



Golden Kids News: Post-Conflict Expansion

The recent civil conflict in Liberia has ravaged the country, leaving behind a fragmented and traumatized society. All three armed factions forcibly conscripted child soldiers, and the fighting, raping, and looting by the military and rebels displaced thousands of people from their homes and communities. Search for Common Ground, which operates a program called Talking Drum Studio (TDS-L) in Liberia, is taking a number of different approaches to work to support the peace process and promote reconciliation within the country, including expanding its *Golden Kids News* project to support children and the issues specifically facing them.

Since launching the program in 1997, TDS-L has been working with a group of children in Liberia to produce a radio program for children called *Golden Kids News*. To date, the children involved have all been based in Monrovia, and directly supervised by TDS-L staff. TDS-L is currently expanding the program to create networks of children within the many displaced camps to address the large population of traumatized children and families. TDS-L will partner with community-based NGOs to identify new child candidates to be cub reporters. Each new network of Golden Kids will represent the spectrum of children in Liberia, engaging former child soldiers and displaced children. Our efforts will support the work of other humanitarian organizations, particularly the child protection organizations. This work includes tracing of separated children's families; as well as protection, livelihood and educational issues. Success stories showing the coping mechanisms of families will be an important part of the programming.



Children in a displaced camp

Each group of cub reporters in the various displaced camps and slum communities around Monrovia will have an approximately equal number of boys and girls from a cross-section of homes. By partnering with local NGOs and child protection agencies, TDS-L will decentralize the supervision of the cub reporters and therefore be able to include significantly larger numbers of children in the program. TDS-L will remain responsible for providing materials and training to the Golden Kids for their activities. Materials, equipment, and training for the cub reporter groups comprise the bulk of the costs for the Golden Kids project.

Given that more than two-thirds of the population of Liberia has been displaced from their homes during the most recent rounds of fighting, internally displaced camps are a priority area in which the Golden Kids will begin work. TDS-L has already been active in these camps, providing information on the peace process and humanitarian relief to the populations, as well as messages to separated families. Our established, credible reputation will enable us to quickly develop Golden Kids networks and reporting in the camps, providing a voice to children and families who have suffered terribly during the fighting.



Displaced people lining up for the distribution of food