



Search for Common Ground in Liberia Program Overview

Since 1997 Search for Common Ground has worked to reduce conflict in Liberia. Search for Common Ground-Liberia (SFCG-L) operates two units that work hand in hand: a multi-media production studio (Talking Drum Studio-Liberia) and a community services project (*Tinamenima*).

Integrated, Multi-Faceted Approach

Conflict is multidimensional and operates on many levels (personal, familial, ethnic, political, and social). Therefore, SFCG-L uses a multi-faceted approach to expand beyond strategies that target only one sector of society or one element of conflict. By promoting reconciliation and peacebuilding through a variety of activities, including radio programs, stakeholder workshops, mediation, and drama performances, SFCG-L is able to reach a broad audience and create synergy between some of the most affected and most influential segments of Liberian society.



SFCG-L integrates its multi-faceted approach in order to link grassroots efforts with national dialogues. Talking Drum Studio-Liberia (TDS-L) creates a national dialogue around critical issues. The media work also identifies issues that need intervention beyond radio coverage. *Tinamenima's* activities, like stakeholder workshops and drama performances, complement the media programs by engaging communities in local peacebuilding activities. In this way, the media and non-media projects work in tandem at many levels of society to promote peace in Liberia.

Country Context

Liberia is in a crucial and precarious position at this time. Since the signing of the Accra peace accords in August 2003, which quieted hostilities between the government and the main rebel force Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), Liberia has been working to implement a two-year transitional government. This government, under the leadership of former businessman Gyunde Bryant, hopes to pave the way toward elections and a sustainable peace after fourteen years of war and conflict under former President Charles Taylor. In response to this situation, SFCG-L is promoting peacebuilding skills and ideas throughout the country. These skills and ideas are essential for solidifying the fragile peace and building the capacity of Liberia's growing civil society. Specifics on several of SFCG-L's programs are outlined below.

TALKING DRUM STUDIO-LIBERIA

TDS-L has a staff of over 30 Liberian nationals responsible for the production of radio programming strands that disseminate information on the peace process and support dialogue to further reconciliation in Liberia. TDS-L also provides local newspapers with articles from rural correspondents. Programs address current political and social issues and reflect the dynamic needs and interests of the Liberian society. With a recent survey revealing 87% listenership across Liberia, SFCG-L has become an integral part of Liberia's media and peace community.

- **Today is Not Tomorrow**

The dramas of TDS-L are among the most popular programs on the radio in Liberia. TDS-L has launched a new soap opera drama, *Today is not Tomorrow*, which began airing in October 2003 and uses dramatic situations to address sensitive and important issues in Liberian society ranging from current political topics to long-standing development problems. *Today is not Tomorrow* educates listeners on the process of reconciliation, forgiveness, and the promotion of peace, while providing popular entertainment.

- **Situation Report**

In partnership with UN-OCHA, *Situation Report* creates the opportunity for internally displaced people (IDPs) to highlight specific issues and problems. TDS-L interviews IDPs one week and the next week UN-OCHA representatives respond to the issues that the IDPs raised.

- **One Step Beyond**

One Step Beyond focuses on the constantly unfolding role of the UN and the NGO community in the peacebuilding process in Liberia. The program often interviews high-level officials from these organization, giving listeners a chance to hear directly the perspective of the groups.

- **Golden Kids News**

As children are a vulnerable sector of society that is often overlooked, SFCG-L designed a program specifically targeting this audience. *Golden Kids News* is a program produced by and for children that raises issues of importance to them.

- **Woman**

Woman is produced by TDS-L's female staff and gives airtime to salient issues concerning women. The program allows them to be widely involved in encouraging the transformation of violent conflict in Liberia into cooperative problem solving.

TINAMENIMA (COMMUNITY SERVICES UNIT)

In March 2002 the community services unit that complements TDS-L became a separate division of SFCG-L, called *Tinamenima*. Now that SFCG-L has gained respect and recognition across the country, *Tinamenima* staff can respond at the community level to local issues that TDS-L's journalists uncover. *Tinamenima* staff utilize a variety of tools such as organizing workshops, drama performances, soccer tournaments, and facilitations of community problem-solving. Throughout the outreach activities, TDS-L staff record interviews and proceedings, which are then taken back to the studio and incorporated into the radio programs.



- **Southeastern Peace and Reconciliation Workshops**

Tinamenima embarked on a series of workshops in southeastern Liberia in response to the possibility of violence due to harbored ethnic tensions remaining after the civil war. Activities of the project include training for local journalists, a series of workshops, live drama performances, and a soccer tournament. Material and discussions from the workshops are gathered and aired through TDS-L's radio programs.

- **Training**

SFCG-L has a policy of passing on its knowledge to the rest of the media community. *Tinamenima* established a training team of eight members of the production department of the studio who visit local radio stations at their request. The team is onsite for two days, training on-air staff in the basics of broadcasting and journalism.

Search for Common Ground in Liberia is a program of Search for Common Ground and the European Centre for Common Ground, international NGOs working as partners in the fields of conflict resolution and media production. For additional information, see our website, www.sfcg.org, or contact West Africa Program, 1601 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20009, USA; phone (+1)(202)265-4300; fax (+1)(202) 232-6718; e-mail search@sfcg.org.

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