SFCG is committed to transforming the way the world deals with conflict, away from adversarial approaches and towards collaborative solutions. We seek to help those in conflict identify and utilize non-violent options to resolve their problems and address their challenges peacefully. Through strategic communication and dialogue we target youth and community influencers such as religious leaders and media actors; civil society groups; local authorities; and other influential interlocutors. SFCG has been in South Sudan since 2014 with the overall objective to promote social cohesion, resilience and the peaceful resolution of conflicts among individuals and communities in South Sudan.

Best Practices in Peacebuilding in South Sudan synthesizes recent lessons learned in our programming and M&E to build an evidence base on conducting conflict transformation programming in South Sudan.

To access further information on Search’s work in South Sudan, please visit our website at https://www.sfcg.org/south-sudan/

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SFCG designs innovative multi-faceted programs to respond to the population’s needs through a wide range of tools that we adapt to the evolving conflict context. To ensure that programs are relevant and responsive, it is necessary to identify underlying factors of conflict, triggers of conflict, and community unifiers.

It is important to recognize that members of society can both influence and be victims of conflicts in different ways. Therefore, reaching out to these groups and understanding their specific needs requires creative thinking. For example, in South Sudan, community leaders and elders are perceived as critical in shaping the overall attitudes and behaviors of people in their communities, establishing societal norms that either promote or discourage peaceful conflict resolution. On the other side, youth are overwhelmingly perceived as responsible for conflict, but also as having the power to build peace despite the few opportunities for them to engage in peace building processes. Finally, women tend to be more influential within the home whilst also being victims of high levels of GBV. Reflecting on these factors, SFCG determined that traditional dance, music, sports (football, wrestling), church, and school constitute popular activities that provide opportunities for people to gather and have discussions across dividing lines.
It is also important to acknowledge that dispute-resolution mechanisms and preferred community-bridging activities may vary across the country and adapt activities accordingly to the context. For example, in South Sudan, preferred mechanisms to respond to a conflict differ according to locations (see above graph). Further, within groups, significant differences can be found and need to be taken into account. For example, young South Sudanese men living in towns tended to see a value in having peace, while their peers living in rural areas did not agree on this point.

**USE CREATIVE STRATEGIES TO REACH HARD-TO-ACCESS LOCATIONS AND POPULATIONS**

South Sudan’s context is highly volatile, with accessibility changing from day to day and month to month. This environment can mean that physically visiting a location may be impossible for a period of time, requiring that outreach activities be postponed or even canceled for security reasons. The use of media approaches—and particularly radio in the South Sudanese context—ensures that programming can continue to reach affected populations, even when their communities are inaccessible or when people are displaced. When NGOs were forced to evacuate and suspend activities following the July 2016 violence, SFCG and its partner the Catholic Radio Network were able to continue engaging with our target audience through the two radio programs that we jointly produce and broadcast.

Creative solutions also entail working through key stakeholders and bringing people together across dividing lines into safe spaces for collaboration. Working through local stakeholders ensures that there is ownership of the solution, and bolsters the credibility of the participating community actors so that they can continue to address local problems beyond the life of a specific intervention. In Eastern Equatoria two communities coexisted until a series of land disputes triggered violence between them.

SFCG invested in the local government that had been divided by the dispute, facilitated the participation of community interlocutors and religious leaders from each community and provided safe spaces for them to come together, discuss and rebuild peace. SFCG also supported the identification of common social, economic or livelihood interests that both communities relied on to build on commonalities and enhance social cohesion. As a result, in 2016, 36.5% of participants had 10 or more weekly interactions with a member of another ethnic group in comparison to 2015 (11.6%). **Allowing communities to discover solutions to their conflict instead of trying to impose a solution** and giving them the tools to take ownership of projects contributes to the sustainability of an action.

SFCG and CRN jointly produce Hiwar al-Shabab, a youth-focused radio magazine program, and Sergeant Esther, a radio serial drama. More information on the two programs is available at [www.sfcg.org/south-sudan/](https://www.sfcg.org/south-sudan/).

**DEVOLVE CREDIBLE AND CONSTRUCTIVE NARRATIVES THAT ENGAGE DIVERSE TARGET GROUPS**

As stated above, community actors tend to be involved in conflict in different ways. Influences are likely to shift from private to public spheres as well as between open and hidden influencers (ex.: elders have a more visible involvement whereas women can be more behind the scenes). In the case of South Sudan, SFCG incorporated the findings of initial research into the design of its radio program, finding that “debate among youth on non-violent conflict resolution mechanisms” was a significant gap. In response, SFCG launched Hiwar al-Shabab, a platform for youth to discuss issues that affect them and their communities; identifying areas of shared interest that transcend ethnic and religious divisions. About 25% of the population in target areas listens to the radio show and Hiwar al-Shabab received extremely positive reviews from listeners. When asked about possible improvements to the program, the most common suggestions were limited to increasing air time and further encouraging people to call-in and share their views.

In participatory theater, SFCG collects stories from the community where it will perform, shaping the narrative of the performance to be relevant to that community and its residents. The April 2016 evaluation found that 36% of people surveyed in the target areas attended a participatory theater show in their community. A case study on the use of participatory theater, captured as a short documentary, also demonstrates the importance of tailoring the narrative to the community being targeted.