

## Giving Voice to a New Generation of Filmmakers: Jean Noel Bah

A major objective of the GTF grant has been to build local capacity. No one has benefited more than Ivorian, Jean Noel Bah who has been the driving force behind **L'Equipe** in Cote d'Ivoire. In addition to being the owner of JNB Productions, a local NGO, Bah was also the director and one of the writers for the series.

For the partners like Jean Noel who are involved in the creation of The Team, it has been an unprecedented opportunity for young artists not only to build technical skills but to learn to better express themselves through a television, one of the most powerful mediums of popular culture. It's been a chance for them to reach tens of thousands of their fellow citizens and even millions in other countries.

**"L'Equipe** is a good program because the stories are not fantasies; they reflect our life. It teaches people to have a good attitude and put away a bad attitude, to listen and to search for solutions."

Filmmaking was a dream of Jean Noel but the opportunities in Abidjan are few and far between. Over the years, he took every chance he had to work on stories. As a writer on a radio series for Search for Common Ground, Bah also managed to teach himself filmmaking. He made a few short films for various aid agencies with a loyal team of technicians under the JNB Productions banner before meeting SFCG Executive Producer, Deborah Jones who recognized his talent and saw that he was at a stage in his career where he would benefit from the GTF grant. After considering several filmmakers, Jean Noel was chosen as the main partner for the GTF grant in Cote d'Ivoire. This was in 2008.

**"L'Equipe** was the biggest production I had ever done. It helped me in 3 ways. 1) Artistically: Because of my contact with SFCG, it helped me grow as an artist; 2) leadership. It helped me develop my attitude toward leadership because I have had to manage everyone and use the budget properly and 3) Personally. **L'Equipe** has helped me to build the career I wanted and to build so I can take care of my family.

Bah is also quick to point out that exposure to L'Equipe has had a positive impact on other members of the production team. Inspired by the messages of hope, many members of the cast make themselves available for the mobile screenings because they want to spread the messages of tolerance as well. Because the series promotes self-reliance and responsibility towards ones community, others on the team have started local businesses like small restaurants, a pressing (dry cleaners) and other schemes. Of the project overall Bah says, "L'Equipe helped us to balance, to be more tolerant of others."