and helped strengthen their capacities and raise their awareness of the importance of monitoring and communicating around state reforms (98%). CSOs were really eager to benefit from SFCG’s support and therefore all planned activities took place. However, working with government officials proved to be much more difficult, and SFCG was unable to carry the activities that had been initially planned, such as the design and implementation of a Ministry of Finance communications strategy for reforms-related topics. According to the evaluation, the reason state institutions and officials lacked involvement and political will to undergo such a project is because they considered this initiative as being exclusively a state responsibility, for which international NGOs such as SFCG should not have a leading role. Evaluators highlight that giving this activity responsibility to a state institution - with support from SFCG, as opposed to the other way around - would have showed much better results to reach this target group.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following is a short-list of key recommendations and lessons learned for further similar programs:

- Conduct a comprehensive listenership survey and use its results to select the future programs’ partner radios;
- Set up official partnerships with the appropriate state institution when willing to conduct activities aiming at high ranking government officials, such as Ministers, Chief of Staff, etc.;
- To the donor: provide the necessary funds to conduct context researches to update the data whenever dramatic context changes occur with serious impact on a project, and consequently allow in-depth project re-design according to the research results;
- Ensure that the training’s topics and facilitation be adapted to each different target groups of the project;
- Provide financial support to the CSOs in order for them to become active partners in the program by implementing their own awareness-raising activities and organizing trainings themselves.

Source: This document is a summary of and taken directly from “Strengthening communication and transparency for governance reform in Cote d’Ivoire: Final Evaluation Report”. A copy can be acquired at http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/ilt/dme_evaluations.html or by contacting Vanessa Corlazzoli, Design, Monitoring and Evaluation Manager at Search for Common Ground: vcorlazzoli@sfcg.org

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