March 2012 marked the culmination of the 24-month project implemented by Search for Common Ground (SFCG) entitled *Trading for Peace in the Great Lakes*. The “Trading for Peace” initiative by USAID, DFID, and COMESA supported the project, which was designed in consultation with COMESA with the aim of bringing innovative conflict resolution tools to complement their mission in the region. The regional project *Trading for Peace in the Great Lakes* was coordinated by the SFCG Kigali office in Rwanda. The overall goal was for *trade routes between Burundi, DRC and Rwanda to be more secure for regional economic activities*.

The project’s two main objectives were the following:

- Strengthen respect and trust among and between small scale traders and customs officials in the target region;
- Improve knowledge and understanding on issues causing conflict, including laws, duties, rights and approaches to manage them among principal actors on the main trading routes between the DRC, Burundi and Rwanda.

The range of tools implemented included, namely: regional planning meetings, baseline survey, production and broadcast of a Radio Soap Opera, training and support to border radio stations, trading for Peace Festival, training for petty traders, etc.

The evaluation utilized a mixed methods approach, employing both quantitative (survey) and qualitative (focus group discussions and interviews) method. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the extent to which the respect and trust among and between petty traders and customs officials in the target region had improved and to assess the extent to which knowledge and understanding on issues causing conflict, including laws, duties, rights and approaches to managing them among principal actors on the main trading routes between DRC, Burundi and Rwanda have also been improved.

**KEY FINDINGS**

- Overall, evaluation data shows that **positive changes** have occurred, i.e., reduction of prejudice, improvement in relations of petty traders between themselves and with border officials, knowledge and attitudes changes.
- Increase of **trust** among and within trans-border communities.
- The project has reached its objectives to a certain extent with its focus on **mediation**, constructive conflict resolution and increasing access to relevant information.
- There is a slight increase of respondents feeling that they are **not discriminated** against when buying products from the other side of the border. The increase suggests possible contribution of SFCG actions to that effect.
- Overall, the petty traders from all borders say that they have **good relations** with petty traders from their country and from across the border.

"Being sensitized to conflict resolution, being trained on rights and responsibilities, having access to more information received the most scores."
The radio component has been very successful, especially in the Bukavu area. Half of the respondents followed a radio program on petty traders in the last year. Of those who followed a show, 94.5% found it useful or very useful.

There are areas of work remaining. Much work still needs to be done to explain to the petty traders the OBR policies and provide them with information well before bringing about changes.

INCREASED TRUST

In total, 83.6% of the respondents said that the relations with petty traders from the other side of the border had improved, while 90.2% said that there had been improvements with traders on their side of the border. As for the relationship with customs officials, 75.6% of the respondents claimed that there had been an improvement with the officials on the other side and 90.2% said the same about customs officials on their side of the border.

Almost 50% of the respondents thought the services at the other border point were “better now” while 40.4% felt the same about the services of their home country.

Most of the conflicts are related to competition between traders and to the high taxes. 43% of the respondents feel that they are better at resolving conflicts today but strategies used by locals to resolve conflicts (mediation, negotiation, collaboration, call police, pay a bribe, do nothing, etc.) have largely stayed the same.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The knowledge, attitude and behaviour questions used in this final evaluation would have been more useful if they were used at baseline so as to show variations over time.
- More efforts should be made in bringing petty traders from Goma and Rubavu together.
- Coordinate with border officials to ensure sustainability of the intervention (include elements of conflict resolution in training materials or even institutionalize).

Source: This document is a summary of and taken directly from the final evaluation report “Supporting Trading For Peace In the Great Lakes.” A copy can be acquired at http://www.sfcg.org/sfcg/evaluations/rwanda.html or by contacting Nick Oatley, Director of Institutional Learning at Search for Common Ground: noatley@sfcg.org.